

The Messenger

LENT AND EASTER



ST. MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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The Messenger

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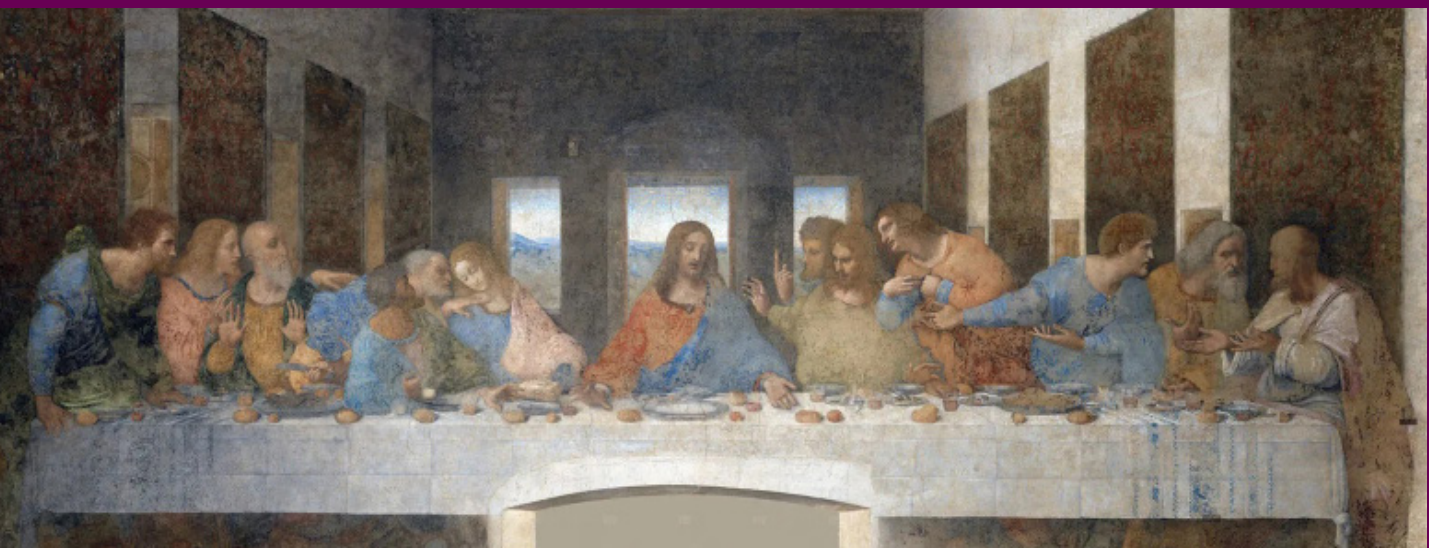
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*L'Ultima
Cena*

Leonardo
da Vinci

The first sin is said to be the sin of comparison. The first humans were told they would be like God, knowing good and evil. The initial missing of the mark for human beings was our desire to be “like” God, comparing our mortal selves to the Divine. The consequences for our desires are still being felt today, as we live in the handheld device world or HHDW. For many of us, this HHDW is one where we compare ourselves to each other and feel our envy turn to self-doubt, and that self-doubt into self-loathing. In the HHDW, we spend much of our time comparing our lives to others. We look at pictures of other people, and we look at pictures of ourselves and we compare each to the other. We judge, we make assumptions, we react, and too much of the time those judgements, assumptions and reactions

From Lent we make our way to a single disastrous week, a week of betrayal with the comparison from those first humans on display, godlike but not Godly. The Holy Week shows humans acting like God in one way, in our ability to destroy, but unable to act like God at all in God’s ability to create. Indeed, we are shown for what we are during Holy Week, humans at our worst - petty, jealous, cruel, weak, judgmental, assumptive, and reactive. These attributes lead us to Good Friday, with shouts of “crucify” and moments of bloodshed that lead to death. Our human comparison leads us to destruction, our own and those we love. Human destruction always has been, and always will be the consequence when we compare our mortal selves to God.

with God, or each other. The whole creation is new because our single life was made whole by the one life of our Lord. This is our good news, and our focus as a new Lent leads us, once again, to an Easter day.

