

The Sceptre

CHURCH OF THE ADVENT OF CHRIST THE KING

An inclusive parish of The Episcopal Church in the Anglo-Catholic tradition

From the Rector

December 2011

Volume 51 Number 12



December is the time, more than any other, when we are put in mind of the Incarnation and its implications for the way in which we live our lives. Even in our increasingly secular world people are still inspired to an increase of altruism and a contemplation of how they can make a difference to the poor and needy at this time of year. Whatever else the centuries of Christendom has done, this is something of a triumph of teaching over experience. How, then, do we make the most of this vestigial sense that birth of a child in Bethlehem in Judea over two centuries ago has changed the way we all should live?

First, of course, is that we should live our lives in a way that acknowledges this change. By that I mean we should really live the stricture that our body is a temple and the matter itself reveals the glory of God. It is a truism to say that we live in a throw away society in which it is all right to discard things when we are done with them. Indeed our whole manufacturing industry is built on the premise of built in obsolescence. Despite all the warning and alarms that have been being sounded now for nearly a century we still deplete the supplies of natural resources with out much thought as to sustainability let alone renewal. We need to embrace the call to be stewards of creation

rather than falling into the trap of allowing ourselves to be consumers.

More than this, 'though, we need to get into the habit of seeing that our very physicality is part of the revelation of the divine. As a society we are beset by so many chronic ailments that are the direct result of the way we live. We are too sedentary, we eat too much, and we pay too little attention to our need for stimulation and activity. All this at a time when we seek to be entertained because we are bored, depressed, and unengaged by our stressful lives. For those of us who believe that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit this is simply not good enough. It is as if Mary and Joseph turned up at the door of our house and we turned them away because we were too busy with our own stuff to entertain them.

By our baptism we become a bridge between the world of the Spirit and the world of the flesh and it is for us to bring those two together not only in our own lives but also in the life of the world as a whole. It is a scandal that clergy are considered a high-risk group for health insurance because they are, in general, unhealthy, but even worse is that we have created, in the Church, an environment that is high stress and low reward. We, of all people, should value the physical and the material because they communicate to us the glory of God. We should show, by the way we treat each other and by the way we care for our own physical and mental health, that we, each of us, reveal something of the glory of God, and that is through our relationships with one another that we come into relationship with God.

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The Sceptre is the monthly newsletter of Church of the Advent of Christ the King, a parish of the Episcopal Church. We are an Anglo-Catholic church, that is, one with a strong emphasis on worship and the life of prayer. Here, in addition to a warm welcome by a diverse group of people, you will find an atmosphere of quiet reflection on the presence of God, great beauty in the visual aspects of corporate worship, and music that inspires and transforms. Here, through our life of prayer, you will find people committed to bringing the love of God, Incarnate in his Son, into the lives of all. I hope that we can touch your life with that love as you join us in worship of the Creator.

News and Notes

Sunday, December 18, 2011, 4 p.m.
Adaiha MacAdam-Somer in concert

First Unaccompanied Cello Suite by Bach, and Treble Viola da Gamba Duets.

Please join us for a post-concert reception in Lathrop Hall and Hardcastle Garden.

Tuesday, December 20

Caroling at the Episcopal Sanctuary. Gather after Evening Prayer to finish up the gift bags and walk over to sing and share with the residents of our homeless shelter.

Saturday, December 24, 2011:
10:15 p.m. Matins for Christmas Day

(volunteers to sing welcome - see Fr. Paul or Paul Ellison)

11 p.m. Midnight Mass

Sunday, January 15, 2012, 4 p.m.

Interfaith service to mark the beginning of the season for San Francisco Ballet

AN INVITATION FROM THE VESTRY

The Church of the Advent of Christ the King has many gifts and many needs. We are always challenged to find ways to share those gifts and to address those needs. There isn't only one way to do this. And your way may be just what is needed.

In addition to being of service to the parish as a whole, each person on the vestry represents and occasionally speaks for a constituency of people who are in some way like them, whether by age group, profession, personality, background, or other characteristics.

There are two openings on the vestry next year. Please consider filling that gap with your own unique and valuable traits. You are not obligated to live at the church. Your participation doesn't need to look like anyone else's. You are needed and valued, just as you are.

Music Program News



2011 Third Sunday Series Successes

October 16 2011 BACH TO BACH

The first concert in this fall's Third Sunday Series featured Lauren Carley and her instrumental ensemble presenting Bach cantatas and other works. We had 84 attendees, and a well-attended post-concert reception. The St. Cecilia Guild would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this event, including Jeremy Burke, Sam Cantin, Anna McHargue, and Sue Ellen Thompson.

