

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

Pulpit Notes

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

--Matthew 17:9

Brothers and Sisters:

Yesterday, it seems like everyone I ran into wore a perplexed expression as they stared at their calendars. "How can March be next week?" I heard more than one person say. Some of them used more colorful language than that, but never mind.

I too found myself scrambling to get on board with the swiftly approaching change of calendars and seasons. All of a sudden, we are faced with Pancakes for Supper and Ashes in place of breakfast as we shift from Epiphany to Lent.

I always thought of the shift as a bit of an emotional whiplash: You go from this wonderful, fun dinner where you eat strange food (though there'll be more than pancakes!), where the kids get to decorate pancakes with the silliest designs and materials - and you go to the early hours of the morning with a somber ashen reminder that we are dust and will return to dust.

It always makes me think of the poor disciples who went up to the mountain with Jesus and witnessed this incredible, divine and glorious event ... only to return to the mundane yes oh so dangerous world below where they would ponder their mortality on a regular basis. Worse yet, they had to keep quiet about the experience.

Imagine seeing what they saw and not being able to tell a soul. At least on Ash Wednesday, you can relate how the pancakes were particularly delicious this year!

Seriously, we are about to make an abrupt about-face in our spiritual walk, and it needs your attention. We are about to leave behind the Epiphany call to responsible action and slide into that reflective, penitential season where we take a hard, honest look at our lives, acknowledge our mortality, our fallenness, and our utter dependence upon God for life and meaning.

As we prepare for Lent, I invite you to take full advantage of all the traditions of the church - from pancakes to ashes. These help us not only begin our reflections with purpose but also to put away the more active and less reflective days coming to an end. That is, these traditions and liturgies help us navigate the spiritual explorations God has called us to.

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St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

When we participate in them, we know that we are not traveling alone. We know that there is a path, and that even if we have no idea where it's going, we at least know that we have companions. That's what the church is: Companions on the Way. And these companions will offer comfort, honest critique, courage and - yes - coffee.

So join us for the **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper** on Tuesday, February 28 at 6:00 PM.

Then join us again on **Ash Wednesday** at 6:30 and 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM.

In fun and reflection we will be there for each other.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck+

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

The News of the Church

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper February 28, 2017 6:00 PM



St. James' Parish Hall

All are Welcome

Celebrate a night of Family Fun
as we prepare for Ash Wednesday and Lent.
FREE FOR ALL... We hope you'll join us!

Kids! You're Invited to take part in
Fr. Chuck's Pancake Decorating Fun!

St. James' E-pistle
February 24, 2017

Ash
Wednesday
Liturgies*

6:30 AM

10:00 AM

7:00 PM

From approximately 7:30 - 9:30 AM, Fr. Chuck will be at Cranberry's to offer the Imposition of Ashes to any who present themselves. This is an outreach to the broader community.

*in the Church

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

Quarterly Chapel Service: Our next Quarterly Chapel Service is **Sunday, February 26.**

The New York Haiti Project: Mark your calendars! **Sunday, February 26** for a presentation by Father Sam Owen on the New York Haiti Project **following the 10am service.** The presentation will take place in the Wilks Room.

Building relationships! This is a key component of the New York Haiti Project. Please join us as we learn about the New York Haiti Project and explore how our parish might engage in this important mission opportunity. --Deacon Gail and Joanne Lown

Lenten Morning Prayer: This year, we are excited to offer daily Morning Prayer for your Lenten discipline. While the timing won't work for everyone, we hope that you will be able to attend at least one - but whether it's just one, one a week, or every day, we'll be here for your spiritual benefit.

It is especially gratifying that we have six volunteers who are offering their time to lead Morning Prayer. Vince Asher, Wilma Tully, Janice Syedullah, Tom Finnigan, and Patty Caswell will each officiate one day a week at 10:00 AM. For those who need a little earlier, Wendy Urban-Mead will lead Morning Prayer on three Mondays at 8:00 AM.

If anyone wants to officiate at 6:00 AM (or Saturdays), let me know - the more we offer, the more opportunities there are for your fellow parishioners - and our neighbors - to attend.

So come to the church on Lenten mornings - it will make your Lenten discipline that much more meaningful.

