

St. James' E-pistle

Date of Sunday Service: August 18, 2019

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Pulpit Notes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This week — August 13 to be precise — was the 58th anniversary of the Berlin Wall. That is, 58 years ago this week, Berliners woke up to find a wall — at the time largely barbed wire but also a substantial stone block section — had sprung up over night. It was so sudden that many families were caught on opposite sides of the wall and unable to re-unite.

One of the most moving pictures of that day is of an East German soldier letting a small child through the mess of barbed wire and stone so he could be reunited with his mother. The soldier was under strict orders to allow nobody to cross, but he took pity on the child and helped him over. The soldier was then arrested by his superiors and, as far as I've been able to determine, nobody knows what happened to him.

Another series of photos from that time was of an East German soldier checking in all directions before tossing his rifle and jumping over the barbed wire to the west.

I remember as a teenaged exchange student in West Berlin peering over that wall almost on a daily basis, looking at the guards in their towers who always photographed me and my friends. The wall was up for only 28 years — it's been down longer than it was up — yet it carved a deep scar in the landscape and in the souls of most Germans. It will take generations for the country to fully heal from that wound.

On that same day, I received a notice from the Presiding Bishop's office asking all churches around the country to join an effort of the National Park Service in commemorating the 400th anniversary of the beginning of African slavery in this land. The Park Service is hoping to have bells toll for one minute at 3:00 PM on August 25, the very day 400 years ago with the first enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia.

I do hope that St. James' will participate in this effort — I'm looking for a volunteer to ring the bell at the chapel and for someone else to toll the bell (electronic) here at the church. Other churches of all denominations are also being asked to participate.

The fact that these two things happened on the same day reminded me that they are connected. Each in its way dehumanized a segment of the human family. Each separated people and took away a level of freedom. Each has left deep and lasting scars. But if 28 years of a wall (and another fifteen years of separation before that) were bad, how much deeper are the scars of more than 250 years of slavery, followed by another hundred years of legal, official segregation and discrimination, followed by still other less formal forms of discrimination? If it will take generations to heal the rifts in Germany, how much longer will it take us?

4526 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park NY 12538 T 845-229-2820 F 845-229-5293

W www.stjameshydepark.org E stjamesoffice@stjameshydepark.org

f at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/22692330307>

I mention this because we are an impatient people. I hear people on all sides of the conversation complain that we should have finished with racism in our land. Those who do not wish to deal with it at all say, “That’s the past; why bring it up? I didn’t own slaves.” Those who want racism to end immediately express frustration that we haven’t repaired the damage yet.

I wish it could be repaired right away, but I don’t think it can. The systems put in place over hundreds of years to ensure separation of different groups of people, to ensure that one group would rule the coop while others would sink in descending order of influence, do not disappear overnight. It is simply impossible to heal the wounds and erase the scars of that wicked period in our lives. It’s too complicated and too recent.

BUT — and this is crucial — that doesn’t mean we don’t do the work. When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sat in his jail cell addressing segregation, he mentioned those sympathetic to desegregation who nevertheless urged him to slow down, to not demand so much, to be patient and wait. He rightly questioned their sincerity and said, in essence, “If not now, when? How long shall we wait and do nothing?”

I fully believe that it will take several more generations for all the wounds to heal, and for the long, cruel effects of the slavery era to be mitigated. At the same time, I fully believe that there’s no time like the present to pick up the work that others have been laboring on for generations and carry on. Right now.

The image I’ve been using to understand our present situation is that of a giant ball of tangled earbuds and charging cables. You’ve seen how just one pair can get so tangled up that it’s nearly impossible to untangle. Now imagine a million pairs all interwoven into a massive ball. That is our racial situation today. People live in areas they were forced to live in a hundred years ago. Housing areas are still segregated. Schools are more segregated today than they were fifty years ago. Police relations within black communities are ever more fraught.

We are called upon to stand up and begin untangling that ball of fear, hate, contempt, and confusion. We ought to know by now that there is no way we will see the project through to the end — not we ourselves. That will come to fruition after many of us have left this earth. But that doesn’t mean we aren’t called to work on it, to work for more just laws, to work for greater equity, to work for better housing rules and police relations right now.

And we can start by ringing our bells. So who’s got some time on August 25? Chapel and Church. Let me know! Because while ringing bells will not in and of itself erase those horrible scars, it is a declaration that we see those scars and are willing and ready to apply balm.

