

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: May 20, 2018

Day of Pentecost (Whitsunday)

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

PENTECOST. It's one of those churchy holidays that doesn't seem to mean a whole lot to most of us. You won't find it on most secular calendars. There are no Pentecost sales at Macy's, no Pentecost brunches at Shadows, and no Pentecost specials on NBC.

But there was a time when Pentecost was big. Really big. The entire community knew about it and celebrated it. Church was packed on Pentecost to an extent rivaled only by Easter. Not even Christmas could hold a candle to Pentecost.

That was then. This is now.

And now, very few people have any idea what Pentecost is, let alone make it a priority in their lives. There's a good chance you may not know what it is.

So, here's your quick primer on Pentecost, and why it still matters to us.

Back in Jesus' day, there was already a holiday called Pentecost - a harvest festival and a holiday commemorating the giving of the Torah to the nation of Israel. It was a pilgrimage holiday, so people trekked to Jerusalem if possible.

For us, however, Pentecost took on new meaning. During the feast in Jerusalem after Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit came down to the apostles and alit upon them. This was the beginning of the church. In a way, it was a continuation of the Jewish tradition because just as the Torah marked the beginning of the nation, so the gift of the Holy Spirit marked the beginning - the planting, as it were - of the Church.

That's why it was such a big deal throughout the ages. This is our starting point (yes, our birthday). Without the gift of the Holy Spirit, Christianity might not exist because without it, our entire understanding of the Holy Trinity (the Feast of the Trinity is celebrated the very next Sunday) would be undeveloped.

More importantly, we believe that it is the Holy Spirit who guides and empowers us in our work today as followers of Christ. We believe that the Spirit is what piques our souls when we see someone in need of help or compassion. We believe it is the Spirit who lifts our souls when we sing a beautiful hymn. We believe it is the Spirit who strengthens us when we are feeling uncertain or worn out. And the Spirit empowers us when we know we have big tasks ahead and wonder how we can possibly do them.

The answer, of course, is that we can't do it by ourselves. BUT...with the Holy Spirit working through us - with inSPIRATION - all things are possible.

I invite you, then to come to church this Sunday - to the biggest holy day you might never have thought about - and welcome the Holy Spirit not only to the church but into your life.

And wear **RED**! Because one of our enduring traditions is to wear red to welcome the Spirit. Why Red? Because of fire, of course! If that's confusing (and it might be to some), then you'll just have to come to church to find out.

If it's not confusing to you. If you know all about Pentecost. If this is all old news, then you know how important it is to be here Sunday to celebrate! Because this is our beginning, our call to action, our power.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

A PLEDGE PLEA: Thanks to those of you who responded to the plea for new pledges! We really appreciate it. If you have not pledged yet, please do so. And if you already pledged but can increase yours a little, it will go a long way to making our ministry here move forward. God is good, and so is your partnership in the Jesus Movement.

Announcements

BECOME A LAY READER:

Want to serve God and your church? There are many ways, but one pressing need is for lay readers during Sunday worship. Some training is required, but it is a task that is possible and open to all. While we encourage new lay readers at both services, there is a special need at the 10:00 AM. Please see Father Chuck.

Between Service Classes:

This **Sunday, May 20**, we continue our 3-part series on prayer. Last Sunday, we laid the foundation for understanding prayer through the lens of the Catechism. This Sunday, we look at what it means to pray in a practical sense. Then, on May 27, we will explore three different forms of prayer.

Next, in June, we have a series on African Christians who made a difference.

In July we have a series on the 7 Deadly Sins.

This Fall, we look at church music - What it is in its various forms? What's different about it from other music? How do we make best use of it?

Buildings and Grounds Meeting Sunday:

Come attend the next Buildings and Grounds meeting this Sunday, May 20 at 11:30 AM. Grab a cup of coffee (or tea or juice), some snacks, and then meet with the Buildings and Grounds Committee to help plan the work of keeping up the facilities here. There are many large and exciting projects on the horizon, and they can be just the ticket for the right person. Attending does not commit you to anything - but it is an opportunity to see if it's something you'd like to do (or at least learn more about).

Youth Group:

The Youth Group meets Sunday, **May 20 at 3:00 PM** in the Wilks Room. Weather Permitting, we are going on a hike! Bring a friend!

CPR Class:

Saturday, May 26 at 10:00 AM, the Men's Group is sponsoring a CPR class. **It is open to all.** Cost for the class is \$20 per participant. There is a limit of 12 for the class, so sign up soon!

Continuing Inquirers:

The Continuing Inquirers class has had to be postponed yet again due to scheduling difficulties. By common agreement, the next class will now be **June 6, 7:00 PM** in the Wilks Room. If you'd like to learn more, please join us! This month's topic: The Creeds.

