

The First Order

St. Stephen's Parish

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APRIL 2017

"I have heard many people speak of who they believe they were in previous incarnations, but they seem to have very little idea of who they are in this one. . . . Let's take one life at a time."

- Stephen Levine, *A Year to Live: How to Live This Year as If It Were Your Last*

Let's take one life at a time.

What wonderful inspiration in this season of Holy Week and Easter. Even as we walk the Way of the Cross ourselves, and feel into our bodies the Passion and Resurrection stories, it can be easy to slip into the safety and distance of our minds and thoughts. But to my way of thinking, we do not walk through these liturgies every spring only to recall Jesus' walk through these events, but we walk them to feel for ourselves the basic human experiences that He shared with us, and that we ourselves know all too well in our own lives.

Misunderstanding. Loss. Betrayal. Suffering. Death. Renewal. Return. Reconciliation.

To walk through these liturgies and focus only on Jesus' experiences does not change us. His pattern of living is meant to seep into our very hearts and souls, and transform our lives. Can we offer our very best in the face of cruelty? Can we stand with one another in the midst of suffering?

In this season of endings and beginnings, of death and resurrection, we can ourselves begin anew. What patterns in your life need to end now? What behaviors or habits have become life-sucking instead of life-giving? What would it look like for you to feel, *in your flesh and in your very bones*, Resurrection? In

the same breath that we rejoice in Christ's resurrection, we are called over and over again to embrace new life ourselves.

For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

- John 13: 15,17

The Lord is risen, indeed. Alleluia!

Cricket +

Reflections

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Holy Week and Easter Services



Palm Sunday *April 9*

5 pm (Sat) & 8 am (Sun) Holy Eucharist

******10:15 am** Blessing of the Palms on **PARK SQUARE**
(Rain or Shine)

We will join with our neighboring churches for this brief blessing, before returning to St. Stephen's in procession!

(those with mobility concerns may wait in the church, or join us, as you are most comfortable.)

Maundy Thursday *April 13*

6 pm "Agape" Potluck Meal* and Celtic worship in the Guild Room, followed by the stripping of the Altar

Vigil in the Chapel, following (sign ups in hall)

** For more information on the Agape Meal, please read associated article in this newsletter!*

Good Friday *April 14*

12 noon Good Friday Liturgy

7 pm Good Friday Liturgy

The Great Vigil of Easter *April 15*

8 pm Join us in darkness to walk again through the history of God's love for us.

*** Incense **WILL** be used this year at the Vigil!

*** Chanting and fire!

*** Come be drawn into the stories of salvation!

Easter Day *April 16*

All-Morning Coffee and Pastry Buffet in the Guild Room, beginning at 9am.

8 & 10 am Festive Holy Eucharist

Easter Egg Hunt follows the 10 am service!



from Joseph

Holy Week is drawing near! Palm Sunday's happy procession with palms will give way to the reading of the Passion Gospel. Maundy Thursday will begin with a meal shared amongst friends, leading to the stripping of the altar as a sign of Jesus' turmoil in the Garden of Gethsemane and his arrest. The somber quiet of Good Friday draws up the gentle slope of the hill of Golgotha to stand at the foot of the cross to glimpse the mystery of our redemption. The darkness of the Easter Vigil is pierced by the Easter Fire, the Paschal Candle, and the triumphant proclamation of the Resurrection.

If you've been to the services of Holy Week, especially of the Three Days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil, you know their power and mystery. We sit with the story of Christ's final entry to Jerusalem and his crucifixion and resurrection, and we find ourselves there in Jerusalem with him even though two thousand years separate us from those events.

I find that the liturgy of those days is like a nest. The worship holds my life in its nest of Scripture and prayer, keeping me secure even when the world outside seems chaotic, uncertain, even downright scary. The crucifixion is the gift of salvation and redemption, and the resurrection is the gift of unconquerable hope and joy. What more do I need?

In your meditations leading up to Holy Week, I commend to you one of the anthems that can be used at the Good Friday liturgy. Even on such a darkly holy day as the commemoration of the Crucifixion of Christ there is joy:

We glory in your cross, O Lord,
and praise and glorify your holy resurrection;
for by virtue of your cross
joy has come to the whole world.

May God be merciful to us and bless us,
show us the light of his countenance, and come to us.