Grace and Peace,

Chuck +

Thought for your week:

“There is no such thing as defective love, or deficient love, or partial love. Love like sensitivity either is in all its fullness or it simply is not. You either have it whole or you have it not.”

— Anthony de Mello, *The Way to Love*

Worship This Week:

| | | |
|-----------|---------|--|
| Tuesday | 6:30 PM | Evening Prayer (at the Chapel) |
| Wednesday | 10 AM | Morning Prayer (Wilks Room) Bible Study (Resumes September 5) |
| Sunday | 8 AM | Eucharist Rite I |
| | 10 AM | Eucharist Rite II |

If you have anything to add to the E-pistle, please contact either Fr. Chuck, Dyan in the Parish Office, or Brian Rance. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday evening. Thanks!

Announcements

THANK YOU From Outreach!

A huge THANK YOU goes out to each of you who made a donation (cash and/or kit) towards the Rural and Migrant Ministry's Camper School Supply Kit Project. On Monday, through your generosity, we were able to deliver thirty-five school supply kits to the RMM office. Your donation makes a difference in a young person's life. On behalf of each camper who will benefit from receiving a kit, THANK YOU!!!!

Peace,

Deacon Gail on behalf of the Outreach Committee

Between Service Class to Resume. Next Series: "Who Needs Creeds?"

Several folks have asked when the between service classes will resume. Well, here they are! Starting **September 15 at 9:15 AM in the Wilks Room**, we will have a series called **"Who Needs Creeds?"** Designed to address if not necessarily answer questions about whether the Creeds are necessary, this series will give some history and theology but leave plenty of room for open and frank discussion. What does it mean to say you believe something? Is it necessary to state it in public? What if you're not sure what you believe? If you have ever asked any of these questions (or are asking them now), this series is for you.

Acolyte Training:

I'm pleased to announce that several folks have expressed interest in learning more about becoming an acolyte! Training will be **Sunday, September 1, after the 10:00 AM service**. If you can't make either of these sessions but want to acolyte, let Fr. Chuck know, and we'll set up an alternate training session.

NO Men's Breakfast

There will be no Men's Breakfast this month.

Reading Adventures Gearing Up:

Believe it or not, it's almost Back To School time. And with that comes Reading Adventures! We will re-start the program in October, but we want to line up our volunteers as soon as possible. If you would like to be a volunteer this year, please contact Fr. Chuck at your earliest convenience. It's one of the most effective and rewarding programs you can be part of, and it only takes an hour a week.

RISE FOR REFUGE

In the narthex of the church you may have noticed a small sign **Rise for Refuge** reminding us as followers of Jesus Christ that we are a nation of refuge and not rejection. Welcoming the stranger in our midst goes back to the time of Abraham. Welcoming the stranger has deep roots in our faith.

Two or three weeks ago I was on my computer when I received three e-mails within thirty minutes of each other alerting me and others about an article published by Politico Pro revealing that the current administration is pressing to zero out refugee resettlement for 2020.

The alerts came from Church World Service, Refugee Point (based in Cambridge, MA) and Episcopal Migration Ministry all involved in refugee resettlement.

As some of you know, my daughter, Doreen, worked for over twelve years first with Church World Service and then with Refugee Point in refugee resettlement and knows first hand the challenges our refugee neighbors face every day. Doreen was based first in Nairobi, Kenya, then in Mozambique with her final two years in resettlement work in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her responsibilities took her to many refugee camps throughout eastern Africa. She will attest from first hand experience that the resettlement process is arduous and the vetting process can take up to three years before a person can enter our country as a refugee.

If this ban goes into affect, it will not only impact refugees seeking resettlement, it will impact refugees currently in the vetting process and will also impact families trying to reunite with one another.

Episcopal Migration Ministries, a ministry of the Episcopal Church is one of nine agencies responsible for resettling refugees in partnership with our government. As the Rev. Canon C. K. Robertson, Canon to the Presiding Bishop for Ministry Beyond the Episcopal Church, stated, "We walk the way of love when we embrace the stranger and love our neighbor. Indeed, we believe that in welcoming the stranger, we are welcoming Jesus."

Over the past two years the current Administration has been reducing the number of refugees allowed into our country. In 2018, 22,000 refugees were resettled. So far in 2019, only 5,000 refugees have been resettled and at this rate, the target number of 30,000 for this year will not be met. By the way, 30,000 is the lowest number ever set by a President.

