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# ST. JOHN'S JOURNAL

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Advent 2013

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## Welcome to the St. John's Journal inaugural issue!

Varied and various voices from our community are found within these pages, and it is our hope that herein each of us will share our varied and various voices with our community.

Share your pictures, your prayers, your prose, or news of your special event, and it will become ours: to live together, give together and grow together.

**With love and thanksgiving, The St. John's  
Communications Committee**



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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## WAITING WITH PATIENCE

How do we wait for God? We wait with patience. But patience doesn't mean passivity. Waiting patiently is not like waiting for the bus to come, the train to stop, or the sun to rise. It is an active waiting in which we live the present moment to the full in order to find there the signs of the One we are waiting for.

The word patience comes from the Latin verb *patior* which means "to suffer". Waiting patiently is suffering through the present moment, tasting it to the full, and letting the seeds that are sown in the ground on which we stand grow into strong plants. Waiting patiently always means paying attention to what is happening right before our eyes and seeing there the first rays of God's glorious coming.

By: Henri Nouwen

As we await with patience the coming of the Holy One this Christmas we ask the Lord to help us understand and carry on the mystery of compassionate and generous waiting in our lives. May a spirit of gratitude and humility guide us on our journey through life on earth and fill our hearts with Advent hope so that we may learn to cope with delays and disappointments with patience and wisdom, enabling us to endure, with joy the costs of waiting for love, reconciliation and peace.

**Submitted by Deacon Sandy**

## O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” is the familiar opening lyric of a hymn we often sing during Advent. The petition to “Immanuel” recalls an Old Testament prophecy quoted in this passage from Matthew:

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name “Immanuel” (which means, God with us). Matt 1:23 *ESV*

The word “Immanuel” (Hebrew for God is with us) appears only a few times in the Bible, yet the idea that God desires to be present with us is consistently and reassuringly conveyed throughout its pages. Sometimes our distractions prevent us from recognizing His presence beside us, but thankfully there are times His presence is palpable. Celtic Christians describe these undeniable and tangible encounters with God occurring in “thin places,” places where the line between the sacred world and the physical world is “tissue-paper thin.”

One of my favorite “thin place” encounters occurred in 2003 in St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. If you have visited this architectural wonder of Christopher Wren, you were no doubt dazzled by the splendor and glory of this visibly sacred place. Not surprising then, that God’s presence would be evident amidst these hallowed walls.

I recall breaking stride with my companions and exploring the vast Cathedral by myself, gazing at the exquisite paintings in the majestic dome, the vivid mosaics, and sauntering off to peruse the Chapels and corridors at my own pace. I wandered down one passageway after another, paying no attention to my guide map, simply awed by the beauty and letting it direct my way.

Suddenly before me was a life-size painting of Christ. He was at the center of a dimly lit scene, wearing a crown and a jeweled robe, his right hand preparing to knock on a door long overgrown with weeds and brambles. In the background was a dark, almost eerie night sky and the silhouette of a gnarled tree. Christ’s left hand held a lantern whose warm glow provided the painting’s main source of light. Christ’s approach to the door appeared gentle and patient, yet bold also, with the suggestion of persistence. The door had no handle on the outside and could be opened only if the inhabitant inside chose to respond. I was transfixed—my feet firmly planted at the site of this meeting. Christ was beckoning *me*.

At the base of the painting read this passage from Revelation:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. Rev 3:20 *ESV*

The painting is “The Light of the World,” by William Holman Hunt, originally done during 1853-1854. When I rejoined my traveling companions, I was not surprised to hear that they also had a similar reaction when they encountered it. I have since learned that we were not the only ones who felt challenged and confronted by the painting: it was the subject of much popular devotion during the Victorian period. And several years ago, during one of the late Father “Hap” Carrier’s sermons, I recall that he too described his stirring response at the sight of a painting he saw in England by William Holman Hunt where Christ stood knocking on a door without an exterior handle and could be opened only if the dweller within permitted entry. It seems that when we see this painting we recognize that our own story is being told on the canvas.

May this season of Advent be one when you hear Immanuel’s invitation and open the door He offers you. May you allow Him to enter and may you delight in His abiding Presence.

**Submitted by Jennifer Firth**

## Prayers and Thanksgivings: Shout Outs to God and One Another

### Thanksgiving Prayer

O God, you do not cease to give many riches in the rain that falls from heaven, and nourishment for life in the fertility of soil.

We give thanks to you for the fruits of the land which we have harvested, and we pray that you bless and preserve these fruits which we have received from your hand.

Help us to be mindful of the needs of others as we rejoice in the bounty of your goodness to us.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Submitted by Ellie O'Reilly**



Thank you, St. John's, for all you do for the people in need. We also enjoy Bible study, which is open for anyone who wants to participate. We would like others to take the time to join us and see how they enjoy it.

**Thank you and God bless! Bob and Kim Lachance**

O God, I do like real things like money and houses, fast automobiles and diamond rings.

Forgive me that when I think of Christmas, I often think of real things like that.

