



# LOGOS

The Newsletter for St. John's Episcopal Church, Arlington

*"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it." John 1:5*

## **From the Rector: Setting Priorities**

I am really very proud of myself. I have four documents sitting in my email box with attachments that need to be downloaded. I have passed them by countless times because they are not time sensitive. They can be handled whenever I choose. I have had other priorities since they arrived, and I have not given in to their enticing invitation. Email can be very demanding. It says, "Answer me now. Respond quickly to my message." Time management experts say you should not check your email box more than once or twice a day, rather than every time your computer or Blackberry beeps with a message. This is practical for some, but not for others I realize.

On the other hand, email and the Internet are very important parts of my job. I do a great deal of communicating online. This morning I came in and the Internet had the dreaded "error" message about not being able to connect for some unidentifiable reason. My first priority for the morning suddenly became getting the Internet up and running. Hoping I would not have to call technical support and try to solve the problem over the telephone, I took Virginia's instructions for handling this problem, called a parishioner for help finding the various devices and turned things off and then back on again. Thankfully, I was back in business before my 10:00 appointment.

Sometimes we get to set our own priorities and sometimes circumstances set them for us. There is a bumper sticker that says "Life is what happens when you make other plans." There is also a television commercial for some sort of medication that has a germ knocking on doors and asking people if it is a convenient time for them to have the flu or whatever illness is being treated. Of course illness does not work that way and it can change our priorities slightly or drastically. Our children are home sick from school and we need to take off work to be with them or rearrange whatever plans we have for the day. Other far more serious diagnoses can turn our lives upside down for months or even years at a time, as we struggle with an illness or care for a loved one who is ill or injured.

When natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina hit, mere survival can become a priority for people who just a day ago were experiencing rich, full lives.

Sometimes our priorities are changed by good things too. Good friends come into town unexpectedly, and we change our plans to accommodate them. We win the lottery and suddenly have the freedom to quit our jobs, buy ourselves upscale houses, give money away or help others. We get a sudden offer to go to the beach with a friend and we take them up on it. There are all kinds of arrangements that have to be made for those kinds of surprises.

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St. John's Episcopal Church, Arlington • The Rev. Ann Barker, Rector • September 2009  
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Having priorities set for us or being invited to set other priorities can be uncomfortable. We are more comfortable setting our own priorities without interference. Our routine is undisturbed, everything moves relatively smoothly. Smoothly that is, unless we are trying to set new priorities in a part of our lives that has been the same for years and years. Experts say it takes a person 21 days to get a new habit in place. To begin exercising and staying in shape, for example, is a tough one. We may have to get up earlier, eat less, give up other activities. Our old habits of couch-potato-ism and desert after lunch and dinner may have to change. And getting fit is not just a one-time thing and then it is over. Staying in shape is a priority we have to put in our life plan for a lifetime. It is so enticing to go back to the old habits. The TV shows are funny and the brownies are so good. Smoking is a notoriously difficult habit to change when we set a priority to be healthy.

When we get the chance to set our own priorities, it is important that we balance all our needs to live a healthy and productive life. We do need money to live, whether it comes from working or from retirement accounts, so that is a priority, but we don't just need any work. If we are in a position to choose, our priority is fulfilling work, work that gives us satisfaction but does not require that we become workaholics. We need time to play too. Whether it is soccer, reading, sewing, running or working in the yard, it is critical that leisure time is one of our priorities.

We need to have a priority in our lives that allows us to serve others. Volunteer activities, caring for friends and relatives, taking care of our pets and of our earth are all ways in which we can open our hearts and give. Service never fails to provide as much to us as we give to it and usually more.

We need time to dream and plan and envision, time to rest and meditate or just lie on our backs and look at the clouds in the sky. Empty space leaves time for things to grow.

Another priority we need to make sure gets enough attention is our spiritual lives. For a Christian, that is the most important priority we can set. There has to be meaning in all of the other priorities we juggle and balance. We need to set all of our activities against the backdrop of loving God, neighbor and self. We need to be prioritizing as Christians in our daily lives. We

need to be saying our prayers, listening for God's voice and taking care of ourselves and others.

