



Newsletter

Diocese of the West

February, 2014

Vol. II Issue 1

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Hello Brothers and Sisters in Christ

I pray this finds you all in good health and enjoying the new year. The newsletter is a great way to keep everyone informed of what is happening in our diocese. We are asking you to help by sending information so we can let everyone know what is going on in your parish. It would also be very helpful to have photos as well. Please send them to the email address above.



Parable of the workers in the Vineyard by Johann Christian Brand, 1769

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

The Bishop's Corner

Clericus is nigh! If you are clergy in the Diocese and have not yet submitted a registration, now is the eleventh hour. If you are not in the Diocese but would like to attend this meaningful event, you are welcome if there is space left. As of the writing of this, (January 27) there are still some openings.

Clericus is positioned to be just before Lent, preparation for the Lenten journey to Pascha. The watershed point in the church year between the festival of Incarnation (Advent through Epiphany) and Pascha is not Ash Wednesday, but rather the three "gesima" Sundays, the first days in the church year to look forward to Easter rather than back at Christmas. In contemporary church they have been reduced to a humble state indeed, and in many trendier churches they are no longer observed, with Epiphany being in place right to the very moment of Ash Wednesday. As a result, some great moments in the church year have been trampled. Perhaps it is the failure to understand Lent itself. The point is not a season of doing somewhat arbitrary denials of self (what you are "giving up for Lent," as if

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that exercise in itself had some austere meaning or value). Rather, the entire church year is a journey in our life and faith. The role of Lent is to prepare you for Easter, just as Advent is to prepare you for Christmas. These are pilgrimages, not exercises in personal self-sanctification. As any journey, they may require some effort. Journey often means going without the things we are routinely used to or familiar with. But Lent in itself only has meaning in the goal of a preparation of self to be able to walk the way of the Cross and to receive the joy of Resurrection. It is not "about me," not even a smugly denial me, but about the absolute need for the saving love of God.

Thus, at this point it begins with the three Sundays which could be called "orientation Sundays," as you reach the divide when Epiphany ends and the Easter season begins. As with watersheds themselves, they begin modestly with a trickle, which only later becomes a force, as it flows downhill and collects more and more runoff as it goes. But on Septuagesima, the countdown does begin (the three respectively mean 70, 60 and 50 days to Easter). The ancients were not OCD about numbers or time, so the numbers are approximate, but nevertheless, gradually come closer to Easter until Ash Wednesday begins the 40 days (Sundays excepted). In the Eastern Church, the Gospels are powerful presentations of the saving mercy and grace of God: the stories of Zacchaeus, the greedy tax collector to whom the merciful presence of Jesus came, because Zacchaeus desired repentance and salvation; the Pharisee and the Publican, which delineate clearly the

difference between humble repentance and acceptance of salvation as over against self-righteous boasting of one's innate goodness; and finally, the Prodigal Son, foolishly wasting his God-given life and coming to repentance as a last resort as over against his self-righteous and jealous brother, equally in need of repentance but unwilling to acknowledge it, with only the loving father really being the kind of person God calls us to be. The net impact of these three Sundays is to make clear the nature of the Lenten journey, one of repentance, analyzing your heart in humility, and not an attempt at self-righteous self-salvation.



Parable of the Sower - 12th century

In the 1928 lectionary, the themes are similar. The stories are: the owner of a vineyard who rewards all equally according to what he has promised his workers, regardless of how long they have worked; a sower who sows his seed equally on the ground, but it grows unequally, depending upon the receptiveness of the soil it falls on; and finally, when Jesus broke the news to the disciples about the suffering and trial awaiting, "and they understood none of these things," the story of the blind man, as we are who are spiritually blind, when we entreat as he did, healed finally of our blindness.

The Bishop's Corner (continued)

Having these Sundays means we are prepared for the encounter of Ash Wednesday, when we are directly confronted with our sinfulness, our mortality, and our need to receive Jesus as our only hope. With them, we are ready for the Lenten journey, an inward pilgrimage through our soul, leading to a new way to love, a new submission to the necessary grace of God, which is our only hope, as all these Gospel lessons have together made clear.