I teach my children to think of bicycles and dolls, of toy trains and airplanes, of sugar and spice and everything nice. Forgive me for my foolishness. These things I spend so much time playing around with are not bad, I can even use them creatively. They make up much of my world and occupy a great deal of my time. But you know what my problem is? I get so involved in accumulating them that I forget who I am. I get so surrounded by them that I end up tanglefooted, stumbling along from thing to thing, falling down at times, bruising my shins upon them.

Can you clear away some of the clutter of my life this year, O Lord? Can you help me pick my way through the crowded stores? Can you make me quiet long enough to hear angels? Can your Word about life break through the blare of tawdry commercials, the commercials that insist life can be bought if I will only go deeply into debt?

Lord, do you understand me?

Can you help me understand myself?

Do I really substitute gifts for self-giving too often?

Would I do better to say "I love you" as I pass out presents?

Would I come closer to someone by spending as much time listening as I do shopping?

These thoughts bother me at times. It may be that in my busyness I am losing touch with the things that are most real. It may be I am losing touch with you and with the Child whom you sent to grow up to be a Man, whose word was your Word and whose love was your Love. I like real things, and I know if I will listen, I may hear of the most real things of all... things like hope and love and faith that can change lives, even mine, and renew them in the image of Christ my Lord. Amen.

**Submitted by Carol Daniel**

From *A Book of Uncommon Prayer* by Kenneth G. Phifer (now out of print)

## The Story of the Christmas Guest

by Helen Steiner Rice

Submitted by Deacon Paul

It happened one day at December's end  
Some neighbors called on an old-time friend.

And they found his shop so meager and mean,  
Made gay with a thousand boughs of green.

And old Conrad was sitting with face ashine.  
When he suddenly stopped as he stitched the twine.

And he said "My friends at dawn today,  
When the cock was crowing the night away,

The Lord appeared in a dream to me.  
And He said, 'I'm coming your guest to be'"

So I've been busy with feet astir,  
Strewing my shop with branches of fir.

The table is spread and the kettle is shined,  
And over the rafters the holly is twined.

And now I'll wait for my Lord to appear;  
And listen closely so I will hear,

His steps as he nears my humble place.  
And I'll open the door and I'll look on his face."

Then his friends went home and left Conrad alone,  
For this was the happiest day he had known.

For long since his family had passed away.  
And Conrad had spent many a sad Christmas Day.

But he knew with the Lord as his Christmas guest,  
This Christmas would be the dearest and best.

So he listened with only joy in his heart,  
And with every sound he would rise with a start,

And looked for the Lord to be at his door.  
Like the vision that he had had a few hours before.

So he ran to the window after hearing a sound,  
But all he could see on the snow covered ground

Was a shabby beggar whose shoes were torn.  
And all his clothes were ragged and worn.

But old Conrad was touched and he went to the door  
And he said, "Your feet must be cold and sore.

I have some shoes in my shop for you.  
And I have a coat to keep you warmer, too."

So with grateful heart the man went away.  
But Conrad notice the time of day

And he wondered what made the dear Lord so late,  
And how much longer he'd have to wait.

Then he heard another knock, and he ran to the door,  
But it was only a stranger once more.

A bent old lady with a shawl of black,  
And a bundle of kindling piled on her back.

But she asked only for a place to rest,  
a place that was reserved, for Conrad's great guest.

But her voice seemed to plead, "Don't send me away,  
Let me rest for awhile this Christmas Day."

So Conrad brewed her a steaming cup  
And told her to sit at the table and sup.

After she had left, he was filled with dismay  
For he saw that the hours were slipping away

The Lord had not come as He said He would  
And Conrad felt sure he had misunderstood.

When out of the stillness he heard a cry.  
"Please help, me and tell me - Where am I?"

So again he opened his friendly door.  
And stood disappointed as twice before.

It was a child who had wandered away,  
And was lost from her family on Christmas Day.

Again Conrad's heart was heavy and sad,  
But he knew he could make this little girl glad.

So he called her in and he wiped her tears,  
And he quieted all her childish fears.

Then he led her back to her home once more.  
Then as he entered his own darkened door,

He knew that the Lord was not coming today,  
For the hours of Christmas, had all passed away.

So he went to his room, and he knelt down to pray.  
He said, "Lord, why did you delay?

What kept You from coming to call on me?  
I wanted so much Your face to see."

Then softly, in the silence, a voice he heard,  
"Lift up your head - I have kept My word.

Three times my shadow crossed your floor.  
Three times I came to your lowly door.

I was the beggar with bruised cold feet;  
I was the woman you gave something to eat;  
I was the child on the homeless street.

Three times I knocked, three times I came in,  
And each time I found the warmth of a friend.

Of all the gifts, love is the best.  
I was honored to be your Christmas guest."

### *Having a Bad Hair Day*

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the millions who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.

If you can read this message, you just received a double blessing in that someone was thinking of you, and furthermore, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world who cannot read at all.

So when you feel very down, just remember how blessed you are.