We also need to be thinking about our Sunday lives. Many of us take vacations in the summer. With four young children and no Sunday school, my parents were not in the pews on summer Sundays, but we returned when school started. Our commitment to church attendance is important. We gather in community for worship, fellowship and education to enhance our relationships with God and one another.

This September, as another summer comes to an end and you begin to schedule priorities for the fall, remember that all we do has meaning for us because of God's gift of love in Jesus Christ our Lord. Learn more about what God has done for us and how we can do God's work. I look forward to seeing everyone again this fall.

Ann†

### **September: A Time of New Beginnings**

We frequently think of spring as the time for new beginnings each year, with the new growth following winter. September is also a time of new beginnings as summer ends, school resumes for students, and we pick up activities suspended during the summer's heat. St. John's is no exception. Remember that this month:

- St. John's book club resumes September 1. There is still time before then to read *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks and come to the discussion. Bring your suggestions for books for the coming months, since selecting new books is on the September agenda as well.
- September 3 at 10:00 in the morning the Morning Guild resumes its monthly meetings. The women of the Morning Guild welcome newcomers.
- September 3 at 7:30 in the evening the choir re-convenes for the fall. New singers are always welcome, but why not get started at the beginning of the year? A steady voice and willingness are the most important qualifications.

## Christian Formation Resumes September 13

Our Christian formation year for adults and young people begins September 13.

**Youth Education.** Our youth will continue their work with the fair trade coffee ministry and making cookies for the bagged lunch program. They will also continue to offer hospitality once a month. There are plans in the works for singing camp songs from Shrine Mont, putting on skits, writing for the LOGOS, learning about what Jesus was like as a man and, of course, our annual Christmas pageant.

**Adult Formation.** On Sunday mornings at 9:00, our adults will begin with a six-week session on saints led by Lorraine Underwood. Topics include the origin of saints, how one becomes a saint and how we are saints. Lorraine will also introduce us to some important people in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, which includes saints and people the Episcopal Church recognizes as particularly gifted servants of God. Join us for this interesting and informative series.

Ann Barker is planning a series on Celtic Christianity, including its history, development, prayer, music and other expressions of its particular slant on the faith.

Our Bible study on the book of James continues through September on Monday afternoons from 1:30 – 2:30.

Education for Ministry (EFM) resumes on Sunday evenings, mentored by Prof. Pat Bleicher. Pat begins her 30<sup>th</sup> year as an EFM mentor, and she has been at St. John's more than 10 years. EFM was created by the School of Theology of the University of the South to teach the core curriculum of the seminary to laypersons. It helps people explore their faith, ask hard questions and discover their ministries. This course meets from 6:00 to 9:00 Sunday evenings and you have to be registered. Contact Pat for more information at 703-532-9156.

## Peter Swarr Called to Rector Position in Massachusetts

St. John's former seminarian Peter Swarr (2004-2006) has been called as rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts. His first Sunday at St. Mark's will be September 6. Peter and Angela's new address is 14 Melody Lane, East Longmeadow, MA 01028. Congratulations, Peter!

## Tee With the Bishop

The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Tee With the Bishop Golf Tournament to raise funds for Shrine Mont will be held September 13 and 14. The action begins with a Sunday afternoon check-in at Shrine Mont, followed by nine holes of golf at Bryce, and a 6:30 p.m. cookout. After breakfast on Monday the golf tournament begins at 8:00 a.m. and the event concludes with the awards dinner at 1:00 p.m.

Cost is \$175 per person for golfers, \$75 per person for non-golfers, and includes one overnight and meals. Sign up forms are in the undercroft—but don't delay—space is limited.

## Unwind With Wednesday Candlelight Prayer

"Pause, Reflect and Give Thanks"—This is what the Wednesday Evening 7:30-8:30 Candlelight Service is all about. We are all so busy that we forget how important reflection can be to our well-being.