Let your ways be known upon earth,
your saving health among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

We glory in your cross, O Lord,
and praise and glorify your holy resurrection;
for by virtue of your cross
joy has come to the whole world.

Peace,
Joseph

April

Happy Birthday:

- 1 Noreen Reynolds
- 2 John Crane, Patricia Lake, Bailey Stokes (21!)
- 3 Matt Reynolds (19)
- 4 Patricia Decker, Craig Smith (a milestone!)
- 7 Bella Currie (17), Mark Trapani (a milestone!)
- 8 Scott Haviland
- 9 Maribeth Barney
- 10 Kaytlyn Samuels (15)
- 11 Jayne Church (a milestone!), Elizabeth Leonard, Skylar Reynolds (18)
- 12 Susan Coles
- 13 Mary Adams, Rachel DiGrigoli, Christopher Sanders (10), Cathy Wheelock, Ruth Wood
- 14 Anna Black (20!)
- 15 Aiden Champagne (7)
- 17 Steven Bannon, Elizabeth Trapani
- 20 Scott Ellis
- 22 Mary Gillman
- 23 Kieran Coscia (13), Michael Laurin
- 25 Aaron Cassavant (14)
- 26 Abigail Fenton
- 27 Seth DiGrigoli, Josie Ellis (a milestone!)
- 30 Lew Cuyler
- 29 Bill Carter

Happy Anniversary:

- 8 Cathy and Daniel Doyle (1989)
- 14 Claudia and Gary Curry (1984)
- 28 Bette-Anne and Kenneth Eddy (1990)
- Osneyde and Mark Miller (2001)

Maundy Thursday Agape Feast

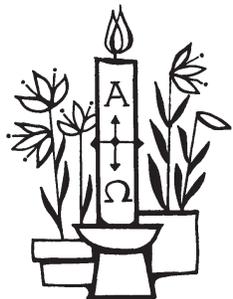
(pronounced ah-gah-PAY)

The word “agape” is one of the 4 varieties of love, as defined in ancient Greek. “Eros” is romantic love, “Philia” is the love we know as friendship (Philadelphia = “The City of Brotherly Love”), “Storge” is the love within a family- especially the love of parent for child, and “Agape” is unconditional love, often described as our love for God and God’s love for us.

Early Christians gathered for different types of meals together. Sometimes they gathered for what became the earliest forms of the Eucharist, sharing bread and wine in an evolving, ritualized sort of fashion. Sometimes they gathered for what were called “Agape feasts.” These were more along the lines of a full meal, ancient potlucks, which at their best were times for the community to work on breaking down socio-economic and cultural barriers, and at their worst were occasions of drunken revelry.

We gather on Maundy Thursday, hopefully, to revisit the former style of Agape Feast. It is a time to gather, to share food (mainly of a Middle Eastern variety, but not exclusively, so bring anything you like!), to hear readings for the day and a reflection upon them, to enjoy a Celtic liturgy at the table, and then to move into the darkened church for the stripping of the altar.

This night, our “communion” will be at table, sharing our time, our hearts, and our food with one another as the disciples might have. Join us for this ancient meal, in our modern world! Sign up if you can, so we can fill in any menus gaps~ or just come!



Eclectic Book Club

We held an extended discussion on March 3rd about “The Great Divorce,” by C.S. Lewis, a truly thought-provoking book. What is Heaven and what is Hell, and who took the bus back? It’s a small book but filled with many questions, and well worth reading. The next Book Club will meet in the Sears Room on April 7. We will discuss “The Ocean at the End of the Lane,” by Neil Gaiman... co-hostesses are yet to be named. Appetizers and Wine are at 5:30 p.m., with Dinner, followed by Discussion, at 6 p.m. Selections for the following months are: May: “The Visionist” by Rachel Urquhart. June: “Crossing to Safety” by Wallace Stegner. Please join us for a lively discussion.

Easter Envelope

Included with this issue of *The First Order* is a special envelope for Easter giving. Please use it with generosity of spirit.

Food for Thought

In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there’s something stronger - something better, pushing right back.

~ Albert Camus

Thank you

I cannot tell you how much your cards, notes and phone calls meant to me during the LONG recovery from knee replacement – not as easy at 83 as it was 15 years ago! Many thanks – and to those of you who brought goodies, my son Christopher joins me in many thanks. (Blueberry muffins from Edie were excellent, but when she then sent scones, Chris said, “Sorry, Mom, I’m going to go live with Mrs. Mingalone!”) I felt your prayers and I know they kept me going!