The Rev. Patrick J. Miller,
Rector

Patrick J. Miller is the Rector of St. Mark’s Church. He is a husband, father of two, author, and TED Talk contributor. When not in his office or around the St. Mark’s campus, you may find him working with Parkinson’s patients at the boxing gym or playing his cello.

A Word From The Rector

push us into anxious states, where the HHDW makes us gasp or sigh, or otherwise think we are not good enough.

With the season of Lent, the church allows us an alternative to the HHDW. Lent gives us permission to pause, to walk more slowly, to listen, to be less attentive to the HHDW, and more attentive to the real world - the world of creation, of human-to-human voices, of Divine and human connection, inspiration, simplicity, and love. We are invited for a few weeks into a Holy Lent, to a time of sacrifice, a time of setting down, of letting go, and are encouraged to seek another kind of awareness - the awareness of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Son of God.

Except there is hope for us on an Easter day. The antidote found in Lent leads to the healing of Easter morning. The silence of the first morning finds us aware of a new thing, a new comparison, a likeness, like one as a Son of God. This moment of resurrection allows us a new likeness, a reflection of hope, a light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it. Easter destroys the HHDW, shatters our assumptions, rewires our sensibilities, and makes the whole creation new. The newness is what we proclaim as people baptized into it. This newness of life, the rewritten salvation, the promise of God revealed, unites us and makes us see each other for what we are - Children of God, worthy, graceful, grace-filled, lovely, and not needing to compare ourselves



Theology Corner

A Reflection on Lent by The Rev. David M. Goldberg

When I talk with our young members in confirmation class and ask, “What is sin?” it’s intriguing to note how often they define sin as merely breaking a rule. When prompted to list sins, they typically mention acts like speeding, smoking, drinking, cheating, wearing a hat in church, and littering. Our society is keen on following rules and laws, but we sometimes neglect the guidance of our conscience.

Conscience is sometimes described as “God’s voice within us.” While it’s possible for our conscience to be mistaken, ignoring it always constitutes a sin. Sin is more than just the violation of God’s commands; it involves estrangement from him, unhappiness, and separation from being our best selves. An action may be legal yet sinful, whereas something illegal could be morally right—think of the examples of civil disobedience that we honor in Black History Month, as an example.

During Lent, we are encouraged to confess our sins and to ponder on what brings us joy versus what causes us unhappiness. The Prayer Book suggests a daily examination of our conscience. The confession from the Rite I Morning/Evening prayer states (BCP, p. 63):

“Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left un-

done those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.”

This confession teaches that God is “most merciful,” always ready to provide comfort, slow to anger, and gentle in judgment. Our heavenly Father desires for us to be the persons he created us to be, which is the reason he sent his Son, Our Lord, to reconcile us. Jesus said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

Feeling lost in our faith journey can sometimes occur, especially as initial enthusiasm for church fades. Gradually, we discover that the church is not immune from the petty conflict, egoism, and fatigue that plague the world. Why should it be? The church is made up of human beings. Yet, this sense of being ‘lost’ is not a setback but rather an invitation to a deeper relationship with God, despite the challenges involved.

A 16th century Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross wrote of the spiritual life:

“To come to the pleasure you have not, you must go by a way in which you enjoy not. To come to the knowledge you have not, you must go by a way in which you know not. To come to the possession you have not, you must go by a way in which you possess not. To come to be what you are not,

you must go by a way in which you are not” (Ascent of Mt Carmel, 1.13).

Our spiritual journey is not a return to a childhood faith or the zeal we first felt when we joined the church, but the taking on of something new.

When we consider what we have done and left undone, we are not just confessing discreet actions or omissions that have distanced us from God, but also our characteristic, yet harmful, tendency towards self-interest. For Christians, sin also encompasses a broader state of being. The church has lately been cautious with the language of sin due to its association with shame. However, a comprehensive understanding of sin highlights our need for God’s grace. St. Paul writes, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). In other words, we must hold our sin and shame lightly so that we can surrender it to God. Taking sins too seriously, or morality too rigorously is dangerous too. Despair, believing that we are beyond God’s forgiveness, is in this way the great enemy of the spiritual life.