Candlelight gives you the opportunity to hear and meditate on the coming Sunday's Gospel. It provides the chance to examine your day—or your week—and to give thanks and reflect on what you could be doing better. It is the chance to spend some quiet time in meditation and prayer together. Parents share child-care duties: One parent gets a quiet night out; the other gets the kiddies. Come join us.

## LOGOS

The LOGOS is published nine times a year in February, March, April, May, July, September, October, November, and December near the beginning of the month.

Dave Dunlap, LOGOS Editor

Jane Edwards, LOGOS Editor and Page Layout

Email Dave at [dave\\_dunlap@yahoo.com](mailto:dave_dunlap@yahoo.com) (preferred) or leave info in newsletter box in the office.

*The next deadline is Friday, September 18 at 10:00 am.*

## Shrine Mont Summer Camp Reports

Three of our young people went to Shrine Mont camps this summer. We got reports from two of them on their experiences. The summary: They loved it—here are their more detailed reports on their camp experiences.

### Maddie Harbin reports

I attended Explorers camp. This was my first year at Shrine Mont and I was very satisfied. I am definitely going to go to this camp next year! We did some canoeing at the little pond by the hotel. One day we canoed at a lake called Lake Laura and that was so much fun. On top of that, we got to swim in Lake Laura, too. I was at camp from July 8 -15. We had Chaplain's Time in the morning and Chapel after diner every day. On Sunday we had All Camp Chapel in the Shrine. For those who have never been to Shrine Mont, the Cathedral Shrine is a stone chapel and the stones come from the Mountain so it's very, very, very beautiful.

Every afternoon, before diner, we went to the pool. The only days we did not swim in the pool were when we hiked to Seven Springs and also up North Mountain. When we hiked to Seven Springs we had these big packs on are backs and it started to rain like crazy! But when we got to the place we were camping out it stopped raining. After we set up our camp we put on our bathing suits and went to the spring. There was a Polar Bear Club because the water was so cold and Paul, Tar, Renie, and I all passed! On the second to last day we hiked up a mountain called North Mountain. We had lunch in a cave and sat on a rock for an hour. The view was awesome. I had a great time at Shrine Mont and can't wait to do it again next year.



### Galen Henderson reports

I went to Explorer's Camp at Shrine Mont on July 8-15. It was a wonderful experience for me because it was my first sleep away camp. We had four cabins—two for the boys and two for the girls. They were cute little cabins that fit ten people, including the counselors. We did everything! We went to the pool everyday, except when we went hiking, camping or canoeing. Canoeing was really fun, even though we only got to go twice. The first time (to practice) we canoed on a pond and it was great! The second time we went on a lake (Lake Laura). We canoed out a ways, then we stopped and swam in the lake. It was so much fun!

One of the best parts was the food! It was amazingly fabulous! Spaghetti, mac and cheese, meat loaf, and the best chicken fingers in the world! I had thirteen, more than anyone else.

We also went camping at Seven Springs. Seven Springs was fun. When we got to the specific spring, everyone jumped in. All of the counselors kept saying that it's going to be like a hot tub. But, as you can imagine, it was like ice...no kidding! Even when the counselor jumped in, teeth chattering and shivering, she said "Oh, it's like a hot tub!"

But my super favorite part was the view from North Mountain. It was hard hiking up, but the halfway point where we had lunch was really was cool. It was a cave that was about twenty-one feet high. By the time we got up to the top, we climbed a giant rock. The view was amazing—truly breathtaking!

Camp was a great experience that I hope to have again next year.