Joan Kurber

Holy Week and Easter with Our Children

Craig Reynolds, Church School Director

I know - drinking in the true power and mystery of Holy Week and Easter can be completely overwhelming. And if we're stunned as adults, how can we possibly hope to help our children navigate this sacred time?

It's no wonder that simple stories of the Easter Bunny and mounds of candy distractions often rule our celebrations.

Spoiler alert: I don't have any easy answers. But recently I became reacquainted with an approach that might help in some small way: The Rules of Improv. Yes, improvisational comedy. Stay with me here and see if you agree.

If you Google "rules of improv" you'll find roughly 685,000 results - evidence that there is no single, unified, certified, list of improv rules. Not surprising, since having a list of rules written in stone about making things up on the spur of the moment would be kind of missing the point.

But there does seem to be a general consensus about how to approach improv successfully:

Rule #1: Listen carefully. I know that when faced with a challenging situation, my first instinct is to start talking. But what if we started by listening? When our kids offer observations and ask questions, do we see these as opportunities for starting conversations? Are we listening?

Rule #2: Respond with "Yes, AND." Here again I can only speak for myself, but if my first instinct is to talk, my second impulse is to correct. But this unintentionally ignores the reality that for children, the way they've worked through a complex concept in their own minds makes perfect sense to them. Rather than invalidate that process, saying "yes, AND" builds on it.

Rule #3: Offer new information. It's not that we accept a child's initial story and leave it at that. Our job as adults is to affirm kids' own understanding as appropriate, and then add to it.

Rule #4: Make your partners look good. The most obvious application of this rule is that we never ridicule our kids' ideas as being simplistic. But the "inverse" is also true - oftentimes our kids can handle more nuance and subtlety than we give them credit for. Don't hold back on them. Allow them to signal when they've had enough.

Rule #5: There are no mistakes, only opportunities. This applies to kids and adults alike. And it's a particularly big one for adults, for two reasons. First, it frees us up to engage in these challenging conversations in the first place. Perhaps the only "mistake" here is to avoid the tough stuff altogether. Second, accepting that there are no mistakes means we can say to our children, "I don't know." That's a powerful message on its own. When it comes to the big questions in life, no one has all the answers. And saying "I don't know" opens the door to searching for some answers - together.

Perhaps raising kids, theology, and improv aren't such strange bedfellows after all:

"We grow spiritually much more by doing it wrong than by doing it right." - Richard Rohr

"We find our way by getting lost." - Seth Godin

"It's funny: I always imagined when I was a kid that adults had some kind of inner toolbox full of shiny tools: the saw of discernment, the hammer of wisdom, the sandpaper of patience. But then when I grew up I found that life handed you these rusty bent old tools - friendships, prayer, conscience, honesty - and said 'do the best you can with these, they will have to do'. And mostly, against all odds, they do." - Anne Lamott

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Women's Spring Retreat: Quick Planning Session! *April 9th*

Many of us have spoken about our longing for a women's retreat this spring. Please huddle with me following worship on Palm Sunday, perhaps just carrying our coffee into the Sears Room for a brief check-in, to find a date that works for most of us. ~Cricket

Book-Signing Event

at The Bookstore, in Lenox:

Thursday, April 6 @ 5:30pm

Join me for a brief reading from my new book, *Chemo Pilgrim*, and for a lively "Question & Answer" period! This celebration includes free snacks, a cash bar, and a chance to mingle and pick up a signed copy of the book. Perhaps you have a friend or loved one who is going through a hard time, and who might be cheered by a book? A friend of mine recently told me it had helped him through his rehab following a knee-replacement, and encouraged him to be more forgiving and gentle with himself.

Thank you all for your kind support during this Book Launch month, and I hope you can come to the event to celebrate, even if you don't need a copy of the book. Bring a friend!

~ Cricket

Did You Know?

- That former parishioner Chauncey Jones died on Thursday, December 28, in Grecia, Costa Rico, where he had made his home in recent years. His daughter Libby and son Derrick were there for his funeral.
- That Connie Bullard kindly and very ably took over *The First Order* during your editor's recovery from knee replacement. A big thank you!!
- That Cassidy Goodwin and Nicholas Trapani made the Honors list at Reid Middle School for the second quarter.