



Everyone Welcome

Led by the Spirit

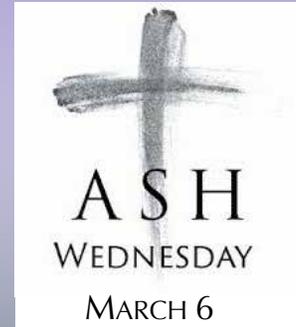
BY REV. DANIEL C. GREEN

The season of Lent, which begins March 6 this year, lasts for forty days. When the ancient church prescribed a time of preparation for the rites of Easter, the bible furnished ample symbolic precedent for a forty-day term. The example that impinged most directly on the Christian imagination was the story of Jesus' fast in the wilderness, after his baptism, for forty days: "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit," says the Gospel of Luke, "returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil." The temptation by the devil is the part of this story that tends to get the most attention, and it has been the topic of countless sermons and works of art over the centuries. These have presented Lent, by analogy, as a time of privation and bitter struggle against our ancient foe.

But sometimes we have overlooked that for Jesus this whole process was propelled and overseen by the Holy Spirit, a point that is worth remembering. If the great mysteries of Holy Week and Easter, concluding with the feast of Pentecost, are to be a fresh outpouring of the Spirit in our lives, we ought to prepare, not just by flexing our fighting muscles in a contest with the spirit of hostility, deceit, and destruction, but also by coming more closely under the tutelage of the Spirit of life and peace. The fruit of the spirit that people often associate with Lent is that of self-control. We exercise it by denying ourselves certain luxuries or behaviors. But Galatians 5 lists other spiritual gifts as well: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness.

So our observance of Lent this year might be a conscious effort to not only examine our shortcomings and repent of our sins, and to renounce self-indulgence, but also to do more of those practices that invite the Spirit to influence our lives. There can be a close connection between these two aspects of Lent. For instance, it is traditional to take the money that one might have spent on sweets or other luxuries, and give it instead to the poor. A contemporary example might be to take time one might otherwise have spent on social media or other electronic entertainment, and use it instead for a meditative walk, or reading of a spiritual book.

And the life of the Spirit is, of course, a life in community. Involving others in your Lenten spiritual practices will give them a major boost. This newsletter includes invitations to various activities, some ongoing at St. John's, and others special to this season, that can powerfully support your intention to be led by the Spirit. You might also wish to find a spiritual friend or two with whom you can name your intentions for practicing Lent this year, and promise mutual support in seeing them through. Blessings for a Holy Lent! ■



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

**Ash Wednesday Holy Eucharist
with Imposition of Ashes**

12:15 pm and 6:00 pm
in the Sanctuary

**Ash Wednesday
Labyrinth Walk with imposition
of Ashes**

7:00 pm in Cram Hall

UPCOMING DATES TO SAVE

Sunday, April 14

Sunday of the Passion/Palm
Sunday

Sunday, April 21

Easter Day

Saturday, May 11

Appreciation event for Bishop
Beisner

Saturday, June 29

Consecration of 8th Bishop of
Northern California

Sunday, July 28

Parish Picnic

MARCH SPECIAL EVENTS

on page 6

Lenten Prayer Retreat



Wishing you could get away for an intensive prayer retreat, but just can't clear the time in your schedule? This Lenten season we will again offer a non-residential prayer retreat for busy people like us. Beginning on Tuesday, **March 26** and continuing through Saturday, **March 30**, all are invited to join us for a deep dive into everyday life. During this week we will support each other's effort to bring greater wisdom and compassion to our daily routines by coming together for morning and evening times of contemplative silence and corporate prayer, and sharing a simple quiet meal. Throughout the week we will be listening to and reflecting on a short book, *The New Creation in Christ*, by **Bede Griffiths**. The week will culminate with an intensive day of practice on Saturday.

A schedule is located on this page or can be found on St. John's **website**. Attendance at all scheduled events is optional, and drop-ins are welcome, except for at meals. See the adjoining article for instructions on how to sign up. Volunteers are also needed to help prepare and clean up the meals. This a wonderful way to support and encourage others to participate in the retreat, even if you are unable to.

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Deacon Mara's Office Hours

Deacon Mara holds an office hour on Tuesdays from 4:00–5:00 pm at St. John's, in the office across from the mail room.