*St. John's campers gather for the camera at Explorer's Camp: left to right: Galen Henderson, Paul Petrich, and Maddie Harbin*

## **Parish News**

### **Congratulations**

To Erin and Gerard Baynham on the birth of Nolan Gavin Lloyd on July 9

To David Vistica and Abigail Croteau on their marriage July 11

To Peter Swarr, a former seminarian, who has been called as rector to St. Mark's Episcopal Church, East Longmeadow, MA (see related article on page 3)

### **Bon Voyage**

To Michael, Stephanie, Sam and Jacob Beavin as they move to Naples, Italy, where Michael will take a new job with the Air Force

### **Rest in Peace**

Margaret Jones, who entered the Life of the Resurrection on June 21, 2009

Alva Rice, who entered the Life of the Resurrection on August 9, 2009

### **Thank you**

To Brian Cavey, Del Hunt and Bill Thomson for their work in getting a tree limb down in the parking lot and cleaning the gutters

To Del Hunt for finishing the piping for the watering system

To Beth Cavey for coordinating the card ministry this year

To Del Hunt for creating acolyte instructions for our adult acolytes

To Bill Thomson, John Wilson, Kim Houghton, Del Hunt and Pamela Corey-Archer for volunteering to act as adult acolytes

To Keith and Kaipo McCartney for donating a flat-screen television to St. John's

To Liz White for coordinating our "hospitality light" experiment

To Jeff Wallace (whose name got left out last time) for help with Glencarlyn Day

To Pat Bleicher and Chris Van Wyk for their work in mentoring our EFM group at St. John's (see education section for related article on page 3)

To Kay Wells and Liz White for their work in decorating for the Beavins' party

To Liz White for preparing and mailing the July/August LOGOS and the volunteer list

To all those who are helping with the bagged lunch program and our AFAC donations

To Bob Yates for help with the computers

To Bill Schenck for taking on the job of vestry register

To everyone who supported the May ingathering for the United Thank Offering. St. John's members gave \$495.35 to this worthy cause.

### **September Birthdays**

- 2 Anna Scherer
- 5 Kay Gasker
- 7 Jeff Aitken
- 7 Stephanie Beavin
- 7 Kay Wells
- 11 Nick Hall
- 12 Ginger Adair
- 12 Clara Naw Sweet
- 12 Lane Turner
- 15 Connor McCartney
- 16 The Rev. Sue Hardman
- 17 William Gibb
- 18 Karin Ferriter
- 20 Jeffrey Wallace
- 23 Delaney Del Gallo
- 23 The Rev. Dr. Eduardo Guerra
- 24 Laurie Hall

### **September Anniversaries**

- 8 Erin & Gerard Baynham
- 28 Matthew & Cristina Tallent

## PIPS and the General Convention

by Bill Schenck

What does the recently concluded Episcopal Church's General Convention mean for PIPS? That, by the way, is the term used by our northern brethren, the Anglican Church in Canada, to refer to "people in the pews." The short answer is that our religious lives will not change; we will have the same liturgy, use the same hymnal. But actions taken will affect the church in America and our relation to other Episcopalians throughout the world—those in the Anglican Communion.

Bishop Peter Lee writes that the "most lasting impact of the 78<sup>th</sup> General Convention is likely to be an increase of initiative and energy in local congregations and dioceses." This is primarily due to sharp cuts in the national church's budget; cuts that will mean significant staff layoffs. Many programs of the national church (ECUSA) will either cease or have to be carried forth by others.

The Convention addressed the current economic crisis by asking churches and dioceses to use Lent next year as a time of "penitential reflection on the brokenness of the global economic order and its reformation in light of the gospel."

The most newsworthy and controversial issue concerned gays and lesbians and the church. By a large majority, bishops, clergy, and lay delegates voted to permit ordination of gay and lesbian bishops in committed relationships. (There are four lay and four clergy delegates from each diocese; all bishops, active and retired, can attend and vote.) This does not alter the process for electing bishops but it removes an impediment.

The convention did not adopt a service to bless same sex marriages but it did ask local churches and dioceses to collect liturgical and theological resources regarding same-sex blessings and it affirmed that a generous pastoral response is needed by the church in those states where same sex marriages are permitted. (Please don't ask me what that means.)