Lenten Quiet Day: The Companions of St. Mary the Apostle, is hosting a Lenten Quiet Day at the Church of Christ the King in Stone Ridge on **Saturday, March 4.** It runs from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM and will be led by Sisters Elizabeth and Shane of the order (CMA), and Lorraine Coscia-Ackerman, and Covenant Companion of the CMA. Cost is \$35 sliding scale, bring your lunch.

Book Signing: Many of you (especially in the choir) may remember Geraldine Hawkins, a Park Ranger who used to attend St. James' before being transferred away. She will be speaking at the Wallace Center **March 9th** at 7:00 p.m. for the "launch" of her book Elliott and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Story of A Father and His Daughter in The Gilded Age. There will be

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

Q&A and book signing. She would love to see members of the congregation there, so I hope you'll consider it!



St. James' Hosting Trinity Institute Simulcast: St. James' is the only Midhudson Valley site hosting a simulcast of this year's Trinity Institute Conference which takes place **March 22-24**. The Trinity Institute is a three-day conference attracting participants from around the world. Each year it focuses on one topic of importance to people of faith. This year's conference is titled: "Water Justice" and centers on the sacredness of water and the necessity of protecting it so we can all live. From the Trinity Institute website: "Water is a gift. Water is life. As water crises increase, access to safe and clean drinking water decreases.

From Flint to Standing Rock, many of today's most pressing social issues revolve around water. Faith communities worldwide can help."

The simulcast will take place in the parish hall. We encourage everyone to be part of this - for all three days if possible, but for one day if that's all you can do.

Some Diocesan Dates of Interest: It is important to be in communion with other Episcopalians in our diocese. While many events are held in New York City, some are more regionally available. Here are a few events that you may be interested in.

March 18, 9:30 AM - 2:30 PM - Eucharistic Minister/Eucharistic Visitor Training (in Cornwall)

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

March 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 8:00 AM at Chapel	27 Office Closed	28 6:30 PM Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper	1 Ash Wednesday 6:30 AM, 10:00 AM, & 7 PM - Ashes	2 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures	3	4
5 9:00 AM Lenten Breakfasts	6 Office Closed	7	8 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	9 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures	10	11
12 SPRING FORWARD! 9:00 AM Lenten Breakfasts	13 Office Closed 6:00 PM Women's Group	14	15 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	16 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures	17	18 8:00 AM Men's Breakfast
19 9:00 AM Lenten Breakfasts	20 Office Closed	21 7:00 PM Vestry	22 Trinity Institute 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	23 Trinity Institute 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures	24 Trinity Institute	25
26 9:00 AM Lenten Breakfasts	27 Office Closed	28	29 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	30 11 AM Bible Study 3:30 Reading Adventures	31	

Every Sunday, the Holy Eucharist is celebrated at 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM
 Sunday School is offered at the 10:00 AM service. Coffee Hour follows.

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

Churchyard Committee: Our churchyard committee wants you. The committee oversees one of the most historic graveyards in the region, and is responsible for making sure it is kept up. It handles the sale and digging of graves as well. If you value our churchyard and want it to continue to be a source of comfort whose loved ones rest here as well as historical interest to those who visit, please join our committee. If you're interested, you can contact Carol Vinall at vinehall3@aol.com.

DONATE YOUR iPad! Please consider donating your old iPad - or any old tablet that can read a PDF file - to St. James'. We would like to have three or four tablets so we can download the digital bulletin onto them and let guests (or parishioners, of course) use them. This is especially helpful to those who are unfamiliar with the liturgy and all the books we use. You should erase everything on it, of course - all we need is a PDF reader and a browser (to download the information). Thanks!

Spiritual / Educational Online Resources to deepen your faith:

- Acts 8 Movement
- GrowChristians
- Episcopal Cafe (a favorite)
- The Slate Project (not affiliated with Slate magazine)
- Virtual Abbey
- Second Life Church (gives you a virtual church experience if you're into that sort of thing. Fun to look at maybe).
- Inward/Outward (daily meditations sent to your e-mail)
- "Edge of Enclosure" (weekly lectionary-based blog post)
- The Celtic Christian Tradition (via Facebook)
- Anne Lamott (via Facebook)
- Fr. Richard Rohr's blog <https://cac.org/richard-rohr/richard-rohr-ofm/>
- Jan Richardson - <http://paintedprayerbook.com>

Especially good for those grieving or interested in women's spirituality.

The News of the Diocese

Diocesan Cycle of Prayer: Please pray for these diocesan ministries this week. If you want to check out the entire year's calendar for intercession, it's simple to find - go to <http://www.diocesen.org> and click under "Beliefs and Practices."