Because she is occasionally out of town, please email her at **mara.arack@gmail.com** or call her at **(707) 407-7347** to let her know your intend to meet with her. All communication is confidential, as with any ordained person. ■

Dive into Everyday

A Non-Residential Prayer Retreat

Tentative Schedule
Check website for details

TUESDAY, MARCH 26 & THURSDAY, MARCH 29

6:30 am	Centering Prayer
7:00 am	Morning Prayer
7:30 am	Silent Breakfast
7:50 am	Clean-up
5:00 pm	Centering Prayer
5:30 pm	Evening Prayer
6:00 pm	Supper
6:30 pm	Clean-up

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

6:30 am	Centering Prayer
7:00 am	Morning Prayer
7:30 am	Silent Breakfast
7:50 am	Clean-up
11:30 am	Centering Prayer
12:15 pm	Holiy Eucharist II
5:00 pm	Centering Prayer
5:30 pm	Evening Prayer
6:00 pm	Supper
6:30 pm	Clean-up

FRIDAY, MARCH 29

6:30 am	Centering Prayer
7:00 am	Morning Prayer
7:30 am	Silent Breakfast
7:50 am	Clean-up
5:00 pm	Centering Prayer
5:30 pm	Evening Prayer
6:00 pm	Supper
6:30 pm	Clean-up
7:00 pm	Taize Service

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

7:30 am	Centering Prayer
8:00 am	Centering Prayer
8:30 am	Morning Prayer
9:00 am	Break
9:15 am	Centering Prauer
9:45 am	Talk
10:00 am	Break
10:15 am	Work Period
12:00 pm	Noonday Prayer
12:15 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm	Centering Payer
2:15 pm	Labyrinth Walking
	Meditation
3:00 pm	Tea & Discussion
4:00 pm	Closing Prayer

Resources for Lent

LENT 2019 begins on Ash Wednesday, March 6. Here are a few ways you can engage in Lent.

★ **Lent Madness** is a fun, engaging way for people to learn about the men and women comprising the Church's Calendar of Saints. The format is straightforward: 32 saints are placed into a tournament-like single elimination bracket. Each pairing remains open for a set period of time and people vote for their favorite saint. [Learn more here.](#)

★ **Episcopal Relief & Development Lenten Meditation** books are available to either order copies or to subscribe to daily emails. This is the 15th year for this program. There is no charge for the books, which come in either English or Spanish; only the shipping is charged. [More information is available here.](#)

★ **The Way of Love in Lent and Easter** is offering several resources, including Test Kitchen, which is a Facebook-based platform. [Learn more here.](#)



How to Participate

This **Non-residential Prayer Retreat** during Lent is available to everyone. It will begin on **Tuesday, March 26** and run through **Saturday, March 30**. You can participate by attending one or more activities during the week.

From **Tuesday through Friday**, we gather in the morning at 6:30 AM for Centering Prayer, Morning Prayer, followed by a silent breakfast. We then go about our daily activities as usual, though with an intention to maintain a prayerful attitude through the day and then returning to St. John's in the late afternoon for Centering Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Dinner with a reading and discussion. On **Saturday**, the day begins a little later and ends mid-afternoon, and includes morning prayers, several periods of centering prayer, walking meditation on the labyrinth and outside, a manual work period, lunch, and discussion about the week.

Many participants have and do attend all sessions, but again it is by no means a requirement. You are welcome for just a morning or evening, or anytime you can make it. All we ask is to let us know if you will be joining us for the meal so we can make sure there's enough! Also, if you would like to help in making a simple breakfast (Hot cereal, fruit, yogurt, etc.) or dinner (Soup, salad, and Bread) that would be most appreciated.

You can find the **meal sign up** and **meal preparation sign up** forms online (click on red text) or in Cram Hall, along with the schedule of events. If you have any questions, please ask! Hope to see you there. — **Jonathan Hiller**

Practices of Prayer

For the second year in a row, some of us at St. John's will be deepening our experience of Lent by coming together for a five-day prayer retreat. We invite you to participate in any and all of the retreat activities described elsewhere in this newsletter, and on our website. Recognizing that some people may be doubtful or even intimidated with respect to this retreat, we thought it would be kind to offer a brief explanation of some of the practices we will be doing, as well as some testimonials by past participants.

MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER: These rites, consisting of psalms, readings from scripture, sung canticles (also from the bible), and prayers, continue a tradition that emerged from Jewish daily prayer during apostolic times. During the Medieval period this practice became progressively more elaborate and more distanced from lay people, turning into the province of "professionals" — clergy and monastics. [continued on page 3](#)

Practices of Prayer

continued from page 3 When **Thomas Cranmer** and other Reformers created the first **Book of Common Prayer**, it was their intention to return it to everyone, with the simplified offices of Morning and Evening Prayer in the English language. These services, which immerse us in a timeless rhythms of Christian devotion, are a rich feast of the language, music, and attitude of prayer.