The Gospel Life is not for sissies!

Over the past few weeks we've had some fascinating reading from the Gospel of Matthew. We've been hearing of the encounters of Jesus with the leaders of the Jewish Teachers: the scribes and the Pharisees. We've seen how they have constantly tried to trip him up with question after question and trick him into answering questions in ways they would use against him. But Jesus has this incredible knack of turning their questions back round on them and asking them just the right question that 'hoists them on their own petard' - as they say! - Jesus catches them out again and again, in the way they try to catch him out.

If you were the local Rabbi you certainly wouldn't want Jesus in your congregation!!!

This Sunday we come to the last of these haranguing session by Jesus, and in some ways, the worst of them all!

And this time the warning is not just addressed to the scribes and the Pharisees, this time Jesus addressed the crowds AND his disciples: he says: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it' but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heaven burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others;" and it goes on and gets worse..... they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long..... love to have places of honor and the best seats..... to be greeted with respect..... oh dear..... dear, dear dear! Condemnation after condemnation! Not only an attack on their lack of understanding of the scriptures, law and tradition but on their very living of that law.

Jesus holds nothing back at all in this part of the Gospel. Out it all comes! And Matthew is making it absolutely certain that the full force of Jesus'

November 20 2011 AVE MARIS STELLA

The second concert in this fall's Third Sunday Series, featured Kevin Baum and Stephen Siegler singing Gregorian chant and Italian vocal solos and duets with instrumental accompaniment. We had 77 attendees, and many enjoyed the post-concert reception. The St. Cecilia Guild would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this event, and helped us to share God's gift of music with the wider community, including Robyn Arnold, William Branson Jeremy Burke, Sam Cantin, and Anna McHargue.

November 27 2011 Advent Liturgy

6 PM Candlelit Procession with Lessons & Carols

Music of Bach, Britten, Demessieux, Howells, Ord, Messiaen, Palestrina, Wood, and Willcocks including the Magnificat Primi Toni for Eight Voices

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 18 2011

The last concert of the 2011 Third Sunday Series.

condemnation is recorded!

In this part of his Gospel Matthew is coming to the final part of the teaching stories of Jesus, next week we will have the great parable warning about being prepared ~ the ten maidens with their lamps and no oil ~ they used to be virgins, but now they are only maidens, morals are slipping! And we then hear how the Pharisees and teachers of the Law could no longer, quite understandably, tolerate Jesus continually attacking them and tying them in knots - and so planned to get rid of him. So from hereon the plots for the death of Jesus began to unfold.

A few years ago Father Paul stood in this pulpit and said 'living a Christian Life is not difficult, it is NIGH IMPOSSIBLE!' Like the sign I once saw, 'Christianity if not for sissies!'

In the year 1209 Saint Francis with his band of tatty and shabby brothers took his Rule to Rome for approval..... the Pope and Cardinals rejected it because they said it was far too difficult a Rule to live, "No one can live like this." they said. He then pointed out to them that all his Rule was, was a collection of the sayings of Jesus from the Gospels on how we are all to live. They then, with some reluctance approved the Rule.

The Gospel Life is not for sissies!

This Gospel passage today is one I am fond of quoting to the fundamentalists of all varieties who attack me and are always willing to condemn others..... I like to point out that the only people Jesus ever condemned in the Gospels are those who condemn others and lay heavy burdens on others.

It is a wonderful passage to use..... BUT I have to be really careful because it poses me with a big question: - How many times am I on the other side

Adaiha MacAdam-Somer presents Solo Works on Baroque Cello

Unaccompanied Suite No. 1 by J.S. Bach
Ricercar No. 7 by Deomenico Gabriello
Selected viola da gamba duos with Hallie Pridham

January 15 2012 Interfaith Service

San Francisco Ballet, the oldest professional ballet company in America, has emerged as a world-class arts organization since it was founded in 1933. For all those years, Church of the Advent of Christ the King was nearby on Fell St. Now, we are planning an interfaith celebration to mark the start of the San Francisco Ballet 2012 season.

On Sunday afternoon January 15, 2012, just days before the opening Gala of the San Francisco Ballet, Church of the Advent will welcome representatives of the ballet and other arts organizations to join in an interfaith ceremony honoring the 2012 ballet season. Jewish and Muslim clerics will participate in a joyful event focusing on the sacred gifts of music and dance.

A festive hosted reception will follow.

