

March 15, 2022



St. Paul's Church

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Desiring Nothing

“ To reach satisfaction in all, desire satisfaction in nothing. To come to possess all, desire the possession of nothing. To arrive at being all, desire to be nothing. To come to the knowledge of all, desire the knowledge of nothing. To come to enjoy what you have not, you must go by a way in which you enjoy not. To come to the possession you have not, you must go by a way in which you possess not. To come to what you are not, you must go by a way in which you are not.

--John of the Cross

I am reading St. John of the Cross for Lent and, as usual, he has given me insights into myself and the world I occupy that I would not have received from any other source. One of the greatest challenges in Lent is the letting go of all of what we believed we want for ourselves, all the things that mean joy and satisfaction for us at the expense of our relationship with God. Even the most spiritually disciplined people I know crave satisfactions to possess things, either by knowledge or through prayer and often feel as though they have made no progress, especially in the conflict within us between contemplation and the world of action. In a time when we have active opposition to voting rights, a global pandemic which has just begun to retreat, deep uncertainty in global and local markets, as well as active destruction of a sovereign country for the sake of one man's hubris, action would seem the right path, if we only knew how.

St. John of the Cross might be the patron saint of the oppressed. He did most of his writing in prison and, even though his Spanish is supposed to be the measure by which all poets of the language are measured, he did not take a completely passive view of the very turbulent world he lived in. Convicted of disobeying the rules of his order, he was imprisoned in a monastery cell that measured six feet by twelve feet, in which

the only daylight was visible through cracks in the wall. It was there that he wrote some of his most renowned poetry. After his release, he was seemingly always in conflict with the authorities and was again imprisoned, which took a great toll on his health. He died in 1591.

It is hard to know what John would make of the world we live in, but it is easier to conjecture that he would have thought that to change the world, one has to begin with oneself. Because he was a mystic, we may think that it is hard to apply his wisdom to the thorny problems of our lives. But even to beginners in the very detailed rule he observed, it is not passivity but humility that is the heart of his method. We should be able to abandon all, our self-seeking appetites, our proud pursuit of control among things we cannot manipulate or even understand, by an indirection that is contrary to all the world's priorities. Hate, after all, is far easier than love. And love is what we are about in this riven world. To begin on this journey toward love (John called it an "ascent"), we have to occupy a kind of negative territory, to let go of the "pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives," as the Ash Wednesday litany has it, and replace it with emptying ourselves of all that is not of God. If we are to reach satisfaction with all we are and see, we must not desire or pursue it

A holy Lent may only be possible in paradox. As much as we want to give up things or take on new disciplines, what we need to give up is all we had taken for granted in our lives and ask that God fill that space. It is the journey that matters, not the destination. And John implies, if we undertake the journey with humility, moment by moment, we cannot help but be astounded at the results. —Fr. Mark

Deacon's Corner

One of the best things about coming into spring is the surprise when it finally decides to arrive. One day, everything in the long-view seems bare and gray, trees seem lifeless, then all of a sudden a few warm days come around, the trees have leaves, and the world turns verdant again.

It's a good image to hold on to.

On Wednesday evening, as we discussed in our last vestry meeting, I submitted an application on behalf of St. Paul's for a grant from Episcopal Community Service. We should hear about the decision by the middle of April. This grant would help to breathe some funding into our community by way of the new Diocesan program that is for ministries who serve the hungry, homeless, and marginalized.

I am grateful to have seen so many new faces at Family Sunday. Wonderful! And if lunch is a strategy the community has in mind to keep a Deacon, you are heading in the right direction. I didn't realize how many good cooks there are at St. Paul's.

If anyone is looking to add to a Lenten practice, I have been enjoying a book suggested to me by my spiritual director, Karla Droste. The book is [Good Enough; 40ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection](#), co-written by Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie. Here is a prayer I especially like:

A Prayer at the Start of the Day

Dear God, Help me stop, for I am likely to keep doing all the things I usually do. And in that stopping, meet me here, in the beauty of all Your incredible mercy and goodness. And in doing so, remind me again that of course You're here, You're listening, because that is who You are.

You are the kindness that runs to find me wherever I have wondered off to. You are the

faithfulness I don't have enough of. You are my safe harbor in the midst of the storm. And in that quiet place, speak gently to me of what needs to change in order for Your freedom to free me, Your love to care through me, and Your faithfulness to strengthen me.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever,

Amen.

I hope to see you Sunday. In the meantime, pray and think on all things green and growing.

--Rev. Jeannie

Books

Besides Rev. Jeannie's suggestion, I would like to recommend a fine book that we will discuss beginning Tuesday, March 15 at 7:30 pm. *Brothers in the Beloved Community: The Friendship of Thich Nhat Hahn and Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Marc Andrus, the Bishop of California, is a wonderful read, exploring the relationship between two giants in the movement toward reconciliation in the 1960's. It is also devoted to a discussion to the idea of the Beloved Community, from its inception to how we are seeing it manifest today. Help us as we enjoy this book together, which is full of insights about the building of the Beloved Community, even in fraught times.

--Fr. Mark

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March Birthdays

March 1: Damien Bookman

March 2: Anthony Morgan

March 5: Rudy Morgan

March 9: Teresa Stokes

March 17: Patrick Boria

March 21: Adrien Johnson

March 22: Samantha Morgan

March 24: Chyna Morgan

March 25: Michelle Eustace

March 27: Vyelda Macklin

March 30: Aaron Wesley

Camp Faith

By all accounts, last year's Camp Faith was a great success, even with restrictions for COVID. Our planning for this year will maintain many of the same elements. We expect to have 60 campers and counselors with us for four weeks, July 5 through July 29; overall costs are expected to be the same, with fees for each camper to be \$420 for the four weeks. There will be plenty of off-campus experiences: skating, bowling and visits to the pool are all expected to part of the fun this year.

If you are able to sponsor a child or know someone who would like to donate to the camp, please put them in touch with Mitchell. Thank you! --Fr. Mark

The Lydia Collins DeForest Grant

St. Paul's has recently been awarded a \$15,000 grant from the DeForest Foundation. It is unrestricted (and so can be used for general expenses) but was given in recognition of our work for the marginalized in the city. We are deeply grateful for the grant; the foundation has traditionally been a supporter of Episcopal ministries in New Jersey, particularly toward the vulnerable, but it also represents a wider recognition of the work to which we have committed ourselves. As anyone who has written grant applications knows, only a fraction of what we apply for is able to be funded, but the grant has come with an invitation to apply next year. We hope this will be the beginning of a fruitful relationship, one we hope to initiate with other funding sources.

--Fr. Mark

Family Sunday

I would like to thank again all 60+ people who were able to join us on Family Sunday this year. We were able to catch-up with old friends over wonderful food; it is always a gift to find out news and milestones in people's lives. As wonderful as it was to see many faces we have missed, we were able to solidify a commitment with the young people of the parish to rebuild a vibrant youth ministry. It was a very hopeful sign and one to which I look forward next year.

--Fr. Mark

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Holy Week 2022

April 10: Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday **9:30 and 11am**

April 14: Maundy Thursday **7pm**

April 15: Good Friday **12noon and 6pm**

April 16: Easter Vigil **7pm**

April 17 Easter Sunday **11am (with Baptisms)**