



THE MARVELOUS MORGANS AND BYRON

I remember writing letters from camp when I was in grade school and felt moved to do the same as an observer/resident cleric/Bible study teacher at Camp Faith 2019. To call myself a teacher sounds presumptuous, maybe even false, because these young people teach me more about myself and scripture than I ever hope to impart to them. They are smart, sincere, unfailingly polite (most of the time) and have enough energy to light up the city for a year. They certainly have provided a light for me for the start of my summer at St. Paul's and I am deeply grateful to be around them.

I was reflecting about my official role in "Jesus Stories"; I'm going to suggest we change the name from "Bible Study" for next year. The topic this year is "the miracles of Jesus," and our first foray into this very broad territory was the Feeding of the Five Thousand. Multiplication of loaves is a relatively easy thing to discuss. It is far less challenging than trying to explain how Mitchell Morgan and his crew of counselors, adult helpers

(some of them unrelated to him) and other interested parties from all around Camden take a profound desire to be a positive influence in the lives of these children, a willingness to talk frankly and compellingly about the need for such a camp, add the cooperation and generosity of our many partners in Project Interaction and create a wonderful experience for everyone. My urge is to call it some kind of alchemy, but, in the words of one of my five-year-old teachers yesterday, it is simply a miracle. Nothing else to be said.

For those unfamiliar with the rhythm of Camp Faith, the kids begin the week at St. Paul's and finish it with off-campus experiences throughout the area. This week, they will see a production at the Rutgers Theater and go swimming, courtesy of Dan Higgins' generosity with his pool. Ice Cream Day, my potential favorite, is coming up the end of next week; bowling, skating and a visit to Johnson's Farm arrive soon afterwards. The parts I can attend I plan on enjoying

St. Paul's Church

422 Market St.

Box 1551, Camden,
New Jersey 08101

thoroughly, but I will not be able to describe what I see on the faces of the children. More miracles, I expect.

My chief regret is that I will not be here for the last two weeks of camp. Kelly and I had planned a trip overseas early in the year, scheduled before I was called to St. Paul's. I feel torn about this absence but know that these kids will be fed spiritually, physically and every other way imaginable. Mitchell has told me that it is this experience he thinks of as "Faith in Camden". I simply see it as an unexpected, unsummoned encounter with the miraculous.

IN THIS ISSUE

Pentecost and Prayer

Page 2

Love and Stewardship

Page 3

Other News Items

Page 4

Pentecost and Prayer



*It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just pay attention, then
patch*

*a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway*

*into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.*

Although she was an Episcopalian, the poet Mary Oliver spoke of prayer in ways that are hard for a lot of Anglicans to completely accept, not because we sometimes find the concept of the Holy Spirit uncomfortable, (it shows up in our worship all the time, after all) or that her idea of it is a little "free-form" for people who are used to a framework on which to hang our prayers. Many of us use the forms in the prayer book because they are so polished, honed by people who have used many of them over centuries. If we are doing it mindfully, praying the offices, the daily devotionals or anything else in the Book of Common Prayer can feel like being in a side chapel in an old cathedral: you just know a place that has been prayed in over and over again.

The problem is the difference between prayers and prayer. Prayers are important, especially to a people who have spent so much time in debate over proper language, whose liturgies and practices help tell us

who we are. But prayer, as we often practice it, is something different, and Oliver's admonition to "just pay attention" is about that difference. It is about a way of approaching our day or even the moment with a kind of openness and presence that we would not otherwise cultivate. Much of what we encounter in the prayer book are the "blue irises" that she mentions, prayers in lapidary prose that we can only admire in the ways they balance praise and petition, confession and intercession for those we love and those whom the world often neglects. But many of my prayers can be small stones and decidedly rough, and I bring them before God anyway because they are what I have.

It is about finding God in the ordinary and the season after Pentecost is a wonderful time to begin such a practice. At our house, we take turns doing the dishes, but there are always some left in the morning. I am an early riser and I have begun to look forward to these dishes as a gift. The house is silent, and I can wash each of them slowly, thinking about the gift of touch when I rinse the plates, of gratitude for the food we enjoy, for the people who made it and for the lives of each of the people they nourish in our house. I

can also think about each of the people, most of whom I will never meet, who will not have enough that day. It has become something as necessary to me as any of the other prayer I do and I am probably more intentional in its practice than I am about any other part of my prayer life.

During this season after Pentecost, this practice is also an important as a doorway into thanks, thanks not only for the Resurrection but for the hundreds of resurrections we experience all the time: the sight of a spouse, child or grandchild after a hard day, a glimpse of all the people at St. Paul's coming into church on a Sunday morning. For all these things, the silence of gratitude often seems the only acceptable response, silence in which I can finally begin to hear the faint voice of the divine.