SILENT MEALS: Sharing the preparing, serving, eating, and cleaning up of a meal expresses basic human kindness and solidarity like few other activities can. No wonder it has always been central to Christian practice, beginning with Jesus himself, as no small number of stories from the gospels relate. When we do this together in silence it does not alienate us from one another, but quite the opposite. It allows us to be more intimate, both with the gift of food from God's creation, with all the effort and energy that it costs to bring it to us, and with each other. We become more aware of the sacredness of every meal, and the central place that eating together holds in creating true community.

CENTERING PRAYER: Perhaps the least familiar, to many, of our retreat practices is this form of silent Christian meditation.

The late **Fr. Thomas Keating**, one of three brother Trappist monks who drew on ancient monastic teachings and recovered this practice for contemporary people, describes it this way: "Centering Prayer is based on the wisdom sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:6): "If you want to pray, enter your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." Notice that "Father" re-

fers to a personal relationship, whether you call it father, mother, brother, soul-friend, spouse or anything else.

The first step in Centering Prayer is to enter your inner room, which is symbolized by the heart in most traditions; that is, your innermost self beyond the senses and beyond thinking. . . .

Second, "close the door," symbolizing your intention of letting go of all thoughts, preoccupations, memories and plans during this time. As soon as you are overtaken by thoughts, which is inevitable in the beginning, return to your original intention to let go of all thinking. You can do this in a very simple and extremely gently way, like saying a sacred word briefly, noticing your breath, or turning to God with a brief glance of faith in His presence.

Finally, you pray in secret to the Father who speaks to you beyond words and who invites you to ever deeper silence. . . ." (Thomas Keating and Joseph Boyle with Lucette Verboven, **World Without End** (Bloomsbury: 2017), 29-31. Sitting together in silence and stillness for a half hour at a time, we rest in the loving presence of God, and embrace the simple gift of our lives. Instruction is provided at the beginning of the prayer period, and no prior experience or special posture are required.

What follows are some testimonials from participants in our past retreats:

Most valuable for me with the last retreat was enhancing my living experience with God. All the elements of the retreat work together to support this -- prayer service, centering prayer, silent time, shared meals, discussion, intimate community of participants. The non-residential nature of the retreat gave the opportunity to extend the on-site practice to help experience Christ in all people and things in the everyday world. — **Paul M.**

I found myself more engaged and thoughtful about the words of morning prayer without music, but with participation in the readings. I became comfortable with a mantra during the meditation, which kept me more focused. Mine was "follow Jesus." To be honest, I repeat the words of the creed but am not a real believer. I do believe, however, that Jesus is the way and the world today desperately needs to follow His word and that the community of compassion at our church is part of what is so needed. — **Bill M**

The Prayer Retreats offered by St. John's nudge me to persevere and renew my personal prayer practice (which is far from sweet and easy). The benefits of sharing in a supportive and safe community helps my faith and desired spiritual life grow stronger. — **Kathy B.**

Life can keep my body and mind busy and preoccupied. Impressions and experiences gather and impact my decision making. On my spiritual path finding ways to serve and remember God is aided by my stepping out of and into quietude. Through retreat with others I am helped to find myself in the great tapestry of God's will. — **Kate K.**

It is easy to feel church, prayer, and then the rest of my life are separate. The retreats have given me tastes of wholeness, where holiness and physical reality are not so divided but are aspects of the whole tapestry of living. — **Pam H.**

During these retreats, I sense my humanity and calling, so often obscured, emerge from the depths through prayer and opening with others to the experience of God's love.—**Jonathan H.**

I love the quiet, the peace, the calm. The sense of a shared purpose and focus. The closeness and love I feel toward everyone, my St John's family. — **Carole H.**



WISDOM of the Ancients

From the March, 1905 edition of *The Instructor*, the monthly newsletter of St. John's, Petaluma, along with an advertisement from Hale's Dry Goods for Wooltex Suits and Skirts: "Snappy effects, with style in every line and quality in every thread."

From an article titled "Lent's Occupations":

RETIREMENT That in the quiet seclusion of your own room, or 'mid the sacred surroundings of God's house, you may find time, yea make time—to meditate upon the Cross and its momentous lessons of sin and holiness, or guilt and forgiveness, of love and its willing sacrifice; that you may think of life and its duties, of your life and its actual condition in the sight of God; that you may dwell on heaven and its hopes and promises; retirement, as far as possible, from excessive cares from business projects, from all amusements; and even 'mid necessary duties, retirement in mind and the oft ascending ejaculatory, way-side, prayer.