May 2018						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
13	14 Office Closed 7:30 PM Choir Practice 6 PM Women's Group	15 7 PM Vestry	16 10 AM Morning Prayer 2 PM Eucharist at HP Assisted Living 7:00 PM Continuing Inquirers	17 11 AM Bible Study 7 PM LITURGY OF LAMENTATION <i>(AT CATHEDRAL)</i>	18 11 AM Free Prayer Friday @ Cranberry's	19 8 AM Men's Breakfast 4 PM Graveyard Tour Meeting
20 PENTECOST 3 pm Youth Group	21 Office Closed 7:30 PM Choir Practice	22	23 10 AM Morning Prayer 7 PM Outreach	24 11 AM Bible Study - AT HOLY CROSS MONASTERY	25 11 AM Free Prayer Friday @ Cranberry's	26 10 AM Men's Group CPR training
27	28 7:30 PM Choir Practice	29	30 10 AM Morning Prayer	31 11 AM Bible Study	June 1 11 AM Free Prayer Friday @ Cranberry's	2
Sundays: Holy Eucharist Rite I is at 8:00 AM Holy Eucharist Rite II (with music) is at 10:00 AM. Sunday School and nursery are available at 10:00 AM. Between Service Classes on Sundays are from 9:15 to 9:45 in the Wilks Room.						

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 <https://www.diocesen.org/administration/for-clergy/liturgical-and-sacramental/diocesan-calendar-of-intercession/>

20 Trinity Wall Street

21 St. John's Episcopal Church, Monticello, Delaware Catskill Episcopal Ministry

- 22 St. Bartholomew's Church, Manhattan
- 23 Community of the Holy Spirit
- 24 L'Église Français du Saint Esprit, Manhattan
- 25 Spiritual Directors of the Diocese
- 26 Diocesan Credit Union Task Force

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Mariel Carter, Joanne Clark, Linkin Ewalt, Loretta Falzarano (sister of Donna Beyer), Heather Francese, Kathy Ganim, Brian Ganter (deployed to Afghanistan), Karla Givison (Deb Belding's sister), Gloria Golden, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Ashley Konyn, Tedi Kramer, Hope Jennings, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Jim Lynn (Carol Bender's brother - facing surgery), Doris Mack, Andrew Mendelson, Beth and Ginero Milano, Lillian Peralta, Mary Bowers Peters (stroke), Grace Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (serving in Afghanistan), Pat Rooney, John Ross, Hank Schroeder, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Carl Smith, Marguerite Spratt, Janice Syedullah, Tracy, Georgia Verven, 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 all right.

- Birthdays
(this past week): Walter Edgar Koch, M.D., Brian Kinne and Morgan Kinne
- Birthdays
(this coming week): Daniel McGlynn
- Acolytes:
 - May 20: Russell Urban-Mead and Braeden Hall
 - May 27: Nancy Montero and Jaylen Thatcher
- Altar Guild:
 - May 20: Team III
 - May 27: Team III
- 8 a.m. Readers:
 - May 20: Debbie Belding and Thomas Finnigan
 - May 27: Julett Butler and Lynne Koch
- 10 a.m. Readers:
 - May 20: Russell Urban-Mead and Barbara Slegel
 - May 27: Wendy Urban-Mead and Joann Clark
- Ushers:
 - May 20: Andrew and Tanya Hall
 - May 27: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher

Pledge Clerks: May 20: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher
May 27: Andy Hall and Dean Caswell

Parish Cycle of Prayer: May 20: Leslie Quick, Brian Rance, Melinda Harris and William Rance
May 27: Daniel, Alyssa, Aldonna and Andrew Raugalis, John Robinson and Patricia Rooney

Coffee Hour Hosts: May 20: Deirdre Mae Micker, Wendy and Russell Urban-Mead
May 27: Brian Rance, Saira Shahani

This Week's Lectionary

Acts 2:1-21
Psalm 104:25-35, 37
Romans 8:22-27
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 225 - Hail Thee Festival Day
Sequence: 513 - Like the Murmur of the Dove's Song
Offertory: TBA
Communion: 333 - Now the Silence
Recessional: LEVAS 120 - There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in This Place

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Seventh Sunday of Easter (May 13, 2018)

"I Don't Belong Here"

I would like to wish you a Happy Mother's Day, but it's complicated. That is, Mother's Day is a complicated or even difficult day for many. There are people who avoid church on Mother's Day because they feel they don't belong.

That's because there are those who (as you know) have just lost a mother. There are also those mothers who have lost a child. There are those who never wanted to be mothers but are, and there are those who wanted to be a mother but couldn't. Or wanted to be mothers and are and are struggling with it. There are those who have strained relationships with their mothers.

On the other hand, Mother's Day is really about the fact that each of us has a mother - good or bad - who brought us into the world. It is a day to be thankful that you were born - and I'm glad that each of you was born and that you are here.

Of course, a lot of *other* people feel they don't belong here either - for a wide variety of reasons. Maybe you're one of them.

Here are some reasons people have told me they don't belong: The liturgy is too complicated to follow. The church is too liberal. Too conservative. Too holy. Not holy enough. Nobody here looks like me. It's been too long since I've been to church. I have done such bad things in my life. I'm not sure I even believe in God.

