

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: May 6, 2018

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I would like to express my deep and sincere thanks to everyone from the parish who offered condolences and prayers at the death of my mother. Your care and concern meant much to me and to my family.

I spend much of my vocation talking about death, the translation from earthly life to heavenly life, but I know that when it hits home, it's never easy. In my ordained ministry, not only have I buried many friends and strangers, but I have attended (and sometimes officiated) the burials of four grandparents, a child, and now a parent. Nothing ever makes it easy, yet though some deaths are harder to bear than others, nothing ever makes them life-ending for us. When we embrace the life God has given us for as long as we walk, the death of loved ones gains perspective.

Having said all that, I would like to take a few moments of personal privilege to share a bit about my mother, her funeral, and lessons she taught along the way.

My parents met while my mom was a 16-year-old car hop at the drive-in restaurant. My father started eating there every night just so he could have her serve him. When he finally asked her out, he had to ask my grandfather for permission. The only stories they shared from their dating days was when my mother accidentally shot out the basement window of her future in-laws' with an arrow, and when she and my dad went flying with her future father-in-law in his Piper Cub only to learn that my dad got sick every time they flew.

My mother was a staunch Roman Catholic when they met. My father came from a Southern Methodist family of the Prohibitionist, anti-dancing, anti-movie sort. When they married three years after meeting, while my mom was still a teenager, neither set of in-laws was happy or hopeful things would last. My Methodist grandmother was particularly dismayed when they kept having children - six in a seven-year period. But my parents were delighted (and I'm pleased they didn't stop at four!).

My parents went to separate churches for the first ten years of their marriage, but finally they looked at each other and decided they needed a place where they could both worship with integrity. Both Catholic and Protestant? Where else but the Episcopal Church! So on a rainy Sunday in 1965, they came to St. John's. And when their kids joined kids from the parish playing in the resulting puddles in the parking lot, they knew they were home.

While we were growing up, Mom stayed home to care for us - no small task! With just one income, she invented all sorts of low-cost meals - usually involving beans and Velveeta - that we simply thought of as our own specialty foods.

While we were growing up, we lived in what most would consider a bad neighborhood. It was just down the street from the bus station and the Salvation Army, and it had a fairly high crime rate even for our home town. My parents raised us to deal with people who were cognitively compromised (either through substance abuse or mental illness). When a drunk wandered into our house, either Mom or Dad would simply talk to them. When the guy next door murdered his wife, they talked to us. We lived in that house because it was big enough to hold us and because they could afford it. But they taught us that every person has a story, and no person should ever be treated as disposable. They also taught us to believe in second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth chances. However many it took.

I should mention that church was always a huge part of our life. My family never left early, and we never missed. You could count on all the Kramer kids having every single hanging attendance medal they ever made. Regularly, we were the last people out of the place just because my parents liked to stay and talk - and no amount of badgering by six kids would move them out sooner. Mom always sang in the choir - till her disease made it impossible - so we sat with Dad or, if he was ushering, by ourselves. Mom sang at home, too, and played the piano, and we often were greeted with piano music when we came home from school. It was mostly Mom who ensured that every single one of the kids played at least one instrument and sang in the children's choir. For her, singing was praying twice.

She was a team member with my dad, so many of the lessons they taught together. One was to open our house to others. We hosted an exchange student. Another was the value of a well-placed water fight. One day Dad snuck up on Mom while she was doing dishes and unleashed a Super Soaker on her. He didn't count on her using the sink hose to retaliate - the kitchen was a soaking disaster, but the laughter (and the looks of shock on our faces) made for a lesson in how to live a real, wondrous life.

Then Mom taught us that self-reinvention is crucial to life, and when my oldest sister hit high school, Mom began working outside the home. First she worked in a fabric shop, then she went into business as a wallpaper hanger (and interior painter) with a fellow parishioner from our church. They kept this business till my Junior year in high school when Mom fell off a ladder down a flight of stairs and shattered her leg. She was in a cast for more than six months.

That's when reinvention and inspiration took over again. While she was in physical therapy, she felt a calling, and even as she still wore a cast from foot to hip, she registered for classes and traveled an hour-and-a-half away to follow this new dream. She was the oldest member of the class and proud of it. When she graduated, the entire class stood in recognition. She then went on to serve (at the hospital that had cared for her) until her retirement.

When my parents retired, all six kids were long out of the house, all of us employed and some of us married with children of our own. Having successfully launched their brood, my parents did what they had always dreamed of. They traveled.

Through the last twenty-five years of Mom's life - right up to last year - they traveled the world. They actually got to every single continent in the world including Antarctica. They favored cold places, going to Russia twice, sleeping in an ice hotel in Sweden, and following the Iditarod sled race in person, becoming fast friends with some of the mushers who remain in contact to this day. Toward the end, they stayed mostly in the country, but even two years before her death, they snuck

off on a car trip out west, not bothering to tell anyone exactly where they were going. You got used to shrugging your shoulders with my parents.