PRAYER More frequent, more earnest, more intense in the closet and in the Church; giving utterance to the deep yearnings of your soul for God and for a better life; expressing your sincere desire that God may visit you with pardon for past offenses, with compassion for your infirmities, and with Divine help in your danger and necessities; drawing your life in its every thought and occupation closer to your Savior's side, and nearer nearer to "Our Father, who art in heaven."

NEW JUNIOR WARDEN

Betty Petrillo Named as Junior Warden

As your new Junior Warden, I would like to introduce myself. I have been a member of St. John's for 24 years. Over the years, there have been many changes in rectors, lay leadership, congregation and even doctrine. But what has remained unchanged is the welcoming fellowship, diversity and inclusion of our membership. I am both excited and nervous to take on this role but I feel confident I will have the necessary guidance to make it a success.



The Junior Warden is traditionally responsible for the care and oversight of the church property and is also an assistant to the Senior Warden. The Junior Warden also serves as a liaison between the vestry and members of the congregation. I would like to foster a culture that encourages service and participation among the members of our congregation.

Also, communication is key to knowing what on our campus may need attention. I humbly ask for your assistance and cooperation. If you see something, say something. You may contact me at betty.petrillo@com-cast.net

It has been 10 years since last serving on St. John's vestry. That was an incredibly rich and rewarding time in my spiritual and faith journey. I feel I have been called again to serve and will approach it with a sincere heart and a willingness to be shaped and directed by the work of the Holy Spirit. — **Betty Petrillo**

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

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Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Northern California,
The Rt. Rev. Barry L. Beisner
Rector, **The Very Rev. Daniel C. Green**
Senior Warden, **Walt Lederhaus**
Junior Warden, **Betty Petrillo**

Vestry Members: **Emily Betts, Linda Lee Boyd (clerk), Adam Klein, Jonathan Hiller, Caroly Hyman, Rebecca Smith, Gayle Stewart and Jacqueline C. Woytych**

Newsletter Production Editor, **Victoria Temple**

The **MISSION** of St. John's Episcopal Church is to
Bring Christ to Life:
Celebrating the mysteries;
Honoring the beauty and wisdom of every person;
Healing the soul;
Serving the peace and renewal of the Earth.

St. John's Episcopal Church
40 5th Street, Petaluma, CA 94952 707-762-8872

March Events

Life of Grace

Sunday, March 10 at 11:45 am in the Library

Poetry Circle

Friday, March 15
7:00 pm in the Sanctuary

Theological Reflection Circle

Sunday, March 17
after the 10 am Eucharist
In the Library

In Search of Wisdom:

The Myths, Music and Art of Pilgrimage
Sunday, March 17
1:30 - 6:30 pm
In Norm Cram Hall

Celtic Evensong:

In Search of Wisdom
Sunday, March 17
5:00 pm in the Sanctuary

Sacred Circle Dance

Wednesday, March 20
7:00 - 9:00 pm
in the Parish Hall

Monthly Labyrinth Walks

Sunday, March 24
5:00 - 6:30 pm
Please register through the
Veriditas website by clicking [here](#).

Taize

Friday, April 5
7:00 pm
In the Sanctuary

Benedictine Study Group

TBD
9:00 - 11:30 am
Starting in the Sanctuary

Summer Camp Registrations are Open!

Our diocese is near and home to several Episcopal summer camps where young people can explore their relationship to God through all the astonishing natural beauty our region has to offer. Swimming, hiking, boating, rock climbing, worship services, camping, and the chance to make friends for life, are just some of the activities offered by summer church camps.

Pathways Youth Pilgrimage – Apply by April 1!

Join youth of the diocese for Pathways in Humboldt County, from **June 16-21**. Pathways is a pilgrimage that aims to equip youth to be agents of truth, peace, and reconciliation. Led by the young adults who started Pathways, participants will spend a week together sharing meals, worshipping, having fun and traveling as pilgrims. Learn more at <http://www.norcalepiscopal.org/pathwaysyouthpilgrimage>

Camp Living Waters – Arcata

A week-long Episcopal summer camp in the heart of Redwood Valley, Camp Living Waters is based at St. Alban's parish in Arcata and draws staff members from the faith communities of the North Coast. Learn more at <http://www.camplivingwatershumboldt.org/>

Camp Galilee – Lake Tahoe

Located on the shore of Lake Tahoe, Camp Galilee is the camp of the Episcopal Diocese of Nevada. Camp Galilee's summer camps help youth develop deep relationships with their peers, caring counselors, the natural world, and God. Learn more at <http://www.galileetahoe.org/summer/youth/>