--A. Edwards, London, England

**Submitted by Katie Brillat**

*"My brother read this at a Thanksgiving dinner about a decade ago. I have adopted it as a holiday tradition."*

### **Holidays**

There is a holiday coming upon us soon. It is a thankful time of the year. Often in times past, all my family gathered together, including Mother and Grandma and Sister and Aunt. I see them start to look through old recipe files, magazines, and cookbooks. Mother asks for help about what favorite dishes to make. Someone is going to call on friends and family to deal with the meal menu. I see them cooking the holiday's treats, and around them, a little one is trying to eat a spoonful of sweet cherry or apple for the pies. A big one, walking away with his hand full, tells the little one to go play, but this doesn't work at all. Some of the little and big ones are sent out of the cooking area—or else!

Somebody delivers the flower arrangement for the holiday dinner tables. They put a couple of stems in the kitchen for the ladies; these are surprise treats from the spouses: Husband and Grandpa. Thanksgiving Eve is here and the shopping list is full of food. One half of the list is in the hand of he who is to pick up the main item. Now it is time for young girls and boys to be around. Their eyes pop out with wonder, thinking there will also be sweet taste samples from the store. "Pop, try to get a second or a third." Grandpa gets his four, and passes one to me.

When we go out, we all stop at the main alley for snacks, chip and dip, extra pies, rolls, and wines. We look at the store displays. All are being readied for the Black Friday. It is the start-time for the next holiday. That one is everyone's favorite: Christmas is coming!

Finally we are at home with the bird. Some ask, "What happened to the list?" That shopping was too quick. Brother is back out to shop; he is lucky—more samples! Lunch time is the best for me because of the candy, with some to share. Time to get ready and prepare for Thanksgiving Day.

The turkey is in the oven by early morning. At four or five a.m. there is popping and banging around in the kitchen. Everything is cut, diced, and peeled. The young ones fill up snack bowls with sweet candy or fruit. Now it's time to watch TV—the parade—and to wait for Santa Claus to appear. Now the Thanksgiving Dinner is ready for setting out. Say Thanks!

#### **A Simple Blessing Prayer**

I can say, "Thank you from me!"

I bless with many Fathers!!

Fathers, Stepfathers and Grandfathers!

Don't forget Father Steven.

And God is my Top Father in Heaven!

I have received many blessings, praying!

From family, friends, neighbors, Jesus!

I'm still here with the special blessing and prayer from my friends.

I would like to give a special love

and very big hugs to all of them.

**Reflection and Prayer submitted by John Ballard**



During the first Advent silent prayer service last year I heard God say to me: “Do not hide your face from Me”.

When we are led in prayer and in the darkness by God, we may find, as I did, that he asks us to show him more than our sweet and self-complacent self. He already knows everything there is to know about us; he knows our gifts as well as our sins, and he want us to trust him, and his love, and show him both.

Let us remember to listen when we pray for the voice that says: “Don’t be afraid to show your whole self to me. Pay attention to what is happening to you. I, the One God and Creator of the Universe, am pouring out my love upon you.

**Submitted by Amy Lewis**

### Wants Litany

In unrest, we pray to you:

For the world and the church, that they would serve our needs well; *We want what we want, and we want it now.*  
 For those who are sorrowful or in need, that somebody would help them; *We want what we want, and we want it now.*  
 To never be sick, and enjoy perpetual healing; *We want what we want, and we want it now.*  
 To have faith, and to never need it; *We want what we want, and we want it now.*  
 To appear youthful, and to sound wise; *We want what we want, and we want it now.*  
 That we would not hunger after mere necessities; *We want what we want and we want it now.*  
 To be attractive to the opposite sex, to everyone and everything, and not to draw unwanted attention;  
*We want what we want, and we want it now.*

We pray for the special wants and concerns of this congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ Aren’t there more? \_\_\_\_\_

We pray for the wants that have died \_\_\_\_\_ ; certainly there are others?: \_\_\_\_\_ , that they would be resurrected on this day, that they may light a fire within us of eternal unrest, prompting us to forever beseech you; *We want what we want, and we want it now.*

We will thank you for the blessings of this life when we receive them.

We will try to pray for the forgiveness of our sins: for self-pity because of things you have left undone. Because we lack so much, we are truly sorry and humbly repent. For our sakes, have mercy upon us, and give us what we want.

**Submitted by Brynna Carpenter-Nardone**



**Dear Parishioners of St John's and St. Paul's Parish:**

The community of Saint Esprit Church in Lascahobas and I are very pleased to send you this note of gratitude and thanks. We appreciate your compassionate love for the community of Saint Esprit Church. Your great support in various and most effective ministries is very much appreciated by the church's people and myself.

In a time of economic austerity everywhere, we are still blessed to have been receiving the means to support our ministry in Haiti. It is our prayer that we will be able to continue working side by side as partners in the coming years and your ministry is one dear to our hearts. We look forward to a long and rewarding association with you and we will continue to pray for you that God can be able to provide good things for you in the coming years.

As we approach the Advent Season, I wish you all a blessed advent season. May the incarnate Lord come in our hearts that we can be able to continue ministering to the poor and the needy which is a sign of the manifestation of God's kingdom on earth.

May the God of love and hope be always with you!

