



**St. Paul's
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When Kelly and I were in England recently, there were certain phrases that were practically inescapable. One was their version of the "See something, say something," that we find almost everywhere in public spaces; from the perspective of someone who is instantly suspicious of official-looking pronouncements, it's hard to tell whether these pithy sayings are meant to make us more aware of our surroundings or are simply there to ratchet-up our anxiety. The British version is as follows: "See it. Say it. Sorted." It doesn't really work for Americans, partly because we think of sorting things as a more mechanical activity (at least I do), so it doesn't comport with the idea of increased vigilance, at least at Heathrow Airport, where you will find enough painful experiences to match anything at the Tower of London.

One saying that has achieved some currency in the U.S. is the admonition to "mind the gap," which refers to the space between the platform and the inside of the underground trains. It was part of a clothing company's advertising campaign a few years ago (I'm dating myself here) and so has achieved some traction on its own, but I was thinking of the theological implications. British or American, we are actually masters at minding the gap, especially if we are thinking about the theological space for which we have

no plan of our own. A crisis arrives; a job loss, unexpected diagnosis, a rupture in one of our important relationships. Because we actually think that having a plan for everything is a virtue despite the fact that it relegates God to the periphery of our lives, we look for God to rescue us from one of these predicaments, instead of admitting that in our lives (and maybe even the vast economy of salvation), God has been at the center. We then look for this "God of the gaps" to rescue us from ourselves and whatever predicament we are in at the moment, instead of understanding, moment-by-moment, that God has been closer to us than our own skin. There is at least one fancy name for this heresy, but "mind the gap" is about as clever a reminder as any.

Because I am an American, was raised to be in charge of my own destiny by parents who made it through the Great Depression and a world war, I am keenly aware of this spiritual malady except when I suffer from it. A great deal of my prayer life is focused on living in the moment and giving thanks for it. It prevents me, temporarily, from delusions that I can solve all my problems without the help of God's grace. These moments when I forget that I am utterly reliant on God for every moment, every breath of my life, can paralyze me with anxiety. The great gift of time away or at least

unscheduled time is that we can be more expansive with our gratitude. We can stop running the world long enough to appreciate its beauty, its gifts, without feeling that we are reneging on our responsibilities. They never were ours in the first place.

This worshiping community has taught me a great deal in a short time but nothing so important than this dependence on God and, by extension, the God-given gifts we have in each other. I'm looking forward to a new year and new challenges but none more than the hard work of abandonment to divine providence. It is because in a world governed by that providence, there are no gaps. There is only a God who asks me to give it all up, to offer thanks in all things and to leave everything in hands far more capable than my own.

IN THIS ISSUE

Violence and Healing

Page 2

Other News Items

Page 3

Violence and Healing

In thinking about the violence of the last few weeks in Florida and Ohio, I have been thinking about what our responsibility is in the midst of these events, we who are fortunate enough not to be directly embroiled in them. As Christians, we cannot be simply spectators, but it is hard to know what to do except offer our prayers and our outrage; each of these lives, after all, is deeply beloved by God and we cannot, in good faith, condone the taking of life under any circumstances. But beyond our outrage, many of us feel something like paralysis, which only intensifies anger and suspicion of those not sharing our backgrounds or life-experience that comes from inhabiting two different worlds.

Rowan Williams has written about the part of the vocation of the Christian that is embraced in the East, that to be part of the community is to name the gift of God and to celebrate it. Such activity is most transparent in our worship. "Worship," Williams says, "is not only a matter of words, but is a foretaste of the God-related destiny of the world, that longed-for state of creation in which everything can be clearly seen as bearing God's glory and love." God's giving is at the heart of who we are; in fact, the failure to celebrate it or, at worst, to do it violence is the heart of original sin among our eastern brothers and sisters. We see this attitude echoed in our own celebrations of the Eucharist; the Church "takes the material of the world and gives it to God so that it may become a fully and equally-shared meal, a means

of communion in Christ...it manifests the destiny of all material things, which is to be effective signs of an accepting love that uses the material environment to express grace and justice."

In case we are wondering what this has to do with our lives at St. Paul's, we can begin by understanding that this sense of community is not only indispensable but sacred, if we take our Christian vocations seriously. Coming to the altar itself is an affirmation of the holiness of our community, one we ignore at our own peril. Participation in the Eucharist, as in all of our sacramentally-oriented lives, affirms the essential goodness of each of us; it is bearing witness to the gift of God that, despite our tendency toward violence and disorder, makes holy each of us. Despite what we see in our newspapers or televisions, one of the best gifts we can offer back to God is our belief that community matters. As children of God, our best weapons against suspicion and violence are in our worship, by which we affirm, as creatures of God, the holiness of all lives around us.

Approaching the beginning of a season dominated by vacations and time with those we don't ordinarily see, we nevertheless need to be attuned to the importance of the hard work of worship and prayer, not only for ourselves but on behalf of those whose lives we are celebrating, even in times of conflict and deep wariness. As a liturgical people, it is the fundamental way we convey the grace and justice that we desire for all the children of God.

MORNING PRAYER AND HEALING MASS

Please join us for morning prayer, Tuesday and Thursday at 8:30am. It is not only a wonderful way to make clear our intentions to ourselves and to God; it is also a wonderful way to build community within our parish. We will pray for our sisters and brothers throughout the Anglican Communion, for our neighboring parishes in the diocese and for the Church throughout the world. We will also be able to pray the list for the parish, for all who need healing and for our neighbors in a city that needs healing in many ways. Be with us if you can!

Our healing mass every Wednesday at 12:30 is a wonderful place to receive healing prayers in the context of a Holy Eucharist. It is designed to be short enough to occupy twenty minutes of a lunch hour and is a place where we can meet neighbors from other traditions who simply want to be in a place that emphasizes the sacramental work of healing. Join us!

COMMUNION CLASS TO BEGIN SEPTEMBER 8

In response to several requests by parents, I am having a class on Holy Communion after services, beginning September 8. Although it is not intended as a "First Communion Class" in the same sense that our Roman Catholic Sisters and Brothers use it, we will speak about the sacrament we practice each Sunday, how it is put together and how we think about it in our tradition. If you would like your child to participate, please sign up on the sheet at the back of the church. Thank you!

HELP US WITH OUR RECORDS!

We have discovered that much of our information about current parishioners is out-of-date or inaccurate. In the interest of making St. Paul's a safe place and with parish records we can trust, we are leaving sheets at the back of the church with names, addresses and contact information. Please take a moment to look at what we have and to make any necessary corrections. Thank you!