To cast off the weight of anguish we need to be reminded of God’s forgiveness. For some people this entails receiving the sacraments. Jesus took the cup and blessed it with these words, “this is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins” (BCP, p. 342). For others, it will mean

Continued from page 3.

occasional confession to a priest in the sacrosanctity of the sacrament of reconciliation. After confessing her particular sins, the priest pronounces an absolution over the penitent "I absolve you from all your sins: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (BCP, p. 448). Or perhaps, you are able to spend some moments in the stillness of God's own presence, reciting a prayer or a favorite psalm. In the midst of my sin, I prefer to be reminded that God made me and purposed me for his love. "Lord, you have searched me out and known me; you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar... For you created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I will thank you because I am marvelously made; your works are wonderful, and I know it well" (Psalm 139, 1, 12-13).

The Rev. David M. Goldberg is the Associate Rector of St. Mark's. He is a husband, father of two, and pickleball evangelist.



Parish Tour Group Itinerary - England 2024 Canterbury + Oxford + London

Day 1: Saturday, August 3, 2024 - Arrival in London Our journey begins with your arrival at London Heathrow Airport, followed by a transfer to our hotel. In the evening, you're invited to a special welcome dinner at 5 p.m. at Dishoom, a renowned modern Indian restaurant showcasing the vibrancy of London's culinary scene.

Day 2: Sunday, August 4, 2024 - Canterbury After breakfast at the hotel, we'll immerse ourselves in the sacred atmosphere of Westminster Abbey in London. Then, we'll embark on a train journey to the ancient city of Canterbury, where Augustine first established the Catholic Church in England. Enjoy a leisurely lunch on your own before checking into our hotel. The day culminates with Evensong at the magnificent Canterbury Cathedral, the Mother Church of the Anglican Communion, at 5:30 p.m., followed by a group dinner.

Day 3: Monday, August 5, 2024 - Canterbury Experience the spiritual heart of the Anglican Communion with a guided tour of Canterbury Cathedral, led by Ken Fincham. After lunch in Canterbury, our afternoon includes a visit to St. Augustine's Abbey, tracing the steps of Augustine of Canterbury. The day concludes with either Evening Prayer or Eucharist at St. Martin's Church and dinner.

Day 4: Tuesday, August 6, 2024 - Reformation in Oxford We travel from Canterbury to Oxford, where upon arrival, we check into our accommodation. Discover the renowned Bodleian Library and Christ Church. Lunch will be at Chiang Mai, Fr. David's favorite Thai restaurant, followed by a walking tour of Oxford, delving into the Reformation period. Our day ends with dinner at Gino's, Fr. David's favorite Italian restaurant.

Day 5: Wednesday, August 7, 2024 - The Oxford Movement Join us for Eucharist at Keble College, Oxford, followed by an enlightening guest lecture at Keble Chapel. After lunch, enjoy free time exploring Oxford's historic treasures before dinner.

Day 6: Thursday, August 8, 2024 - Return to London Check out from your Oxford accommodation and journey back to London.

Day 7: Friday, August 9, 2024 - A day of exploration awaits with tours of the Banqueting House and the College of Arms. Enjoy lunch at your leisure, followed by a tour and Evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral. We gather again for dinner.

Day 8: Saturday, August 10, 2024 - Departure

Cost: \$3,500 per person, double occupancy room.

(There is a \$1,100 surcharge for single occupancy rooms)

To register your interest and receive more details on accommodation and travel costs, please contact the Rev. David M. Goldberg at david.goldberg@stmarks-houston.org.

Why Do We: SUNDAY SCHOOL



by Stephen Adkison

I can still remember the nights my dad would read me to sleep with his well-worn copies of Lord of the Rings and The Chronicles of Narnia. I remember these nights vividly. My dad taught me many things, and I am still learning from his example. By reading me these books, my dad passed down to me the value of stories, of good and evil, and people banding together to do what is right. Most of all, I experienced just how much my dad loves me, a reflection of God's love for his children.

This is the same kind of learning that we do in Sunday School. It isn't about homework, tests, essays, or simply reading old books. We go to Sunday School to pass down the stories of Christianity. In the Episcopal faith, we value the legacy of tradition. Thousands of years ago, people knew Jesus personally and experienced his love directly. It was so powerful, so life-changing, that they told their friends about it and passed it along to their children, and their children's children. We believe what we do today because of a chain of love that spans the generations between Christ and the present.