Lent 2015, is a time when many of our brothers and sisters will not need to worry about giving up something. Perhaps more than at any time in history after the third century, Christianity and Christians are being attacked in many places throughout the world. The tragedy of All Saints Cathedral in Peshawar, Pakistan just over a year ago, when scores of parishioners, men, women and especially children were killed and hundreds injured, brings it home. These are ordinary Anglican believers just like us, who simply went to Sunday Eucharist. To meet the modest and gracious man who is the bishop of Peshawar, it is hard to imagine the iron backbone and unwavering courage involved in what he has endured. Seeing the photos of those who are still in pain and handicapped from their injuries, who of us can feel sorry for the petty defeats which come our way. That same encounter with martyrdom is now happening throughout our world in Sudan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, India and so many other places, just as it did with the martyrs of the early Church. As

with those persons, these are not particularly great giants of the Faith, renowned theologians or profound preachers, but rather everyday people. Indeed, someday it may well be our turn. Until then, remember these Faithful in prayer and give them help with their situation through relief, resettlement and intervention efforts, as part of your own Lenten exercise.

And may you begin, travel and conclude your Lent with joy, knowing that God's love and grace does not waver, and that Resurrection is our baptismal gift, renewed by his real presence every week.

Your bishop,
+Win

Parish News

For those of you who have not yet seen the letter below, it was written by Victoria Tester, who is the coordinator for the San Isidro Bean Project.

Dear Bishop Win, Friends and Churches of the Diocese of the West,

Thank you for partnering with the San Isidro Bean Project in 2014, to bring in a 45,000 lb. bean donation to serve the work of the servants of Christ at the Mexico border. I am deeply grateful for the spiritual support of Bishop Win, for the work of Deacon, Joan Eng, DOW Treasurer, and for the aid of you members and friends of the Diocese of the West that gave vital freight funds that made it possible to support so many worthy efforts

Parish News (continued)

towards easing the hunger crisis at the Mexico border.

This 45,000 lb. donation served Juarez through the work of Pastor Jose Galvan, who directs the largest and most creatively run mental asylum in Juarez, with over 100 residents; the School Sisters of St. Francis, whose Juarez Food program serves 63 families; the

Casa de Soles de Anapra community child day shelter, serving 75 children; the four Anglican Churches of Juarez, Mexico - San Jose de Anapra, Santa Maria Magdalena, Espiritu Santo and San Matias; the ecumenical program Levantando La Mano Para Ayudar; the work of Juarez missionary Brother Daniel Torres; that of Root International for Mexico in Juarez; and several entities in Palomas, Chihuahua, through the work of Deacon Tom Bates of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Silver City. I estimate that this 45,000 lbs. of beans your freight funds aid was integral in bringing in, made nearly a quarter of a million meals possible.



Beans being served in Juarez, Mexico

Recent good news from the San Isidro Bean Project is that a December 2014, donation of 15-20,000 beans has been offered by Diaz Farms in Deming, New Mexico, and has been gratefully accepted. No freight funds will be necessary. This donation will aid the work of

Root International for Mexico, who serve 20 comedores (mostly child meal programs) and ten other community meal programs in Juarez.

More good news is the San Isidro Bean Project is in a process of transformation. Our loving partnership with Diaz Farms in Deming, New Mexico, continues. In the coming year however, the Project will move delivery and warehousing of any large shipments to El Paso, Texas, to more efficiently serve Juarez.

Large shipments will now also go by truck directly from El Paso into Juarez through partnership with Root International for Mexico, in order to relieve not only those programs already aided by the Project, but to expand aid to those 30 entities aided by Root International for Mexico.

And finally, in regard to large scale food aid, the Project, whose main capacity has been to appeal, raise freight funds for, and allocate donations of beans, will widen its focus towards possible shipments of other nutritious foods, and other vital necessities for the Mexico border.