At Mom's funeral, you could see many of these lessons jump out at us. First was that the six kids loved being together. Though we often don't see each other for a couple of years at a shot (and rarely do all six get together at the same time), when we are together, we are friends who love each other's company. And we still love music. My brother and I were staying at the same hotel, and at breakfast on the morning of the funeral, we starting singing a hymn together ("Let all mortal flesh keep silence" I think). Very low - we thought - so just we could hear. Then we looked up and realized the people at a nearby table were staring, so we stopped. A woman there said, "No, don't stop! We really liked it!" That was Mom.

While this has been extremely hard on my dad who has essentially never lived without Mom, he was surrounded by the same people he and mom had befriended all those years ago. And by younger people - friends of us kids - who without us realizing it had seen our parents as a second mom and dad. One - my brother's best friend who happens to be Jewish - said that his parents marveled that Christian parents would welcome him as a son. To us, it just seemed normal.

So, my brothers and sisters, thank you for indulging me. Thank you for the emails and cards of concern and love. And for your lesson to me. Because while I am around death a lot, it never sank in just how much those expressions of sympathy can mean. But they do, and following your example I hope to be a better supporter of those in grief. After all, as Mom taught us from the beginning, as long as we are in this world, there's always time to reinvent.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

Announcements

Men's Breakfast/CPR Class:

As always, the men's breakfast will be the third Saturday of the month, May 19. Cranberry's, 8:00 AM. See you then!

The next Saturday, May 26 at 10:00 AM, the Men's Group will meet in the Parish Hall for a CPR class. Cost for the class is \$20 per participant. There is a limit of 12 for the class, so sign up soon!

Between Service Classes:

This Sunday, the Between Service Class is taking a break. But stay tuned because May 13, 20, 27 we will have a 3-part series on prayer. Following that, in June, we'll have a series on African Christians who made a difference. Following that is a series on the 7 Deadly Sins which begin in July. Then, come Fall, we are looking at a quick guide to church music - what it is in its various forms, what's different about it from other music, and how to make best use of it.

Sacred Spaces:

This Weekend, May 5 and 6, St. James' will be part of the New York Landmark Conservancy's "Sacred Spaces Open House." Some churches will have a docent to offer guided tours, but others - such as St. James' - will simply keep the doors open and the lights on. We will also provide several booklets with information about the church and self-guided tours. If you are interested in being a docent either day, please feel free to let Fr. Chuck know. Or you can just show up and offer information to people who stop by.

Mothers Day Tea:

The Mother's Day Tea is upon us! On May 12, the Tea will make its annual return, delighting mothers and others who love the high tea scene.

Youth Group:

The Youth Group meets Sunday at 3:00 PM in the Wilks Room. We'll hang out and play a few games. Bring a friend!

Continuing Inquirers:

The Continuing Inquirers class had to be postponed last week due to my need to be away. We have rescheduled for Wednesday, May 16, 7:00 PM in the Wilks Room. If you'd like to learn more, please join us! This month's topic: The Creeds.

A PLEDGE PLEA:

If you have not pledged yet, please do so. Letters will go out next week from the Vestry to remind you about your pledge. Please help!

Diocesan Festival Choir

There will be a rehearsal for the Diocesan Festival Choir on Saturday, May 12, from 12 noon to 2 p.m. at the Church of the Intercession, Broadway at 155th Street. For more information, please contact Bill Randolph brmusicintercession@gmail.com.



A Liturgy of Lamentation

A Liturgy to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the ongoing work of repentance, reparation, and reconciliation to which Christ calls us all.

Performances by Alicia Waller, Theresa Thomason, Paul Winter, Reggie Wilson, Tonika Custalow, and William Randolph
Speakers: *The Rev. Canon Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas; The Rt. Rev. Andrew Dietsche, a member of the diocesan youth, and 'Richard Jenkins' (former slave)*

May 17, 7:00 PM
Cathedral of St. John the Divine

*For information:
Email: diocesanrepcommittee@gmail.com
Facebook: @Ednyreparationscommittee*

On Thursday, May 17, the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s visit to the Cathedral, the Diocese of New York offers a special liturgy as a part of their Year of Lamentation, the first stage of a three-year period of study, observation, and work to understand and address the diocese's past role in the slavery era and the ongoing injustice associated with it today.

Performers include

- Paul Winter (world famous soprano saxophonist and founder of the Paul Winter consort)
- Alicia Waller (renowned classical soprano and cultural connector)
- Theresa Thomason (International Gospel, jazz and cultural singer)
- Reggie Wilson (Choreographer, Fist and Heel Performance Group)
- Tonika Custalow
- Vissi Dance Theatre
- The Diocesan Festival Choir, William E. Randolph and acclaimed singer and director Jeannine Otis.