But the love of God expressed through his son Jesus isn't just something we read about. It's something we get to experience for ourselves. Just as my dad demonstrated his love for me by sharing the stories he loved, the care that we show one another in Church lets us feel God's love for us. Sunday School is not just a place where we talk about Jesus. It's a place where we get to meet him.

It might not surprise you to learn that as a child, I was a bit of a nerd. That might be understating things a bit. I was that one annoying kid who was always first to raise

his hand and ask the teacher questions about what we were learning and what connections we were making. Sunday School was a safe space for me to do this same thing with God. There weren't any questions that were off limits, and my Sunday School leaders challenged me to think critically. Although I found it to be a place I could flourish, the beauty of Sunday School is that it isn't just for kids like me. I made life-long friends in church with people who had vastly different personalities and came from all sorts of backgrounds. Athletes and math-letes, skaters and scenesters, extroverts and introverts, we would all get together on Sundays to learn about Jesus.

If you are a youth, I hope that you get to experience that same thing. Sunday School is an important part of growing as a Christian and a fundamental part of who we are as Episcopalians, not to mention it's fun. Whenever someone asks me, "Why do we have Sunday School?" I like to answer the way Phillip did when his brother Nathaniel asked if Jesus was the real deal. "Come and see."

Stephen Adkison is the Youth Minister at St. Mark's. He was born in El Paso, is a Baylor University graduate, avid comic book reader, and chief editor of his own zine.

Why Do We: _____? is a series built to give answers to the questions we may ask about our church communities. For more information about Sunday school, confirmation classes, and youth gatherings, please reach out to stephen.adkison@stmarks-houston.org

It's A Bird, It's A Plane,



It's Vacation Bible School!

Wonder at the power and majesty of God with us this summer at Vacation Bible School!

One of the joys of my job as Director of Christian Education at St. Mark's is the opportunity to create and lead Vacation Bible School every summer. This year's theme is WONDER VBS – Miracles of Jesus. We will be sharing four amazing miracles that Jesus performed throughout his ministry and discussing how Jesus heals, changes, calms, and feeds us even now, just as he did through the miracles he performed thousands of years ago.

Volunteers from St. Mark's Church and School will help lead break-out sessions, including daily crafts, music, snacks, games, and lessons. The St. Mark's Youth will help our adult volunteers portray the stories of the bible each day of the week and help lead the children in song.

WONDER VBS will be held at St. Mark's Church this summer, the week of July 22 through July 25 from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. It is designed for children entering Pre-K 4 through Grade 5. If your child is interested in registering or you are an adult who would like to volunteer for VBS, please contact Joseph Rawley, Director of Christian Education, at joseph.rawley@stmarks-houston.org. We hope to see you there!

by Joseph Rawley

Joseph Rawley is the Director of Christian Education at St. Mark's. He is a husband, father, bass-baritone choral performer, and Cleveland sports fanatic.

Lent & Holy Week

LENTEN SERVICES

6:30 P.M. SERVICE OF EVENING PRAYER
EVERY WEDNESDAY IN ENDERLE CHAPEL

LENTEN SERIES

PRAYING THE PSALMS - SUNDAYS AT 9:45 A.M.
BEGINNING FEB. 18 WITH REV. DAVID M. GOLDBERG

HOLY WEEK

PALM SUNDAY SERVICES, MARCH 24
7:45, 9, 11 A.M. AND 5 P.M.

MONDAY, MARCH 25 - 7 P.M.
HOLY EUCHARIST RITE II

TUESDAY, MARCH 26 - 7 P.M.
HOLY EUCHARIST RITE II

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27 - 7 P.M.
HOLY EUCHARIST RITE II

MAUNDY THURSDAY, MARCH 28 - 7 P.M.
HOLY EUCHARIST RITE II
STRIPPING OF THE ALTAR

GOOD FRIDAY, MARCH 29 - NOON
LITURGY FOR GOOD FRIDAY

HOLY SATURDAY, MARCH 30
HOLY SATURDAY LITURGY - 10 A.M.
EASTER VIGIL SERVICE - 7 P.M.

EASTER SUNDAY, MARCH 31

7:45, 9, 11 A.M. AND 5 P.M.
EASTER SERVICES



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Easter Sunday

March 31

7:45 a.m.	Egg
9 a.m.	Hunt
11 a.m.	
5 p.m.	10 a.m.



St. Mark's Episcopal Church