The Project will now also serve, as it can, in smaller, vital ways to: help connect individuals and ministries to programs on the Mexico border, aid in channeling material donations directly to Mexico border entities, and in the areas of child welfare and education. Do not hesitate to contact the Project for general and contact information for any of the ministries we serve.

Parish News (continued)

In keeping with the Project's transformation, the name of the San Isidro Bean Project, which over the past five years has made more than a million meals possible, will soon change to the St. Francis Border Project.

We will continue to work from year to year on a completely volunteer basis, ecumenically through wings, prayers and joyful, informal and inspired alliances. In the spirit of St. Francis, the Project will continue to operate in Poverty and Simplicity, itself not receiving or storing funds, and asking only for what it needs as it goes

My prayer is that the Diocese of the West and its friends will continue to play a vital role in partnering through the Project on behalf of our brothers and sisters on the Mexico border. Please feel free to contact me for photos of ministries served.

Please pray for the spiritual gifts of humility, love and joy for all who partner through the Project, and for our shared, sufficient earthly success.

Peace and all good,

Victoria Tester

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Thank you Victoria for all your work. You are a Blessing to the people you serve.

Reflection on the Lord's Prayer

Jesus meant not only “pray in these words,” but, “pray with this sequence of thought and desire.” God first, the Father, the heavenly Father, “hallowed be thy name.” His name is his character and glory, to be dwelt upon, honored, loved, our hearts and minds to be soaked in it. And then we ask that His reign may come and His will be done. With all our wills first surrendered to His, we bring the affairs of the world to Him in our requests.

The Most Reverend A. Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury

Thank you to Rev. Robert Herrell for sharing this information.

Prayer Requests



Cycle of Prayer

Each month we will be asking you to pray for one of the parishes in our diocese. This month we are asking you to pray for Christ the King Parish in Arroyo Grande, California. Pray for its Senior Warden, Nate Bingham. We also ask your prayers for Deacon Chris Linebarger, who has accepted the call to lead the parish, pending completion of his seminary studies this spring. Pray for the members of the parish as well.

Pray for the clergy of the Diocese, who will be meeting next week in New Mexico.

We have not been receiving any prayer requests, so please, send an email to let us know who or what you would like others to be praying for.

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Ramblings of an Ancient Episcopalian

As I was searching the internet for recorded music for our nursing home morning prayer service I came across the first hymn I can ever remember singing, “I sing a song of the saints of God”. While listening to it being sung by the congregation of All Saints Hilton Head, my mind drifted back to Los Angeles of the mid 1950's and the large parish church I called home until I left for the Army in 1966. It was then I realized that it was this very hymn that ultimately shaped my faith, for it portrays sainthood as a calling. Hearing the song again after so many years, it still reminds me that God's saints not only lived in the past, but also live and work in everyday lives. And yes, “the world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus' will.”

When the 1982 Episcopal hymnal was in the process of being compiled, this hymn was not being considered. Probably because the words were just a little too quaint. However, that was not to be. What the compilers had missed was there was an entire generation of Episcopalians who grew up with the hymn, and for many of them it brought back precious memories. And I would like to think that many of those same people, like myself, viewed their young Christian lives in light of that song.

I now spend time reflecting on what type of influence (if any) the hymn would have on children today. How would my six year old granddaughter take to it? The cynical side of me wants to say it is too dated and quaint and that once the older generation passes away, so will “I sing a song of the saints of God.” But if you take the time to really study the lyrics, you will see that this little children's hymn is in some

respects, just as theological as its elder brother, “For all the Saints.” And like its elder brother, this hymn is the story of the Church. I pray that future generations will continue to use this hymn to teach their children (and themselves) that they are called to be saints of God.

And you can still “meet them in school, or in lanes or at sea, in church, or in trains or in shops or at tea, (and even at Walmart), for the saints of God are just folk like me, and I mean to be one too.”

For those interested in the lyrics, it is hymn 243 in the 1940 edition and 293 in the 1984 edition of the Hymnal.

Hint of Humor