If this ban goes into effect, the US Refugee Resettlement program will collapse along with the humanitarian protection our country has built up over many decades amid the worst world-wide refugee crisis in history.

So what can we do. We need to **RISE FOR REFUGE** by contacting Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand and our Representative urging them to do everything in their power to end the Administration's attacks on refugees and to provide oversight on the US Refugee Admissions Program. Refugees are not a threat to our communities. Refugees are neighbors who need our welcoming arms so that they can begin to rebuild their lives.

Please prayerfully consider taking action by contacting members of Congress. Thank you.
 Peace, Deacon Gail

| August 2019 | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| 18 Guest Celebrant: The Rev. Susan Auchincloss | 19 Office Closed | 20 6:30 Evening Prayer | 21 NO Morning Prayer | 22 NO BIBLE STUDY | 23 FREE PRAYER FRIDAY | 24 |
| 25 Guest Celebrant: The Rev. Kevin Bean | 26 | 27 6:30 Evening Prayer | 28 NO Morning Prayer | 29 NO BIBLE STUDY | 30 | 31 |
| 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. | | | | | | |

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/>

- 18 Pilgrims with Bishop Dietsche to the Holy Land
- 19 Grace Church, La Gracia, White Plains
- 20 Christ Church, Bronxville

- 21 National Association for Episcopal Schools
- 22 The Canon for Transition Ministry
- 23 Interim Pastors and Search Committees of the Diocese
- 24 St. Bartholomew's Church, White Plains

Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ashley, Joe Baldwin, John Bohlmann, Justin Bohlmann, Fr. Fred Cartier, Patty Caswell, Loretta Falzarano (sister of Donna Beyer), Heather Francese, Karla Givison (Deb Belding's sister), John and Gloria Golden, Kathy Graff, Robert Guariglia, Clifford Hallmark (father of Alyssa Raugalis), Dalton K., Edith Kline, Lynne Koch, Walter Koch, Ashley Konyn, Hope Jennings, Rosemary Leuken, Lorraine, Joanne Lynn, Jim Lynn (Carol Bender's brother - facing surgery), Doris Mack, Margaret, Andrew Mendelson, Beth and Ginero Milano, Lillian Peralta, Grace Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Rob Robinson, Jason Rodino (serving in Afghanistan), 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): Gordon Mackenzie, Jim Matranga, Suzann Kinne and G. Angela Henry
- Birthdays
(this coming week): Vince Asher, Amelia McNamara, Shirley Ferris, Liz Granados, Scott Pitcher and Jeffrey E. Pardee
- Acolytes:
August 18: Jaylen Thatcher
August 25: Nancy Montero
- Altar Guild:
August 18: Team II
August 25: Team III
- 8 a.m. Readers: August 18: Shannon Butler and Sue DeLorenzo
August 25: Lucille Ogden and Jim Smyth
- 10 a.m. Readers: August 18: Patty Caswell and Mike Fenwick
August 25: Eric Zavadil and Nancy Montero
- Ushers: August 18: Dean Caswell and Audrey Horne
August 25: Nancy Montero and Anna-Marie Pitcher
- Pledge Clerks: August 18: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher

August 25: Andy Hall and Dean Caswell
Parish Cycle of Prayer: August 18: Carol Vinall, Dick Wager, Laura Walsh, Dyan Wapnick
August 25: Dave and Chris Wardell, Pat Weber, Cliff and Bobbie Wells
Coffee Hour Hosts: August 18: Summer Break--No Coffee Hour
August 25: Summer Break--No Coffee Hour

This Week's Lectionary

Isaiah 5:1-7
Psalm 80:1-2, 8-18
Hebrews 11:29-12:2
Luke 12:49-56

This Week's Hymns

Processional: 546 - Awake My Soul, Stretch Every Nerve
Sequence: 661 - They Cast Their Nets in Galilee
Offertory: 574 - Before Thy Throne, O God, We Kneel
Communion: TAIZÉ 47 - In the Lord, I'll Be Ever Thankful
Recessional: 596 - Judge Eternal, Throned In Splendor

Last Week's Sermon

Sermon Preached on Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

"The Priorities of Faith"

There's a movie I like, that I'm sure I've mentioned before, and that I know some of you have seen. It's called "The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society." I hadn't given it much thought in quite awhile, but yesterday I had an unaccountable desire to watch it.