These actions will affect ECUSA's relationship with other provinces of the Anglican Community, as the ordination of Bishop Robinson has already done. Perhaps this will mean a schism in the Communion. But as the religion historian Phillip Jenkins has writ-

ten, we are a church born in, and with a tradition of, schism. The Methodist Church came from a schism in the Anglican church.

Schism is not new. In the Book of Acts some apostles are being tried for their new teachings. Some judges want to punish them but Gamaliel presents his fellow judges with this choice. He says that if these apostles are following their own interests, they will not succeed but if they are following God's will, then they will succeed and others should not interfere.

In a less-publicized action, the General Convention authorized Church Publishing Incorporated (CPI), along with the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, to conduct a feasibility study on the need for revision of *The Hymnal 1982*. The Resolution further states that, if warranted, a new Hymnal could be published in 2018, which would also mark the 100-year anniversary of CPI, which was founded to publish the hymnal and later became publisher of the Book of Common Prayer.

The Rev. Dr. Clayton L. Morris, staff officer for worship and spirituality at the Episcopal Church Center, said "Since the appearance of *The Hymnal 1982*, eight supplemental hymnals and a shelf of service-music collections and psalters have been added to Church Publishing's catalogue. However, the quantity of individual volumes makes it difficult for the typical congregation to add a much-needed note of diversity and contemporary musical style to its Sunday morning repertoire." The feasibility study will talk to diocese and congregations and report to the next General Convention.

### St. John's Mission Statement

To discover and share the transforming love of Christ

### St. John's Vision Statement

St. John's is dedicated to making disciples for Jesus through

- attracting and welcoming newcomers;
- sharing faith-deepening worship, education, outreach, and pastoral care; and
- together carrying God's vision of the kingdom into the world around us.

## **Sign Up Now for Shrine Mont Weekend**

Crisp days, colorful leaves, great meals, great company, and time away to pause, reflect, and refresh—that is St. John's annual fall retreat at Shrine Mont. Mark your calendar and plan to be with us October 16–18.

Shrine Mont truly feeds body, mind, and soul, offering each of us what we need to become revitalized. All each of us has to do is choose. Do you need time to sit quietly and meditate? There is a meditation room (or the woods and fields, if you choose), and you can take as much meditation time as you want. For those who would like a primer, there will also be a meditation session on Saturday led by one of your fellow parishioners.

Do you want the challenge of growing in understanding, faith, and action? We have a retreat leader, the Rev. Gloria Cangialosi, who can take those of us who are interested through a morning and an evening session exploring what it means to be part of a small church like St. John's. And there is always the book store, as well, to challenge the mind.

Do you need to stretch your body and put it into action? There are sports fields at Shrine Mont—for pastimes like badminton, softball, or horseshoes—and a golf course nearby, and there is always the opportunity for a hike in the woods, maybe all the way up North Mountain. If you like your recreation a little more leisurely, you can bring your fishing pole and fish at the pond (which those at Shrine Mont insist on calling The Lake).

Do you crave some unrushed time to just talk and be with your friends from St. John's? You can do that, too—during social hours, at meals, at campfire, or whenever you choose to just sit on the porch and rock and, perhaps, talk.

And this year our retreat is extra special because we are taking the kids with us and providing them with their own program. Norca and Valeria, God bless them, are coming with us to care for the children. They will lead the children in their own program during the times that parents are taking part in retreat. Then the children can join us again for family and social times and for worship on Sunday morning.

Pick up your registration form in the undercroft, or call Pamela Corey-Archer (703-998-2909) or Faye Pritchard (703-931-2168), or email them (Pamela: [pcoreyarcher@yahoo.com](mailto:pcoreyarcher@yahoo.com); Faye: [pritchardh2o@aol.com](mailto:pritchardh2o@aol.com)), or just talk with them at church. They will answer your questions and take care of all the details.