Speakers include

- The Very Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas (Dean of Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary, Professor of Theology at Union and Canon Theologian at Washington National Cathedral)
- The Rt. Rev. Andrew ML Dietsche (Bishop of New York)
- **“Richard Jenkins”** (a formerly enslaved 18th Century Episcopalian who helped build and then served as sexton for **St. James’, Hyde Park**, played by actor Brockton Pierce)

NOTE - OUR OWN RICHARD JENKINS!

May 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 10 AM Morning Prayer	3 11 AM Bible Study	4	5 Sacred Spaces Open Church
6 Unction	7 Office Closed 7:30 PM Choir Practice	8	9 10 AM Morning Prayer	10 ASCENSION DAY 11 AM Bible Study	11	12 Mothers Day Tea
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.dioceseny.org/administration/for-clergy/liturgical-and-sacramental/diocesan-calendar-of-intercession/>

- 6 All Angels' Church, Manhattan
- 7 Christ Church, Bronxville
- 8 Christ's Church, Rye
- 9 Rural & Migrant Ministry
- 10 Church of the Ascension, Manhattan
- 11 Church of the Ascension, Staten Island
- 12 Postulants and Candidates for the Vocational Diaconate

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

John Bohlmann, Helen Braun, Mariel Carter, Joann Clark (recovery from surgery), 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, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, 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, 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): Kathryn Clark

Birthdays
(this coming week): Erika Seagren and Rebecca Gausepohl

Acolytes:
May 6: Deirdre Mae Micker and Bill Fenwick
May 13: Kirstin Horn and Amelia McNamara

Altar Guild:	May 6: Team II May 13: Team II
8 a.m. Readers:	May 6: Julett Butler and Sue DeLorenzo May 13: Lucille Ogden and Jim Smyth
10 a.m. Readers:	May 6: Wilma Tully and Maggie McNamara May 13: Patty Caswell and Justin Bohlmann
Ushers:	May 6: Maggie and Tom McNamara May 13: Dean Caswell and Audrey Horne
Pledge Clerks:	May 6: Joanne Lown and Sue DeLorenzo May 13: Doug Belding and Judy Douglass
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	May 6: Sally Pardee, Lillian Peralta and Anna Marie Pitcher May 13: Brian and Scarlett O'Leary, Brian O'Leary, Jr. and Tara O'Leary
Coffee Hour Hosts:	May 6: Audrey Horne, Eric Zavadil May 13: Jodi Triola and Mike Fenwick

This Week's Lectionary

Acts 10:44-48
Psalm 98
1 John 5:1-6
John 15:9-17

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 199 - Come Ye Faithful
Sequence: 662 - Abide With Me
Offertory: "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"
Communion: 304 - I Come With Joy
Recessional: 213 - Come Away To The Skies

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Fifth Sunday of Easter (April 29, 2018)

Preached by Julett Butler

Opening Prayer: May the words of my mouth and meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord our help and our Redeemer. Amen.

I have known for a while that I would be preaching today. So, my deeply introspective mind says....start by finding the Lectionary readings, thinking about a common theme, find a word or phrase that speaks to you, make notes....read the passages daily... and jot down thoughts. And most of all pray and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.

As I prepared this sermon I read all the lessons assigned for today. I was struck by the interaction between Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts. Here we have a follower of man Jesus and a court official who works for the queen of the Ethiopians. Two different cultures and two different social standings. I cannot think of an issue that would be common to both men. There was no mention of other folks traveling on the road. By the way...What was Phillip doing in the wilderness? What was his mission? I asked myself Who dares to get into someone's car? Or better yet...would you let someone or invite a stranger into your car to give you directions? I certainly would not. I would stay securely in my car and speak with them through a crack in the car window. We have the Siri and GPS so there is no need really to ask for directions. After 9/11 most of us are in on alert.... Always mindful that something serious could happen? Safety first... DON'T PICK UP HITCH HIKERS! If you see something....say something.....

I have been through a desert in Israel, and I would guess the wilderness looks similar. It is open space with dusty roads, hills, maybe some wild goats roaming. It is hot and occasional pools of water called Wadi (which forms after a heavy rain). Back then we know there were no highways of paved roads like it is today. There were no bus stops with people waiting. Official people travelled by chariot like this eunuch, some by donkey, horse back and others had to walk.

Phillip was NOT alone – he was tuned into the Spirit. ...and ‘An angel of the Lord spoke to him’. This is always comforting to know that I, ... and we ARE never alone. Jesus was not physically present with Phillip, yet an angel of the Lord was present. I believe that angels are present with us today also. Some we can see and touch and others not so much. We can feel the presence of the Holy Spirit that cannot be explained in words. We just feel something deep within our being.