And as I watched, however, I realized it was because of today's sermon.

If you *don't* know the movie, I'll give a thumbnail sketch: It's about the British Island of Guernsey that was invaded and occupied by the Nazis during World War II. Mostly, it takes place after the war as a writer from London tries to piece together what happened to one of Guernsey's residents who had been arrested by the Nazis and sent to a concentration camp.

Right now you're thinking, "Yes, but what does this have to do with Jesus saying, 'Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.?'?" I'm getting there.

At the heart of the movie is a book club the residents were forced to invent in order to avoid getting in trouble by the occupying Nazis for breaking curfew. Once they made it up, they were forced to actually meet weekly — and it saved their lives. Each time they got together, diving together into a different world, they were given life in the midst of a horrendous, painful, hungry, daily existence. Not only did they escape into the world of whatever author they were reading, but they held each other up and formed life-changing bonds that lasted well after the war.

What they learned in their literary society is what the church at its best — and maybe all religions at their best — have been saying all along. Tending the soul, tending the relationship with God, leads to a healthier relationship with each other.

Jesus said, "Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys." Contrary to what many claim, Jesus isn't telling his disciples to just ignore the present world's suffering because they'll get it all paid back in heaven. Throughout the gospels, Jesus admonishes them to care for others in a very real, very physical way.

No, what Jesus is saying here is that building that relationship with God, tending the soul, is the KEY to living in peace and joy and kindness and compassion with your neighbors (and remember, everyone is your neighbor).

We live in a physical world, sometimes a harsh and dangerous world, but diving into the world of heaven, into the mind of God — that fills our hearts and our own minds so that we can live in this physical world more fully. Diving into the divine *together*, right here, right now — *that* allows us to support each other both as we explore the divine *and* work in the world of work and school and sickness, and mass shootings and racism and xenophobia and so on.

Another movie I saw this week — you're not going to believe this — was "Dora the Explorer" about a teenage girl who grew up in the jungle with her scientist parents but isolated from other kids. When she's thrown into a situation where she has to help a group of kids her age get through an adventure, she says, "Making it alone is easy, but people are hard." Yet, at the end of the adventure, she chooses to stay with the people because there was something in those relationships that she just couldn't get alone. We explore the divine best together.

So the priorities of faith are two-fold. One is to grow in the divine. To dive into that other world of God through reading (again, that's why we have bible study, folks), through prayer, and through our worship at church — kind of like our own Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society.

We support each other so we can work on the second priority of faith which is to go out into the world and care for each other, to make God's love present in the world. With ears to listen to those who need to talk, with eyes to see those things that need to change but also the beauty in the people around us, with hands to hold — whether it's another hand or a hammer to build houses. With feet to walk with each other.

The priorities of faith are to love God and to love each other — with heart, with mind, with soul and with our bodies. Our priorities are NOT, as Mark Twain said, to be so heavenly minded that

we're no earthly good. Our priorities are to be so steeped in the mind of God that we can live lovingly, peacefully, harmoniously IN the world.

Theologian Wayne Teasdale wrote, "By allowing inward change, while at the same time simplifying our external life, spirituality serves as our greatest single resource for changing our centuries-old trajectory of violence and division." He talks about simplifying our external life because the more we chase after stuff and power, the more we separate ourselves from God and each other. Or as Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

My point today is simple. We live in a physical world. But we are connected to the divine. Without that connection, the physical world will eat us up. Even those who say they don't believe in God know it instinctively. They create their own form of the divine to look to, their own form of church to belong to in order to get by. Or else, like all who separate themselves from the divine, they shrivel up inside.

At this point, I have to throw you a curveball. More times than I can count, I've heard people say that all the problems of the world are because of religion. Religions started the crusades. Religions start all the wars. Religions only exist to control and exploit everyone else.

That's not religion. That's the lust for power and control. And certainly, this lust does exist within most religions. Just as it infects most business and most politics and most societal organizations. It's not religion that does this — rather, it is separating oneself from the world of God in favor of the world of power.

Because our God has said over and over that God has no desire of sacrifices or power over others — but as Isaiah said, to "seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."

There are those who use the name of religion to fleece the unsuspecting, to get rich, to control the lives of others, but they are not of God. The priorities of faith are always to unite God and creation in love.

So let yourself sink into the arms of God's embrace. Take time to be alone with God and in community with God — let us be our own Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society for the sake of our souls and for the world.

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 VALUATION 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?