

MISSIVES



From the Senior Warden

BY JAMES HAYES

This year, the season of Lent begins on February 14th, Ash Wednesday, and concludes 40 days later, excluding Sundays, on March 30th, Holy Saturday. The 40 days symbolize the period during which Jesus fasted in the wilderness before starting his public ministry. Lent is a time for preparation and reflection before the celebration of Easter. Throughout this period, Christians engage in practices such as repentance, fasting, prayer, almsgiving, self-examination, and renewal.

When we repent, we acknowledge our sins and turn away from behaviors that separate us from our faith. When we fast, we abstain from certain foods, activities, or luxuries as a form of self-

discipline, which expresses our solidarity with Christ's sacrifice. When we pray, we draw closer to God and seek His guidance. When we are charitable, we show Christian love and compassion for others. When we engage in self-examination, we identify areas for personal and spiritual growth. Through renewal we seek to confirm our commitment to living a life in accordance with Christian values. Additionally, the season of Lent is a time to contemplate our own mortality and to remember that we are all sinners in need of God's grace and mercy.

One of my favorite stories from the Gospel of Mark is that of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, who receives the gift of sight from Jesus. It illustrates the Lenten practices of repentance, renewal, and prayer. In his physical blindness, Bartimaeus recognizes a deeper blindness and calls out to Jesus for

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mercy. Lent invites us to acknowledge our own spiritual blindness and to humbly recognize our need for God's mercy and grace.

Renewal is also illustrated in the story. As Bartimaeus calls out to Jesus, a powerful transformation unfolds. Christ, moved by Bartimaeus' determined faith, not only restores his physical sight but also gives him a new vision of life. Lent challenges us to seek renewal, to allow Christ to open our eyes to new possibilities, deeper understanding, and a stronger relationship with Him.

Faith is also reflected in the story. Despite being told to be quiet, Bartimaeus persists in calling out to Jesus for mercy. His faith in Jesus is unwavering, and he believes that Jesus can heal him. Bartimaeus' passionate prayer should be a model for our own communication with God during this season.

In this Lenten journey, let us remember Bartimaeus. Through repentance and renewal, may we experience the transformative power of Christ in our lives. As we engage in prayer, fasting, and acts of kindness, may our spiritual vision be renewed, and may the light of Easter morning give us a more profound understanding of God's love and grace.

Bartimaeus' story is a narrative of transformation and renewal through faith, which aligns with Lenten practices. While the elements of repentance may not be explicitly emphasized, the encounter with Jesus and a transformative renewal aligns with the spiritual journey that many individuals undertake during Lent.



Religious Literacy

BY JAMES HAYES

I recently read "Religious Literacy" by Stephen Prothero, a book that examines religious illiteracy in the United States and its repercussions. The author urges readers to consider the importance of this issue in fostering informed dialogue and facilitating coexistence in an increasingly pluralistic world. Prothero introduces a religious literacy test to assess individuals' knowledge of diverse religious traditions.

How many questions can you answer without references?

1. Name a sacred text of Hinduism.
2. What is the name of the holy book of Islam?
3. Where according to the Bible was Jesus born?
4. President George W. Bush spoke in his first inaugural address of the Jericho Road. What Bible story was he invoking?
5. What are the first five books of the Hebrew Bible or the Christian Old Testament?
6. What is the golden rule?
7. "God helps those who help themselves." Is this in the Bible? If so, where?
8. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God." Does this appear in the Bible? If so, where?
9. Name the 10 commandments. List as many as you can.
10. List the four noble truths of Buddhism.
11. What are the seven sacraments of Catholicism? List as many as you can.
12. The First Amendment says two things about religion, each in its own "clause." What are the two religion clauses of the First Amendment?

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*Humble
yourselves,
therefore, under
the mighty
hand of God so
that at the
proper time he
may exalt you.*

1 Peter 5:6

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13. What is Ramadan? In what religion is it celebrated?

Answers will be published in the next issue of *Missives*.

Davies Gift

The paintings gifted to St. Mary's by Kim Davies now hang in the Narthex. The left painting, entitled "Mary," portrays the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus, while the right painting, "The Centurion," depicts the Roman soldier who acknowledged the divinity of Jesus at the foot of the cross.



Lenten Studies

In observation of the Lenten practices of reflection, self-examination, and prayer, St. Mary's will offer a study program on each of the six Lenten Sundays from 9:45 to 10:30 AM in the Fellowship Hall. For those who have duties during the 11:00 AM service, this allows time to prepare.

The studies will be based on the six-chapter book [Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life](#) by Rowan Williams. The author is a renowned theologian, scholar, Anglican Bishop, and the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury (2002 – 2012). His book delves into the principal aspects of discipleship covering such topics as prayer, scripture, the Eucharist, and ethical living. He encourages readers to deepen their spiritual commitment and emphasizes the importance of living one's faith in everyday life.

On each Sunday during Lent, a chapter will be discussed. These studies will not be formal lectures. Instead, they will be

similar to a book club discussion led by a facilitator. Participants are expected to prepare for discussions by reading the assignment and considering the reflection questions at the end of the chapters.

Participants are asked to purchase the book in advance, which is available on Amazon for \$11.83.

If interested, there is a sign-up list on the Fellowship Hall bulletin board.