## St. John's Calendar

### September

- Tue 1 St. John's Book Club, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed 2 Candlelight Prayer Service, 7:30 p.m.
- Thu 3 Morning Guild, 10 a.m.  
Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 6 Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.
- Mon 7 Labor Day Holiday (office closed)
- Tue 8 Vestry Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Wed 9 Candlelight Prayer Service, 7:30 p.m.
- Thu 10 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 13 Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Christian Formation for all ages, 9 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Wed 16 Candlelight Prayer Service, 7:30 p.m.
- Thu 17 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Fri 18 LOGOS deadline, 10:00 a.m.
- Sat 19 Men's Fellowship, 8 a.m.
- Sun 20 Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Christian Formation for all ages, 9 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Education for Ministry 6 p.m.
- Wed 23 Candlelight Prayer Service, 7:30 p.m.
- Thu 24 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 27 Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Christian Formation for all ages, 9 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Education for Ministry 6 p.m.
- Wed 30 Candlelight Prayer Service, 7:30 p.m.

### October

- Thu 1 Morning Guild, 10 a.m.  
Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 4 Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Christian Formation for all ages, 9 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Tue 6 St. John's Book Club, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed 7 Candlelight Prayer Service, 7:30 p.m.
- Thu 8 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 11 Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Christian Formation for all ages, 9 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Mon 12 Columbus Day Holiday (office closed)
- Tue 13 Vestry Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Wed 14 Candlelight Prayer Service, 7:30 p.m.
- Thu 15 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Fri 16 Shrine Mont Weekend (through Sun 18)
- Sat 17 Men's Fellowship, 8 a.m.
- Sun 18 Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Christian Formation for all ages, 9 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Wed 21 Candlelight Prayer Service, 7:30 p.m.
- Thu 22 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.
- Sun 25 Twenty First Sunday After Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Christian Formation for all ages, 9 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.  
Education for Ministry, 6 p.m.
- Wed 28 Candlelight Prayer Service, 7:30 p.m.
- Thu 29 Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 p.m.

## Gospel Lessons for September

### September 6, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Mark 7:24-37

In Galilee, Jesus has challenged official Judaism over the authority of non-biblical traditions and has taught that ritual purity is irrelevant. He now travels to the coast (“Tyre”), a largely Gentile area. The “woman” (v. 26) is Gentile by birth and of non-Jewish origin; she seeks healing for her daughter who (at least in contemporary understanding) is possessed by evil. In Jesus’ statement (v. 27), the “children” are presumably Jews; Jewish writers sometimes referred to Gentiles as “dogs”. Jesus says that he comes principally to Jews, but note that both Jews and Gentiles are at or near the table. The woman’s witty retort (v. 28) shows that she has faith in him: there is a place for non-Jews in God’s plan. Jesus accepts her claim (v. 29). The daughter is completely cured (v. 30).

After a circuitous journey through Gentile territory, Jesus heads towards Galilee (v. 31). A man with hearing and speech problems is brought to him. (Laying on of hands (“hand”, v. 32) is known only in the Qumran, Dead Sea, literature and in the Church.) In doing the miracle, Jesus uses two symbols, one for deafness and one for speech. He touches the man’s tongue with spittle (v. 33). Jesus communes with the Father, is moved with compassion (“sighed”, v. 34) and orders the healing. The cure is immediate and again complete (v. 35). In v. 36a, Jesus hopes to avoid a partial understanding of him (as a miracle worker) but the good news spreads. The people’s words:

- allude to God’s satisfaction with creation (v. 37b, Genesis 1:31) and
- show that the Kingdom of God has begun: v. 37c is a quotation from a section of Isaiah on Israel’s glorious future.

The kingdom of God has already begun!

### September 13, Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Mark 8:27-38

Jesus travels north from the Sea of Galilee to the villages around Caesarea Philippi, a prominent pagan town. He asks: who does popular opinion say I am? There are various opinions, but the Messiah is not one of them (v. 28). Now he asks the disciples: “who do you say ... I am?” (v. 29). Peter’s answer, for the disciples, is pious, but misleading and incomplete. Jews expected the Messiah to come in power, to free them from Roman domination, but they did not expect the Messiah to suffer (v. 31). (Were it to be widely known that he is the Messiah, his time on earth might end before he has done all that he has come to do.) This is the first prediction of Jesus’ Passion. Jesus “must” suffer, for it is in God’s plan. Jesus’ mission is now stated completely, so he speaks about it “openly” (v. 32). He rebukes Peter for his shallowness, seeing his reply as inspired by the devil, as not being godly (v. 33).