**Yours in Christ,**

**Father Jean Jacques DRAVIL+**

Priest in charge of St. Esprit, Lascahobas, Transfiguration, Ranthramouaie, Ascension, Pouly, St Andre Flande; Christ Roi Lahoye and St Philippe & St Jack Corosse

The first time I came to St. John's Church I was so happy! I always heard about the church and the people but never thought I would ever be here--it is amazing to me. I have met so many nice people who work together with my parish in Lascahobas, Haiti.

During Christmas time I expect to take part in many activities at your church. It will be a big pleasure for me. It is so interesting to see how people in your church love each other. I give my full thanks in the name of St. Esprit Church to everyone who always pray and help us.

I did not think I would be able to take part in so many activities because I am a guest. You accepted me and seem happy to have me. That surprised me.

Finally, I thank everyone that I have met. Thank you so much.

**Kimberly Val, St. Esprit Church  
Lascahobas, Haiti**

[Kimberly's mother Ghislène is a leader in the parish of St. Esprit, and the person who prepares delicious meals for us when we are in Lascahobas.]



## The Hidden Ministry of the Altar Guild Submitted by Chris Salmon

The Altar Guild at St. John's is, as Father Steve puts it, one of the "hidden ministries" of the church. Most of us are vaguely aware that there is a group of people called the Altar Guild, and that they have something to do with getting the altar set up for Holy Communion. Beyond that, we would be hard pressed to describe exactly what they do or why it's so important to our common worship. I sat down with Martha Leckonby, for many years the Directress of the Altar Guild (Lois Hodkinson took over in 2012; Martha now serves as Assistant Directress) to find out more about the history and present-day duties of this dedicated group.

In the earlier days of the parish, the Altar Guild was as much a social group as it was concerned with the tasks involved in preparing the altar. One had to be invited to join the Altar Guild by the Rector; you could not just volunteer. (We should note that an invitation to join is no longer necessary!) Meeting notes dating back to the 1920s show us that meetings were held monthly, usually involving some kind of devotions or talk by a member of the clergy. Often, they were held in members' homes. After the business portion of the meeting was over, there was always a social time, with luncheons or even picnics in the summer months. It was an era when many women did not work outside the home and often were able to devote considerable time to church activities. The needlepoint cushions found throughout the sanctuary, for example, were all made by former Altar Guild members. As time went on, and people found more demands being made on their free time, meetings became less frequent and more about keeping members up to date on Altar Guild procedures and policies. These days, meetings are usually held a couple of times a year to go over any changes occasioned by upcoming liturgical holidays or clergy preferences. In addition, the Directress and Assistant Directress serve on the Worship Committee, which consults with the Rector and Deacons on how to celebrate the liturgy through the church seasons.

Setting up for the Sunday service is done on a rotating basis by two people each week, usually on Saturday morning. Before beginning their duties, they silently say a prayer asking God to bless their work and to remind them that their tasks are carried out to honor Him. They check the liturgical calendar in the sacristy to make sure that the proper color is used for the lectern hangings, the Bible marker, and any other seasonally changing items.

The altar is set up first with the fair linen, a long piece of cloth that covers to the front edge of the altar and hangs down on both sides. For Christmas and Easter, a special – and very old - fair linen with lace on the front is used. The brass holder for the service book is placed on the altar and the Gospel book is placed on the altar to the side. The principal chalice used for Communion is set on the fair linen and covered with a purificator, a small rectangle of linen folded in a specific way. Over the purificator is placed the paten, a flat metal plate. The priest's host – a large communion wafer, which is broken when the priest says, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," is placed on top of the paten. The pall, a square, stiff piece of linen-covered cardboard, is placed over the paten and host. In ancient times, this was intended to keep the host and chalice clean and free from any debris or insets. Then the veil, an embroidered piece of cloth in the same liturgical color as the lectern hangings, is draped over the pall to form a tent-like covering. This recalls the veil that was used in the ancient temple to separate the congregation from the sanctuary. (Remember that the veil in the Temple at Jerusalem was torn in two at the moment of Christ's death.) Finally, a rigid cloth envelope called the burse, which is also in the liturgical color, is placed on top. A large rectangle of linen, called a corporal, is folded into nine squares and placed inside the burse, along with another purificator. The corporal symbolizes Christ's burial shroud (its name derives from corpus, "body" in Latin); it is unfolded at the Eucharist and is placed under the chalice and bread to indicate their sanctification. The purificators are used to wipe the chalice during the administration of Communion.

In addition to the main altar, the Altar Guild sets up the credence table, the small marble shelf on the south side of the altar. The credence table holds the lavabo, a small silver bowl that the priest uses to symbolically wash his hands at the beginning of the Communion service; two small hand towels for the priest to dry his hands; a cruet filled with water; another filled with the Communion wine; and a second chalice. There is also

the ciborium, a covered, stemmed silver container for the Communion wafers. The acolytes bring these elements to the altar when directed by the priest.

Finally, the Altar Guild is responsible for setting up the cruet of wine and the silver wafer box on the offertory table at the back of the church. These are placed on top of a corporal cloth laid out on the table and are brought up to the altar before the offertory.