Diocesan Convention

The 141st Annual Diocesan Convention will be held at the Greenville Convention Center February 9 - 10, 2024.

The convention is essential for the governance of the diocese, providing a forum for discussing and addressing important matters related to administration, mission, and ministry. It also offers opportunities for worship, fellowship, and education for its delegates.

The convention is striving to be 100% paperless to be good stewards of our planet and resources. This means that all documents and voting will be done digitally.

St. Mary's delegates are Jim Hayes and Bert Yepko.



*But when you
fast, anoint
your head and
wash your face,
so that you may
not appear to be
fasting, except
to your Father
who is hidden.
And your
Father who sees
what is hidden
will repay you.*

Matthew 6:16-18



LeClair Baby Shower

On January 28th, about 30 parishioners gathered in the Fellowship Hall to give a baby shower for Willow LeClair, who is due mid-March. The parents, Johanna and Daniel LeClair, received numerous gifts for their first baby that will certainly be of tremendous help as they prepare for this new and exciting chapter in their lives.



Episcopal History

Since its establishment, the liturgy of the Episcopal Church in the United States has evolved to reflect broader societal changes and theological shifts. Initially, the Church drew on its Anglican origins, adopting the Book of Common Prayer as its foundational text. Over the years, however, its worship practices gradually transformed. The earliest liturgical adaptations naturally reflected those of the colonial era, but as the nation matured, so did the church's liturgy. By the mid-20th century, the church was in the midst of liturgical reforms, leading to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, a significant update embracing inclusive language and a modern sensibility. The evolution reflects the Episcopal Church's ongoing commitment to maintain a liturgy that resonates with its parishioners while reflecting its Anglican heritage.



So That You Know

BY DEDE YEPKO

It has been several years ago now, and I have asked around. It seems there are many in our congregation who don't remember when we sat on hard pews. Personally, I had to bring a cushion into church every Sunday to be even slightly comfortable. One day these beautiful, super comfortable, burgundy cushions appeared on every pew and other wooden surfaces. Just so you know, these cushions were a gift to St. Mary's Church from Don and Sybil MacGill.

February Events

Lutheran Service
February 4
11:00 AM

Music at St. Mary's
Echoes of America
February 4
4:00 PM

ECW Meeting
February 13
4:00 PM

Pancake Dinner
February 13
5:00 PM

Ash Wed Service
February 14
5:00 PM

Lenten Studies
February 18
9:45 - 10:30 AM

Vestry Meeting
February 21
6:00 PM

Lenten Studies
February 25
9:45 - 10:30 AM

Birthdays

Dede Yepko 2/4

Daniel Philemon 2/4

Linda Painter 2/6

Gray Hodsdon 2/8

John Corcoran 2/13

Annette Oelsen 2/14

Dawn Connor 2/22

Amanda Hammars 2/23

Johanna LeClair 2/28

Anniversaries

Armin & Jan Jancis 2/18

Jimbo & Heidi Robbins 2/19

Jim & Terri Hayes 2/20

Faith and Renewal Outside Jericho

BY JAMES HAYES

As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging.

Mark 10:46

Day after day, I sit in the roadside dust outside Jericho amid my familiar landmarks of sounds and odors – a blind beggar unseen by all.

I pray to see the light of the world!

Though my days are dark, and I am shunned, strangers' random charity brightens my soul – such compassion is my hope and my salvation.

I pray to see a kind face!

Today, a traveling Nazarene rabbi stirs excitement. Some say He is the Son of David – the Messiah! The one Isaiah foretold will open the eyes of the blind! I pray that He is the one!

As He and his disciples draw near, I hear the promise in His voice. I sense the power of His presence. I pray to see the light of His countenance.

I know He is the one and shout for His mercy! The crowd scolds me for my impudence. But I shout even louder! Oh, I pray He will hear me!

Then he stops to ask what I want of Him! "Let me have my sight Master," I weep. Through my tears, His gentle face appears! "Go, your faith has made you well," He says.



A Prayer for Lent

Our Heavenly Father, during this sacred season of Lent, we humbly seek Your guidance. Grant us the wisdom and discipline to reflect upon our strengths and weaknesses. Give us the grace to sincerely repent and embrace a more intentional, purposeful life. Open our hearts to the transformative power of Your love, inspiring us towards acts of compassion and mercy. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and constant companion, we offer this prayer. *Amen.*

From the Editor

To submit an announcement, an article, a photo, a poem, or a prayer email it to stmarysmisives@gmail.com. Prepare it how you want it to appear. Include a point of contact and their details.

Guidelines for submissions:

- Articles - 500 words or less.
- Announcements - 50 words or less.
- Photos - use .png format and provide a caption



St. Mary's Parish
EST. 1908

Priest-in-Charge **Rev. Phillip Craig**
Secretary **Pam Anthony**
Organist **Jennings Trawick**
Membership **Pat Casaw**
Webmaster **Daniel LeClair**
Missives Editor **James Hayes**

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Pastoral Care **Armin Jancis**
Fellowship **Armin Jancis**
Worship & Music **James Hayes**

Mission

To witness to the love of God in Christ for all people. To this end we commit ourselves to faithful worship as we gather together around the Word and the Sacrament, share our resources with those in need, and invite all to share our life in Christ.

St. Mary's
Digital Doorway