Love and Stewardship

God desires communion: a union that is vital and alive, an intimacy that comes from both sides, a bond that is truly mutual. Nothing forced or "willed," but a communion freely offered and received. God goes all the way to make this communion possible. God becomes a child dependent on human care, a boy in need of guidance, a teacher searching for students, a prophet crying for followers, and, finally, a dead man pierced by a soldier's lance and laid in a tomb. At the very end of the story, he stands there looking at us, asking with eyes full of tender expectation: "Do you love me?" and again, "Do you love me?" and a third time, "Do you love me?"

Henri Nouwen
Burning Hearts

With

During my time with the kids and adults at Camp Faith this year, it became clear to me how true Nouwen's words are. There is a mutuality in the words, "the love of God," because God desires us as deeply as we desire God and, in the gospels, that love assumes many guises. My favorite manifestation of that love, because we see it in many different forms, is the living God that we observe in our relationships with each other. It is why those relationships are so important to cultivate and why we pause within our liturgies and in the time we spend outside them to affirm our love for this God who continually asks, "Do you love me?"

In examining the love of God in our collective lives, we have much for which to be thankful. Our liturgies are heartfelt and meaningful; we anticipate a new mid-week healing service, morning prayer twice a week, as well as Sunday morning education programs for our young people. Our relationship

with



Project Interaction is a model of Anglican cooperation and building of relationships. It is indeed an exciting time to be a part of this wonderful parish, due in large part to the help of many who see the future of our church rooted in the ties we have established within the community.

Of course, these activities within the walls of our church and beyond it need our tangible support. As I have noted before, it is not easy to talk about our resources and the mutual love of God we experience at St. Paul's because, if you are like me, we feel we cannot answer the question, "Do you love me?" only in terms of the pledges of support we offer to the ongoing work of the parish. Yet it is important that we do so, if we are to continue the work we have done. In addition, it is critical that we consider how we can give ourselves to these ministries; the church is not a building but people

and we are asked, in the words of one of our Eucharistic

prayers, to offer "ourselves, our souls and bodies" to this effort.

Over the next several months, we will have an opportunity to consider what it means to reflect the light that St. Paul's has been in Camden for many years. We will hear stories of the importance of this parish for our relations with friends, the role it has played in our families, the gift it has been for our friendships for us, for our children and grandchildren. My hope is that you will hear these stories and consider what our response will be, to be stewards of a place that has meant life to so many of us.

I am proud to work and be in a parish that has such a proud history and is eager to carry its reputation of care for each other and the community. I look forward to the year ahead in hope of greater work and discoveries in a time and place that deeply needs our voice of care and love.

Healing Mass on Wednesdays

A reminder that we are beginning a healing mass on Wednesdays at 12:30, offering anyone who is working in the area time to spend with God in the company of others during their work week; our first service will be on August 14. The mass itself will be short—about twenty minutes—but the intent, in addition to the healing presence of God, will be to make transparent how God penetrates all parts of our lives, even when we are least cognizant of it. Please join us for this new worship opportunity and respite from the demands of our work lives!

CLASS ON HOLY COMMUNION

Every Sunday morning, I am thankful for the chance to celebrate with all at St. Paul's the mystery of Holy Communion. I use the word "mystery" deliberately, not only because it is the word from Greek for "sacrament" but because it is something about which many great theological minds have had radically differing views. Nevertheless, there are many things we can say about it and it is good to talk about things that we cannot understand, a lesson my children taught me many years ago!

Because I have been approached by several parents about having a "first communion class," it will not be a rite-of-passage in the same sense that our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters think of it. Rather, it will be an opportunity to talk about why we do what we do, the "meaning" of the different acts in our worship and why it is important that we receive Holy Communion regularly. I will have a sign-up sheet on the back table of the sanctuary soon; please sign up so that we will have enough materials for all. Thank you!

Morning Prayer

As many of you know, we are offering a short mass for healing on Wednesdays at 12:30, beginning next month. Because I believe it is a wonderful practice and even better done in community, I would also like to offer morning prayer at 8:30 in the side chapel of our sanctuary, Tuesday and Thursday mornings, beginning August 13. It is one of the gifts of our tradition to be able to pray the offices, particularly to bring our prayers for our sisters and brothers around the Anglican Communion, for our parish and city, as well as the marginalized and all who walk through our doors. Although I plan to be there each morning, it is my hope that each of us will have a chance to lead; ideally, it should be an informal but reverent way to begin the day. Please join me if you can!

VACATION

Kelly and I will be out of the country from July 28 (evening) through August 9. It is my usual practice to extract a promise from all that no one get sick; if there is a pastoral emergency, however, please contact Betty Fletcher or Marisa Henry. Thank you!

St. Paul's Church

422 Market St.
Box 1551, Camden,
New Jersey 08101