If you fit any of those categories, I'm glad *you're* here, too.

And yes, you *do* belong.

At least, you belong to the extent that *any* of us belongs here.

But understand that by "here", I mean more than just St. James'. For some reason, most people - at least sometimes - feel they don't belong - not in this church, not in this school, not in this country, not in this world. Like...maybe I just don't get what everyone else thinks is so important. Or maybe everyone else is somehow more qualified to be here than I am.

I wonder if that's what Matthias felt like when he was selected to replace Judas as an apostle. I mean, *Jesus* didn't pick him, so maybe he felt like he wasn't a *real* apostle. Wasn't really qualified - a fake or imposter. Believe it or not, most clergy have this lingering doubt in the back of their minds that they aren't *real* priests, that we don't belong at the altar or in the pulpit - and that some day everyone's going to find out.

The idea that we don't belong is, simply put, human.

That's one thing Jesus was saying in his prayer today when he prays, "[my disciples] do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world."

They do not belong to the world. He says this more than once. They don't belong to this world.

They aren't the same as this world. Their values - Jesus' values - are not the same. Their sense of justice is not that of the world. Their sense of mercy is not that of the world. Their sense of glory, and kindness, and service, and pride - they are not those of the world.

Because just like today, the world back then was all about taking care of number one. Take care of your own first, *then* maybe, if you have something left over and it looks good, toss a few scraps to others. ("America First" declared heretical).

And just like today, the world back then was all about power, about being on top, about doing unto others before they can do unto you. About seeing others as either tools or enemies.

No wonder so many of us feel like we don't belong. No wonder so many have throughout the ages tried to escape in any number of ways. They physically move from place to place to find somewhere better. They sink themselves into their work or some fantasy world. Or they abuse substances.

But escape doesn't work.

So Jesus prays for his disciples as he prepares to leave them. He prays that God will care for them in this environment that is so foreign, so unlike the kingdom of Heaven.

But notice this: Jesus does NOT pray for God to take them OUT of this world. Jesus does not pray for God to keep his disciples away from the trouble ahead, just to protect them. Because, he says, even though they do not belong TO the world, they DO belong IN it. At least for the moment.

They belong in it because they have work to do here. And that work is to spread God's love. Not just to love people but to *tell* people that they love because they were loved first - and that the one who loves them above all is the one who breathed life into all humanity, who gave birth to us all, God the Father and Mother of us all.

Jesus prays for the disciples to have fortitude in their mission, to be strengthened in the days, weeks, months and years ahead so that they can stick with the mission of making Christ known in a world that often does not want to hear it and, even more, does not want to live the life that Jesus prescribes.

This mission has taken longer than the disciples anticipated. They had to pass it on down to us. So today, here we are, maybe feeling we don't belong here - but Jesus still isn't praying that we be taken out of the world. We may not belong TO it, but until our work is done, Jesus says, we DO belong IN it.

My brothers and sisters, I invite you to embrace your mission to love, to seek justice, to proclaim mercy and kindness. Just remember that ultimately, you belong to God. Don't ever let the world make you forget. Pray. Study. Seek each other's support. This church is a good place for all of those things.

So, even if you don't belong to the world - you DO belong here. Amen.

A WORD ABOUT RECORDED SERMONS:

Most weeks, I upload a recorded copy of the sermon onto my Facebook page as well as St. James' YouTube channel. I have not yet figured out how to upload them to the St. James' Facebook page but am working on it.

You can also listen to sermons by going to YouTube (www.youtube.com) and searching for "St. James Episcopal Church, Hyde Park, NY". There, you will not only find sermons, but also videos of the Fireside Chats and other videos of interest. You can subscribe to that page, and then when new content is uploaded, you will receive a notification.

SERMON EVALUATION FORM

It is not necessary to take notes during the sermon. Rather, you can take some time afterwards to recollect the sermon and its effect on you. Give yourself a few minutes for each of the questions. If you choose to share this with the preacher, it can be a powerful aid to better preaching - but this is not a form to be handed to the preacher and forgotten. It is an aid for you so you can speak directly with the preacher and answer follow-up questions.

1. WHAT ARE YOU STILL HEARING?

That is, without evaluating it, what are the words or phrases from the sermon that are still echoing in your ears? Are there any "ear worms"?

2. WHERE MIGHT THIS BE LEADING?

As a listener, where does this sermon lead you? What does it invite you to? What are the next steps in your faith that might arise from this sermon?

3. HOW DOES THIS SERMON "PLAY"?

That is, how is it organized or ordered? What steps has the preacher taken you through? What structure did you notice in this sermon? What has it asked you to do?

4. HOW MIGHT THIS SERMON "GROW"?

That is, what suggestions would you have to hone the message of this sermon, to make it more engaging, inspiring, logical, fleshed out... No sermon is ever entirely done; its themes will be revisited over time. What would help the next time be more compelling?