For the 8 am service, the procedures are the same, except that the vessels and linens are set up in the small chapel.

After the service is over, the Altar Guild members take the vessels from the altar and bring them in the sacristy, where they are washed, dried, and returned to the safe. Any remaining wafers are placed in the umbrey, the wall cabinet in the baptistery, by the priest or the deacons to be used when reserved sacrament is required. Wafers that have fallen to the floor or that have been broken and not consumed are placed in a small jar of water called the aspergillum and allowed to dissolve; the water is then poured out onto the ground outside. The purificators, corporal, and hand towels are brought home by Marion Stuarts or Martha Leckonby and washed and ironed. Martha washes and irons the fair linen as needed throughout the year. The clergy at St. John's maintain their own vestments, though the Altar Guild takes care of the seasonal stoles belonging to the church. Guild members also polish the brass fixtures and silver vessels several times a year.

Why would someone want to participate in this very structured and disciplined work? Martha says she finds it very satisfying. Altar Guild members are participating in procedures that date back centuries, yet are honoring God anew each week with their work. The reverent care they bring to their tasks helps make our weekly Eucharist the beautiful service that it is. If you think you would like to be a part of this proud tradition, please speak to Father Steve or to Lois Hodkinson.

## **Body & Soul,**

In the weeks leading up to Stewardship Sunday this fall, you may remember, we did a lot of extra blessing and sanctifying at St. John's. We consecrated a beautiful new set of Eucharistic vessels. We baptized two babies. And on Stewardship Sunday, we commissioned a new ministry.

Led by Therese Duvil, the Community Health Ministry at St. John's is itself a form of stewardship. Helping us care for our bodies, monitor our health and seek the help we need from our doctors, Therese and her team of gentle ministers are helping us to steward our lives. Obviously, they hope to help us to lengthen our lives. But Therese's vision for this ministry reaches beyond that. As a professional nurse and a professing Christian, Therese recognizes the profound relationship between our bodies and our souls, and how we were each created by God to love and serve him with our whole selves—including our bodies. And a part of what it means to love and serve God is to love and serve for our neighbors as whole persons—including their bodies.

Working under the guidance of her mentor, Angela Sheehan of Seton Health, and in collaboration with her pastor, Therese and her team are devoted to building up the Body of Christ by helping us care for our souls—by helping us care for our bodies.

As Therese develops her team, and her team develops their mission, I will be telling you how we can take increasingly good advantage of their gifts, their love and their service. Meanwhile, you should feel free to talk to Therese about her ministry, the role it plays in the life of our parish, and the service it may do for you.

**Love,**

**Fr Steve**

**Getting to know us:  
Abe Schlossberg interviews Joe Nardone**



Abe: Why don't you tell us how long you've been a pizza and wine maker?

Joe: I've been making wine as long as I can remember. My father always made wine. They made wine in Italy with their own grapes. [In this country] they would always buy grapes every fall and make wine. And then the pizza....I've got five pizza places in my family— I've worked at every one of them. I built pizza ovens with my dad. So pizza and wine are a big part of my life.

Abe: What part of Italy are your parents from?

Joe: The Campania region, near Naples. The province is called Benevento. My mother comes from a small town called Amorosi and my father's town is San Giorgio del Sannio. The big city nearby is Benevento.

Abe: You guys have the best names.

Joe: Italian is a very musical language.

Abe: Do you speak it at all?

Joe: I speak it very little. I would never go hungry in Italy. I can say a lot about food in Italian, I guess. I spoke Italian when I was very young, and then my parents stopped speaking it because they were afraid I wouldn't learn English, so I forgot everything I learned from my parents. I took some in college, but I didn't speak it enough to keep it up. When I go back to Italy, after a week, I'm pretty good.

Abe: Do you enjoy teaching other people how to make pizza and wine?

Joe: Yeah, you are the third person I've done the wine with. It seems like a lot of people are interested in making wine and pizza. I haven't done much with pizza yet, but there is always someone who wants to see how the wine gets made. I do enjoy sharing that.

Abe: What's your favorite pizza place in the Capital Region?

Joe: It's Defazio's, I love their pies. I still have to try Sapienza's, maybe we should go together sometime.

Abe: Yeah, we should. Do you know if DeFazio's is authentic Italian?

Joe: That's a strange question because Italian pizza is almost nothing like [American pizza]. I remember one place in Italy where they put almost no cheese on the pizza, just here and there, and people would ask for no cheese, they wanted the slices with less cheese, rather than more.

Abe: And do they still have the sauce?

Joe: Yes. You'd get a big, square-cut pie covered with sauce and very little cheese. Different places would have square-cut pies with different toppings. I remember when Brynna and I were in Assisi, the town where Francis was from, and we were watching all the workers come out of this place (they call them bars, but it's more like cafe, they serve alcohol and food and coffee), and it smelled great. They were serving pizza for breakfast. There was a pizza with tiny caramelized onions on it. I never saw a pizza you'd buy in the United States in Italy, like a cheese pizza, unless they were catering to tourists. Italian pizza is...I don't know if there is one.