St. Dorothy's Rest – Camp Meeker

Beautifully located in the heart of a redwood forest on the Russian River and just miles from the Pacific Ocean, St. Dorothy's offers a summer camp experience that celebrates the natural world. Learn more at <http://stdorothysrest.org/camp/diocesan-summer-camps/>

Bishop's Ranch – Healdsburg

BREAD Camp is set among the forest, farms and vineyards of Sonoma County, where campers can discovery community and spirituality, and participate in summer camping activities. Learn more at <https://www.bishopsranch.org/programs-retreats/camps/>



Camp Living Waters

IN THIS ISSUE...

A Book Recommendation: 173 Pages of Deep Authenticity

BY MARA ARACK

Beloved Friends: While on retreat in Mexico last month, I read a book that my spouse George had picked up for me at a Humboldt County library book sale before we headed south: Czech theologian, philosopher, professor, psychotherapist and Roman Catholic priest Tomáš Halík's *I Want You to Be: On the God of Love*, translated by Gerald Turner (www.undpress.nd.edu, 2016). Halík was ordained secretly during the Communist rule in his country and practiced both his priesthood and his psychotherapy throughout those years, continuing after the "Velvet Revolution" of 1989 that brought back democracy. Intrigued, I turned the book over. A blurb on the back cover by Fr. Richard Rohr, O.F.M., whose writings I find very helpful in my spiritual walk, encouraged me to dive in.

When I read the title, I assumed that the "you" referred to was another human person, similar to the "thou" of Martin Buber's famous philosophic distinction between treating other people as "it"s (that's my orthographic attempt to make a plural out of the singular pronoun "it"), an "it" being separate and inferior to our own selves, and "thou"s, who are not separated from us by rigid boundaries, and who are equal or even, in the case of God, infinitely more than we ourselves are. Buber argues that when we treat the other as an it, we devalue and dehumanize the other. Conversely, when we treat the other as "thou," we recognize our common nature, and even our divine nature.

But my first impression of the title turned out to be off the mark. The

title derives from Augustine, who wrote of God, "I want you to be." This sentence grew out of Augustine's struggles with doubt, unbelief, even atheism. The "you" in Augustine's formulation is the "You" in Halík's title. The "I" who wants God to be, is the one who earnestly seeks God, even when faith is practically non-existent, even when intellect and education argue that an invisible deity is nonsense, a relic of old, magical thinking, unscientific and even childish. But desire for God's reality, for God "to be," is hopeful, willful seeking, the only prerequisite for finding God.

As a psychotherapist and priest-theologian, Halík deconstructs and critiques much of the literal interpretations of, for example, Jesus' teaching about self-denial, which too often is equated with severe, psychologically unsound asceticism, not the self-emptying that allows the Holy Spirit to fill us. He spends much of this short, pithy book illuminating the awe and mystery of the transcendent God, and in showing how we misuse the concept when we invent products of our imagination that we falsely call "God," but who are "the gods that we manufacture in our minds and treat as we wish . . . instruments for fulfilling our wishes, cultural symbols, educational tools for disciplining children, and so on . . . all manifestations of idolatry and superstition, which are the antithesis of faith" (130).

When we treat "God" as an ATM when we're financially strapped, or a magic pill when we're sick, a rescuer when we're in distress, we are not treating God as the Great Thou, ruler of the universe and deep companion of our souls, but as our ego tool, a thing to

relieve anxiety.

As a European, Halík writes frankly about the decrease in Christian faith in western culture and how Christians might better address our de-Christianized societies and also form greater bonds with people of non-Christian faiths, focusing on God's love for each person God has created.

Reading this book over about a week's time, I found much to think about, and I have made some changes in my own practice as a result, including more contemplative prayer. I am also about to read a book he recommends, Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, which, I was dismayed to discover when I obtained it, is about four times the length of Halík's nicely slender volume!

One caveat: as an enlightened but very much orthodox Roman Catholic priest, when discussing human love, Halík makes a distinction between heterosexual love, which can be biologically procreative, and same-sex love, a distinction that some readers (including me) may find off-putting and even offensive. He is by no means expressing homophobic attitudes – not at all – but he is very "traditional" in his view. I treated his very small number of remarks on this subject the way I do some of Saint Paul's opinions about marriage, celibacy, same and extramarital sex, and women, with the exercise of tolerance and the awareness that I, too, have some notions that could no doubt stand improvement.

That said, I highly recommend Halík's book to you, perhaps to reflect on during the coming season of Lent. ■