February

- | | |
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| 26 | Grace Church, Monroe |
| 27 | Church of St. Nicholas-on-the-Hudson, New Hamburg |

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

- 28 St. Edmund's Church, Bronx
March
1 Ash Wednesday
Episcopal Charities of New York
2 St. David's Church, Bronx
3 Diocesan Leadership Development Commission
4 Postulants and Candidates for the Priesthood

Praying For Peace Everywhere:

Let us continue to light a candle for peace in the Holy Land - and everywhere. Prayer is our most potent antidote to hatred.

1. **Candle for Peace**

Please also light a candle on Fridays - holy to both faiths - for Peace

Let us Light Candles for Peace

Two mothers, one plea:

Now, more than ever, during these days of so much crying,
on the day that is sacred to both our religions, Friday, Sabbath Eve

Let us light a candle in every home - for peace:

A candle to illuminate our future, face to face,

A candle across borders, beyond fear.

From our family homes and houses of worship

Let us light each other up,

Let these candles be a lighthouse to our spirit

Until we all arrive at the sanctuary of peace.

2. **The Mothers Prayer:**

God of Life:

You who heals the broken hearted, binding up our wounds.

Please hear this prayer of mothers.

You did not create us to kill each other

Nor to live in fear or rage or hatred in your world. You created us so that we allow each other to sustain Your Name in this world:

Your name is Life, your name is Peace.

For these I weep, my eye sheds water:

For our children crying in the night,

For parents holding infants, despair and darkness in their hearts.

For a gate that is closing – who will rise to open it before the day is gone?

With my tears and with my constant prayers, With the tears of all women deeply pained at these harsh times

I raise my hands to you in supplication: Please God have mercy on us.

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

Hear our voice that we not despair That we will witness life with each other, That we have mercy one for another, That we share sorrow one with the other, That we hope, together, one for another.

Inscribe our lives in the book of Life

For Your sake, our God of Life Let us choose Life.

For You are Peace, Your world is Peace and all that is Yours is Peace,

May this be your will

And let us say Amen.

*Sheikha Ibtisam Mahameed and Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum
English Translation Amichai Lau-Lavie*

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Susie Buhalis, Mariel Carter, Dee, Linkin Ewalt, Loretta Falzarano (sister of Donna Beyer), Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Charles Pardee, Grace Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (serving in Afghanistan), John Ross, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Carl Smith, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

Schedules

A Note about Schedules: The names you see below are those listed on their respective schedules. There are often times when, due to sickness or travel, substitutes are asked to fill in or trade positions. This will probably NOT be reflected in the lists below—so, if there is an inconsistency between what you see here and what you see on Sunday, that is alright.

Birthdays
(this past week): Regina Ardini, Charlessa Thatcher and David Foote

Birthdays
(this coming week): Gilbert O'Halloran, Karen Pitcher, William Rance and Richard K. Wager

Acolytes: February 26: Team 1

March 5: Team 2

Altar Guild: February 26: Team III

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

	March 5: Team III
8 a.m. Readers:	February 26: Lucille Ogden and Grant Ferris March 5: Debbie Belding and Sue DeLorenzo
10 a.m. Readers:	February 26: Russell Urban-Mead/Wendy Urban-Mead March 5: Patty Caswell/Nancy Montero
Ushers:	February 26: Patty Drake, Bobbie Wells March 5: Nancy Montero, Anna Marie Pitcher
Pledge Clerks:	February 26: Andy Hall and Dean Caswell March 5: Joanne Lown and Janet Bright
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	February 26: Irene Kipp, Edith Kline, Rudy Knakal March 5: Walter and Lynn Koch, Ashley Konyn, Paul Littlefield
Coffee Hour Hosts:	February 26: Brian Rance, Saira Shahani March 5: Lenten Breakfast

This Week's Lectionary

Exodus 24:12-18

Psalm 99

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

This Week's Hymns

Processional: Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor (#307)

Sequence: O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair (#137)

Offertory: In Remembrance of Me

Communion: O Light of Light, Love Given Birth (#134)

Recessional: Christ Upon the Mountain Peak (#129)

NOTE: Audio recordings of some sermons are now available on St. James' website, www.stjameshydepark.org Look under "Worship"

Sermon Preached on
Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

(February 19, 2017)

"A Better Strategy"

Life is hard. We make it harder than it needs to be. For some unknown reason, even though we depend on each other to survive in a world that is both beautiful and harsh, we regularly work against our own best interests.