Another thing that amazed me was that Phillip did not question his directive....the Spirit told him specifically what he needed to do”GO over to this chariot and join it’. Not any chariot but this one....the one with the Ethiopian eunuch in it. The order was clear and specific. Phillip did not discuss with the Angel his concerns or thoughts about following through.. He just did what he was told. I on the other hand would need time to think about the directions.... Over time I have seen and experienced that when the Spirit calls and directs us we don't have to work through the ‘what if's; wonder about the decision or request time to figure what are to do or where we are to go.

The scriptures are filled with God calling and directing his people and people like you and me to GO and be about God's business. Do you remember Abram and Sarai...they were told to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to “the land I will show you.” Jonah was called, ‘he got up and went’ his way... the other way... and God had to rescue him from the belly of a fish. Who can forget St. Paul...he had a ‘run-in’ with the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus and was told to “get up and go” to the street called Straight.

I know I am more like Jonah. I like time to think through things and work it all out in my head try it my way... then...try the other option. I have many 'do it my way' only to be frustrated and wasted valuable time. I have come many times to the place where I have surrendered to the leading of the Spirit through the guidance of others in my life. For years, I memorized the short version of the Serenity Prayer that reads:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
the Courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.

This prayer has helped me to slow down and not be so focused on what I want but what and where the Spirit is leading or saying. I am not in charge and all I need to do is be still and listen. I am working on accepting the 'Now Go' directions without hesitation or fear.

Last July, I was on my way to work. It was pouring rain when I parked my car in the lot. MY plan was to get to work early to catch up on my paperwork. I was NOT going to let anything distract me. As I began to walk to the roadway I saw a pair of feet sticking out from behind some bushes. My first thought was....this can't be real...why would someone be lying face down in the rain? I looked around and there was not one car or a person I could call out to. My thought was to let someone else deal with this person. My heart began to race as I inched closer. It was then I realized that this person must be dead. I had to do something. I pulled out my cell phone and called 911. I wanted no part of this incident because I had to get to work and I told the 911 operator that. She told me to wait for the emergency team to arrive. As I stood in the rain I heard a voice within me say....you know who it is. Of course, I was afraid and refused to look at the face of this person. Now, I could not just walk away and pretend like it was it not my business. I had to do whatever I could to help...I had to 'go over' in the pouring rain. I thought . . Was the death from a drug overdose? I had to be obedient...this was not the time to cut and run. I quietly asked God to help me. My assignment that morning was to be loving in death to this person. I found out later that I worked with this young man for almost a year. I shudder to think what would have happened if I refused to listen and walked on leaving the body under the bushes.

The Ethiopian eunuch was also not alone. Sure, his security detail was there. Most important I believe that the presence of the Holy Spirit was with him as he was reading from the prophet Isaiah. According to the reading in Acts, 'he had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home'. He was probably on a 'spiritual high' after this spiritual retreat. I can identify with that. Then again, I wonder if the eunuch had any idea who he was inviting into his chariot. He invited a hitch-hiker to help him gain some understanding into what he was reading. He trusted that Phillip could explain what he was reading. The need for understanding the scripture outweighed the thought about safety.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit Philip became the teacher in the moment.... and he was obedient, 'he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.' He asked questions, and was open to answers. The eunuch was seeking the love that knows no bounds, no fear...he wanted to know about Jesus and made himself vulnerable. He wanted more from his visit to Jerusalem he wanted to deepen his faith.

The eunuch wanted to solidify what he learned on his spiritual retreat about being changed. The next logical step for him was baptism. He said, 'Look here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?' He went seeking and found the Good news in the scriptures and was ready to be washed in the life-giving water and thereby received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The scripture says, 'Philip baptized him, and when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away.' The eunuch was not given a chance to pay Phillip for his kindness because that is not what the encounter was about. It was all about the Love of God which is freely given and must be freely received.

Philip's assignment was complete. The eunuch of course was thrilled and like you and I he felt something that he could not explain. The scriptures said, "he went on his way rejoicing." Probably he was singing, excited about sharing the experience with anyone who would listen and making plans to return to Jerusalem for the next retreat. Here are some questions we might ask ourselves –

What am I/we avoiding? Am I stifling the Spirit within me because we need time? Do I want more clarification to get going? Am I worthy or unworthy? Are others are better suited for this task? Am I playing a deaf because I have my own agenda? Do I get bogged down in the minutiae before I act on the Spirit's call?

Honestly, I am not always that quick to go where the Spirit leads. I still hesitate and frequently take the Jonah route!

My prayer though, is that God will help me and help you quiet the noise in heads and hearts so we will be obedient to Spirit and 'go where we are sent'.

Amen and 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.