Abe: Yeah, it's not like you ask for a cheese or a pepperoni.

Joe: I don't know if they know what a pepperoni is in Italy. They have a lot of different sausages, I don't know if they have pepperoni, though. I think pepperoni is an American fabrication. I could rattle off a dozen different names for sausage, but I never had a pepperoni in Italy, no.

Abe: I once had a pizza with no sauce on it, but no cheese—never.



Joe: When my grandmother would make it—she made all the bread for the week once a week—she would stretch out some dough, take a tomato and crush it, drop it on top, and that would be pizza. My mother would make it in the summertime. She would take tomatoes, garlic, and oregano from the garden, chop that up, add olive oil, and take that to my uncle’s pizza place to have that put on her pizza. Maybe some grated cheese, but never mozzarella. I forgot to make that last summer—next summer I’ll make it for you.

Abe: I remember that one pizza you made was just a crust with a little bit of sauce that was pretty good.

Joe: That’s a focaccia. I always make the first pizza a focaccia. I just put on garlic, oil, and some herbs on top. Then I can see how the oven is cooking—if it’s too hot or cold.

Abe: It’s like a test dummy.

Joe: It always tastes good.

Abe: My dad and I were saying how that was really delicious.

Joe: I want to try to build a clay oven. I bought a big sack of clay and some sand. I want to make a test oven, maybe this winter to find the right proportions of clay and sand. Straight clay I think

it would crack—if I add sand to keep it from cracking when it heats I think it would still crack some—after we get the right proportions maybe we can build an oven in the garden or at your house.

Abe: We have to do that sometime, too. You are also a really good risotto [rice] maker.

Joe: Yeah, that’s a fun thing to make. I’ve always made things with my hands. I always worked with my dad building houses; cooking is sort of like building, you take all the different layers of food and you build something out of it. Risotto is just another fun thing to make.

Abe: I thought the risotto was delicious. I’ve got to make it for my family sometime.

Joe: We’ll do it together sometime, I’ll coach you through it.

Abe: Were there any Italian icons you looked up to or were a fan of when you were a kid?

Joe: No, I don’t know...

Abe: Not Al Pacino?

Joe: But he’s an American, Italian-American. He’s a great actor. There are a lot of Italian-American actors, like Joe Pesce, DeNiro...

Abe: Yeah, “My Cousin Vinnie.”

Joe: I like “Life is Beautiful,” and that skinny actor, Roberto Benigni: there’s an Italian guy.

Abe: You know all of Clint Eastwood’s spaghetti westerns? They have an Italian director and Italian actors in them. *The Good, Bad and the Ugly*, what’s that in Italian.....”Il Buono.....”

Joe: Remember the movie, *Dumb and Dumber*? They had that in Italy when we were there, *Scemo e Piu` Scemo—Stupid and More Stupid*.

Abe: “Piu`” is “more?”

Joe: “Mangiare un po de piu`,`,” my grandmother would always say, “Eat just a little more.”

Abe: Which of your parents do you look more like?

Joe: I look more like my mother's side of the family. My mother's family all came from Italy in the 1960's. If I go to Italy, my father's family will say I'm a DiPaola, not a Nardone.

Abe: Di Paola is your mother's maiden name? Do you know what it means?

Joe: It means "of Paul." "Di" is "of," son of Paul, I guess.

Abe: Nardone—do you know what that means?

Joe: Yeah—nard is a flower. Actually, it's biblical. When Mary Magdalene anointed the feet of Jesus, she used oil of spikenard.

Abe: Oh wow.

Joe: So Nardone means "large nard." I don't know if someone in my family was a perfume dealer or somebody was in the Crusades and brought back some of these flowers or if someone was a florist...

Abe: Does it smell good?

Joe: It's a powerful and sweet smell.

Abe: Do you have any siblings who make pizza or wine at all?

Joe: Just my sister, and she doesn't make wine.

Abe: Does she enjoy your wine?

Joe: Oh yeah. She and her husband go to New York City a lot and get pizza. Once I made a pizza for him, and he brought the sauce he wanted, he brought the cheese he wanted—he let me make the dough. I made the pizza, and the crust was scorched. He said that's okay, I pay twenty-two dollars for pizza like this in New York City, and they come scorched also.

Abe: That happens to me—it doesn't matter unless it's the whole crust.

Joe: At my uncle's pizzeria, I had to eat what I burnt. I actually developed a taste for it: you don't throw them out.

Abe: That's awesome. Who makes better pizza or wine, you or your parents?

Joe: I do—that's a no-brainer.

Abe: I have to try your parents' pizza sometime and compare them.

Joe: My father's got a big garage, two bays with a third bay that's a little kitchen. He's got a pizza oven in there built right in so he can make pizza all year round. They have parties in there. My parents love to feed people.