How do we undercut ourselves? By trying to undercut others. For some reason, several millennia ago we decided that the only way to live in this world is to struggle against each other: may the best man win... Somebody's got to be top dog.

Now, admittedly, this strategy has taken us pretty far in the sense that some of us live comfortable lives. But even the most comfortable among us lives with a tension that wears us down - a distrust of our neighbor. Because deep down we believe that they - maybe everyone - is out to get us. You see it in gangs and in office politics. You see it in sports - both against other teams and within the same team (teammates vying for the same position). It's in school cliques, in the arts, business, families... We have this underlying suspicion that the next person is just using us and will throw us under the bus at the first opportunity. And that's just our friends and family!

It's even worse if you're not top dog. Because according to the World Bank, three quarters of the world's population lives in poverty, with nearly a billion on the edge of starvation. These are not new statistics. What's new is that in an increasing number of countries, ours included, the gap between rich and poor is growing. This strategy of looking out for number one does not seem sustainable, let alone right. At some point, something's gotta give.

I don't really want to get into an economic justice conversation right now - that's not my point. My point is that this distrust, this unease, this downright abuse doesn't seem like a very good strategy for a peaceful, happy life. Or, as St. Paul says, the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.

Granted, maybe it's the best we've been able to do so far, but it wears us down, doesn't do very much for most people, and is kind of messing up the planet upon which we depend for survival. The mind of God has always envisioned a better strategy for life together. Holiness. Or in the words of Jesus, perfection.

Those two words, holiness and perfection, kind of terrify us, don't they? None of us can ever be perfect, so what's Jesus getting at? None of us is all that holy, either. It's too much work. But according to Jesus, if we want to take it to the next level, holiness and perfection are the best strategy.

Now, this is not reinventing the wheel. From the beginning, God laid out a recipe for holy living. Simple things. Take care of the poor and the alien living in your land. Don't defraud, don't steal, don't cheat your workers out of their wages, don't make life hard on the physically disabled,

St. James' E-pistle

February 24, 2017

don't judge based on wealth. This was all laid out in Leviticus. Nothing Jesus did or said took away one word of this strategy.

But he did expand on it. You know that whole eye-for-an-eye thing? Back in his day, that was considered moderation because before that, the rule was, "If you take out my eye, I'm going to kill you. If you kill a member of my family, I'll kill ten of yours."

Now - Jesus says - if you want to go to the next level, the level that brings you to a more joyful life, one without all the distrust, one that brings you closer to the mind of God, you need to forgive. And more. I'm guessing the reason we don't do this is because it feels wrong. I mean even the basics in Leviticus strain us to the breaking point: caring for the poor is a political controversy these days, let alone the alien - who we see as a threat. Defrauding is seen as smart, and paying the laborer as little as possible is just good business.

And now Jesus wants us to turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, give to anyone who begs! Isn't that just rewarding bad behavior? How is this supposed to be a better strategy for getting what we want?

Depends on what we want. Do we want to live in a constant state of low-grade paranoia? Do we want to live in a constant state of vigilance against our neighbors - remembering that everyone is our neighbor. Do we want to live in a constant state of denial, pretending that the vast majority of people aren't suffering and that the planet we live on is undergoing traumatic changes many of which are of our own making?

And more importantly, do we want to live lives that are intentionally separated from God?

Jesus sees our desire to grow closer to God, to live in joy. And he says the way to do it is love and forgiveness. Some have complained that this strategy just tells people to be doormats and that people in abusive relationships should continue to allow themselves to be abused. That's not what Jesus said. But he is saying that every wall we build against each other takes us one step further from the mind of God. He is saying that the foundation of a happy life - not just individually but as a society - is love.

I know, I know, that's impossible, and I have to protect myself.

But maybe, just maybe. I can creep out from behind my wall long enough to see that person I'm afraid of - and who's afraid of me, by the way - as the neighbor Jesus keeps talking about.

Maybe, just maybe, I can reach out to them - not because there's something tangible in it for me or because I'm forced to, but because I appreciate that person for the child of God they are.

Life is hard, and despite knowing Jesus' mind, we will probably continue to treat others with fear and distrust. But let us not forget that our strategy - and its results - are flawed. And that there is a better way. Amen.