What will happen to Jesus has implications for those who follow him:

- we must cast aside self-centeredness (“deny themselves”, v. 34) and submit to divine authority (as a prisoner submitted to Roman authority when he carried the cross-arm to his execution);
- we must be willing to die for the cause - real life, true self, comes from God (vv. 35-37); and
- we should not be ashamed of the way he is treated and his message in this wayward (“adulterous”, v. 38) world;

for such an attitude will detract from Christ’s glory, his godly show of power, when he comes as judge at the end of the era.

### September 20, Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Mark 9:30-37

The disciples have failed to cure an epileptic boy of an unclean spirit (verses 14-29); this has led to them being puzzled. After Jesus cures him, they ask: how could you cure him but we could not? Jesus tells them: that kind of healing requires the power of prayer; it can’t be done by earthly means.

Now, as they travel from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem, they re-enter Jewish territory (“Galilee”, v. 30). Jesus again wishes to avoid partial understanding of him and his mission. He again teaches that he, the “Son of Man is to be” (v. 31) killed, but adds one new idea: he is to be “betrayed” or handed over to people; this is part of God’s plan. Both his suffering and betrayal are so beyond the understanding of the disciples that they dare not reveal their ignorance.

Jesus now teaches more about being his followers. (Presumably “the house”, v. 33, is Peter’s – see 1:29.) The disciples have been arguing over rank. Jesus says, in effect: to be my disciple, you must abandon seeking position and prestige. He takes an example (vv. 36-37): to welcome a child “in my name” (because of regard for who and what I am) is to welcome me, and indeed God. In Aramaic and Greek the word for “child” is the same as for servant, so v. 36 may also speak of welcoming a servant, one sent by his master. If so, Jesus is saying: whoever receives the servant receives the master. Whoever receives a child receives Jesus, and whoever receives Jesus receives God, who sent him. Both child and servant are without status. They are unable to repay a kindness, in earthly terms.

### September 27, Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, Mark 9:38-50

The disciples have argued over who of them is the greatest. Jesus has told them not to seek position or prestige. Now he rebukes them for attempting to stop an exorcist curing in his name. Jesus explains his tolerance (v. 39): such a person will be slow to speak ill of him. God does work through those who are not followers of Jesus. V. 40 generalizes this, in the form of a proverb. The “reward” (v. 41) is entry into the Kingdom and the blessed state of union with God awaiting us there. Those who treat Jesus’ followers with kindness will be so rewarded.

On the other hand, putting an obstacle (“stumbling block”, v. 42) in the way of immature Christians (“little ones”), causing them to sin, will lead to condemnation on Judgement Day. (The “great millstone” was drawn by a donkey in grinding wheat; “the sea” was the place of chaos.) Vv. 43-47 speak of actions by members of the community, the body. Anyone who shakes the faith of others (“causes you to stumble”), however he or she does it, should be cast out, for the sake of the community. Hell was seen as the place of unquenchable fire and “where their worm never dies” (v. 48), per Isaiah 66:24. Discipleship is demanding. In vv. 49-50, “salt” has three meanings:

- in v. 49, it means purified, as ore is purified to metal in a furnace; before Christ comes again, we will be purified through persecution and suffering;
- In v. 50a, “salt” is a seasoning agent; the disciples are the salt of the earth, the agents of spirituality; if we lose our effectiveness in proclaiming God’s word, what use are we?
- In v. 50b, “salt” is distinctive character: this matters, but so does harmony in the community.

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*Next deadline is Friday, September 18 at 10:00 a.m.*

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