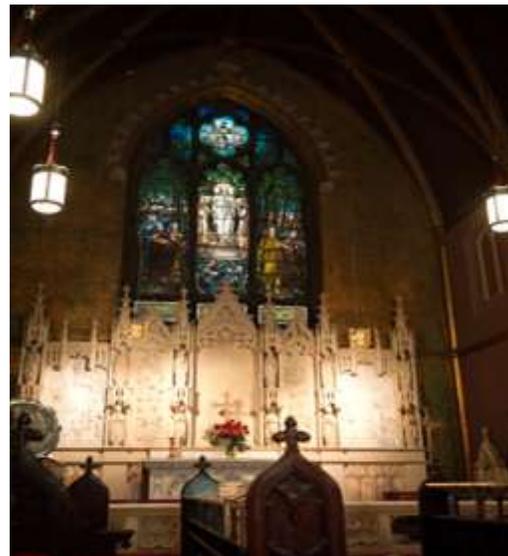
Abe: Ben says when he says he's full, they think he didn't like it.

Joe: It's like that when I'd go to Italy, and I'd struggle to finish a whole plate of something, and when I did they'd say, "Oh my goodness, he must still be hungry, get another plate!" If you don't eat it all, they say, "He must not like it," and then they cook something else for you.

Abe: I have a friend whose grandma is Italian who told me she's the exact same way. So, is there anything else you want to tell me?!

Joe: Nothing comes to mind.

Abe and Joe (talking over each other): Alright, paesan!



## Sermon offered by Deacon Sandy: Luke 17:11-19 October 13, 2013

Please pray with me: “Your Word Lord is truly a lamp unto my feet and light for my path. May it make me humble and teachable as I share it with others”.

Today’s Gospel is found only in Luke, the story of Jesus’ healing of ten lepers. As we heard it, we know that it is a story of the ten lepers’ testimony to the healing power of Jesus Christ. But it is more than that. It’s a witness of gratitude from a condemned man who was brought from death to life.

Most of you have heard of Rudyard Kipling, and have perhaps been introduced to some of his works – “Captain Courageous; How the Leopard Got His Spots, and my favorite, The Jungle Books”. My children loved that one!

A newspaper reporter came up to him once and said “Mr. Kipling, I just read that somebody calculated that the money you make from your writings amounts to over one hundred dollars a word”. The reporter reached in his pocket and pulled out a one hundred dollar bill and gave it to Kipling and said “Here’s a one hundred dollar note, Mr. Kipling. Now you give me one of your one hundred dollar words.”

Upon receipt of the money, Kipling looked at it, put it in his pocket and said “thanks”! Thanks is a small word with a powerful meaning as it gets across a message that few other words are capable of achieving. It’s a word that conveys a powerful message about the relationship of two people and the appreciation of what one has done for the other.

The Gospel story today is what sets the story of the ten lepers apart from all the other healing stories found in the New Testament, because for all Jesus’ healings, only this poor leper came back to say “thank you”.

We all know that leprosy was a dreaded disease in Jesus’ day, mostly because it was not clearly understood. Richard Donovan, in his commentary tells us that leprosy was not necessarily Hansen’s disease, but Biblical leprosy includes skin diseases such as ringworm, psoriasis, etc. So, while some skin diseases were potentially fatal, others are harmless, but lacking medical knowledge, 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews lumped all skin diseases into one category and declared the infected person spiritually unclean and socially unfit.

For many, leprosy was a death sentence. It was assumed the leper was being punished for something they had done wrong. So, they were banished – not to be associated with, but avoided, so their contamination would not be spread – and not only their contamination but also, their condemnation – to others!

So, for lepers in the first century, the Law of Moses was clear – “put out of the camp every leper, and everyone who has an issue, and whoever is unclean by the dead”. (Num. 5:2) For the Hebrews it was a matter of life and death, as an infectious disease could wipe out an entire village.

Once declared to be a leper, the individual was banished as a primitive means of quarantine. Lepers were forced to live in the wilderness. The book of Leviticus tells us “ the leper in whom the plague is shall wear torn clothes, and the hair of his head shall hang loose. He shall cover his upper lip, and shall cry “Unclean! Unclean!”

In biblical times, the suffering leper was due in many cases, not so much to the severity of the disease as to the way the leper was treated in religious society.

Now, today we have better medical ways in which skin diseases are treated, and those afflictions do not quarantine us. . . . .but, do we still isolate and quarantine those we judge to be unclean? Certainly the poor and mentally challenged experience the world differently than we do. Sometimes our body language or tone of voice begs the question – are we hesitant in our approach to them? Are we afraid that whatever it is about them will somehow be offensive or infectious to us? Well, perhaps we’re unaware of this, and it is so sad, because it is contrary to the image of God in which we were created. God is love, and the nature of love is to seek out loving relationships with others, no matter how different or displeasing they may be to us.

In Biblical times, once excluded from family and friends, lepers sought out the company of other lepers, which bears witness to that innate longing of the human spirit for community, love and support. And so lepers congregated in the wilderness to comfort and care for each other, as they suffered and died in exile.

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It was a small leper colony such as this that Jesus encountered on his way through the Samaritan wilderness. Ten lepers, dressed in tattered rags, their bodies covered with lesions, crying at the top of their lungs. For some reason, however, they didn't cry out "unclean!" as they were supposed to. Instead, they cried, "Jesus, Master have mercy on us".

How did they know who Jesus was? Why didn't they warn him of the danger of their presence? Luke doesn't answer those questions for us, he simply tells us that, in answer to their plea, Jesus responded with mercy. This is the nature of Jesus – to love the unlovable, to touch the untouchable, to seek out the least, the last and the lost.

Jesus told the lepers, "Go and show yourselves to the priests". This is significant in two ways: First, he treated the lepers the same way he treated everyone else – he didn't criticize them or question whether or not they were worthy of his time and attention. The only prerequisite to receiving God's grace and love is the need of him, which is precisely what Jesus had told the Pharisees in Matthew's Gospel "Those who are healthy have no need for a physician, but those who are sick do. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance". So, Jesus told the lepers, "Go and show yourselves to the priests."

The second reason that this is significant is that Jesus did not seek to circumvent the authority of the church. It was the priest's responsibility to declare an individual unclean and then it was up to the priest to determine whether or not the individual had been healed. This was in accordance with the Law, and Jesus didn't challenge that. In the Sermon on the Mount He told his disciples: "Don't think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I didn't come to destroy, but to fulfill". (Matthew 5:17). So, the lepers turned in obedience to Jesus' word, and in that instance they were healed!

Imagine the picture – they leaped for joy when they saw what had happened! They could once again re-enter society. Once again they could worship in the Temple! They had been as good as dead, and now they were healed – they were alive! They had been separated from their loved ones, now they were to be reunited. This was a miracle of unimaginable proportions, and they were ecstatic!

But, Luke tells us that one of the lepers, seeing that he was healed turned back to Jesus and praised God in a loud voice "He fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks". He saw what others didn't – he was healed and God deserved praise and Jesus deserved thanks.

Weren't the ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Why did the one who turned back not do as he was told and go to the temple? What was it about this one leper that caused him to return to the scene of the miracle to say "thanks"? Was it because he more grateful than the rest? Was he more righteous?

One of the commentaries by Dr. McLarty suggests this theory: Luke tells us that this leper was a Samaritan. Jesus told the lepers to go show themselves to a priest, who could confirm that they had been healed. Could it be that the Samaritan didn't rush off because he had no priest to go to? Being a Samaritan he wouldn't have been allowed to set foot in the Temple. Could it be that being restrained from other moral obligations, he was free to live a life of gratitude to God? He was free to linger in the company of Jesus and say "thank you" because he wasn't weighted down by the expectations of fulfilling the law.

Now let's ask ourselves the question – does the church stand in the way of our experiencing the fullness of God's grace and love? We get into such a routine of going to church, bible study, etc. that without realizing it, we may be failing to appreciate the miracles that surround us.

We get so caught up in the form of worship and established patterns of church life that we fail to experience the awe and wonder of Almighty God. Like the nine lepers who were so intent on fulfilling the requirements of the law, we may fail to recognize the One who has come to give us life in all its abundance because we're so busy doing what is expected of us.

"Don't forget to say thank you!" We should be shouting that to the nine lepers; we tell our children to remember to say it – and we need to hear those words ourselves. We get so caught up in the busyness of life that we fail to honor the one who has made possible for us the promise of eternal life.

Each Sunday we respond to the Prayers of the People, one of which offers us the opportunity to say "thank you", either aloud or in the silence of our hearts – often we do not reflect upon the good things. Our thoughts always center around those we love, around those who mean so much to us, who for so long have made us so very happy, and how many times we have forgotten to say "thank you", and just how much we love them.

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So, before we rush off to see the priest, that is, before we get so absorbed in trying to fulfill all the expectations others have of us – including the church – let’s take a moment to marvel at the beauty of God’s creation and bask in the warmth of God’s love, and be grateful.

The Good News is Jesus died for us. He has brought us from death to life – let’s not ever forget to say “thank you!”

Let us Pray: “We praise you God, with gladness and humility for all the joys of life, for health and strength, for the love of family and friends, for work to do and play to recreate us. We thank you for the adventure of life. Above all we thank you for your gift of Jesus Christ our Lord for the blessings that have come to us through his body, the church. Help us to show our thankfulness, not only with our lips, but in our lives, always endeavoring to do what shall please you”. Amen.

## ST. JOHN’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **DECEMBER 2013**

ADVENT MEDITATION BY CANDLELIGHT  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 11 & 18 AT 6 PM

THE ST. NICHOLAS CHRISTMAS FAIR  
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 FROM 8 AM TO 2 PM

LESSONS AND CAROLS CHRISTMAS PAGEANT  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22 AT 10 AM

CHRISTMAS EVE HOLY EUCHARIST WORSHIP SERVICES  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24 AT 4 PM AND 10 PM

CHRISTMAS DAY HOLY EUCHARIST WORSHIP SERVICE  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25 AT 8 AM

### **JANUARY 2014**

HEARTBURN FOR HAITI CHILI COOK-OFF  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 24 AT 6 PM

### **MARCH –APRIL 2014**

LENTEN CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER  
FRIDAYS AT 6 PM



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