By Br. Jude Hill, SSF

of the fence, how often am I the Pharisee! It is so easy to sit in church Sunday by Sunday and hear these stories read, to listen to Jesus condemning the Pharisees or this or that faction and challenging people for not engaging in following him and say, to nod my head and say: "here here" or "how awful, all those people passing by that poor man beaten up" or whatever it is ~ but not really ask the question of myself ~ HOW MANY TIMES AM I THE ONE JESUS IS REALLY ADDRESSING? This is what I mean by saying Christianity is not for sissies and I think Father Paul means by saying Christianity is nigh impossible to live if we do it properly. And to do that I have to live it with integrity, and that begins with complete honesty with myself. I have to read through the gospels and turn all those questions around that Jesus confronts the Pharisees and the disciples and his followers with, I have to turn them round, and ask them to myself. And what is so difficult is answering them with complete and total honesty:

Do I tie up heavy burdens, too hard for others to bear? Do I expect people to do things for the church (serve at the altar on Sunday) or work on the Lunch Bunch, or the Deacons Fayre, or Altar Guild or go to the Sanctuary Sunday by Sunday..... be at Mass every morning at 7.30am..... and yet am not willing to do these things myself..... At our parish meeting last week we looked at the results of the survey and how 99% of the people coming to Advent said the Mass was why they came here..... yet are we willing to make the kind of Mass we want happen, to take part in it and help facilitate it..... or attending the daily mass..... it is so easy to find excuses.

We have to ask ourselves - Do I love to be seen as a good and holy person and a respectable person... a person who lives a good Christian life and have others say good and nice things about me.....? Do I like it when I am given respect or a place of honor or when people say how wonderful I am because of

of what I do, even if I don't really do those things.....?

Do I..... do I..... do I?

Do I have the courage to sit and answer these questions with total and utter honesty?? I'll tell you - it is not easy to look at ourselves reflected in the mirror that Jesus holds up to us and see ourselves reflected there as we truly are. It makes me feel uncomfortable when I do it! In a lot of my work I have been involved in various 12 step groups and with people involved in 12 steps programs and I often feel there is more honesty and integrity in the lives of people who are working the program that we have many times in our Christian vocation.

We all need to recognize our insufficiency and weakness.... we all need to recognize we are in need of redemption and of God's love and we all need to recognize that none of us, no matter who we are or how high we sit up at the banquet tables of the Church or State are perfect or immune from inflation or self righteousness, that is what Jesus is warning us about today and why the Church has given us a way of growing into wholeness through humility through the sacrament of reconciliation.... through confession. The great Swiss Psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung, himself a Swiss Protestant, was a great advocate for the sacrament of confession, because he believed it helped people face their shadow, their dark side and helped them to integrate it with integrity.

We have to be so careful in the church that we don't become the Pharisees, so self righteous and quick to condemn others. It is so easy to do that. So

easy. We can easily fall into the Pharisaic role.... how easily we find excuses for ourselves and how easily we find stones with which to condemn others. HONESTY..... we need to be honest with ourselves about our own life. As anyone who is in recovery will tell you, the journey cannot begin until the person admits they are powerless over whatever addiction it is they are struggling with and needs help. We all need help in our Christian journey to become the worthy person God has called us to be. This is why God came in Jesus Christ to help us on our journey to the Father and to live that life and to show us how to be worthy of our call.

The Epistle to the Thessalonians says: 'Urging and pleading that you should lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.'

We are called to lead a life WORTHY OF GOD. And that begins with honesty and integrity.

We cannot be worthy of God unless we set God at the Center of our Lives and that means looking in the mirror and asking those questions Jesus asked the Pharisees and his disciples and followers.....

Saint Ignatius founder of the Jesuits instructed his brothers to conduct what he called the EXAMEN at the end of each day. This wasn't as many people think, just a time of looking at what one has done wrong through the day but looking for the good things, the times where God had been particularly present and times where things could have been better or what how life would have been different if..... perhaps this week we could all commit to spending some time each evening doing that.....

- how would it have been if I had spoken to the homeless person, or even taken him or her into a cafe and sat down and eaten a sandwich with the and talked to them???

- how would it have been if I had been kind to a co-worker or neighbor who is particularly selfish or mean???

-how would it have been if I had lived with a moment by moment generous spirit to each and every brother and sister we are called to share this planet with???

Perhaps if I take time to ask myself these questions I will discover where God has been in my life today and where God COULD be so that I could live in a deeper and more profound place and become more worthy of his Love for me which is generous and overflowing if only I were generous enough to open my wounds in order to receive it.

Richard Rohr, the great Roman Catholic Franciscan says: 'The Gospel must first of all be internalized before it can be externalized'..... in other words, I have to ask myself those questions that Jesus asks his followers and the teachers of his day.... and only when I can ask them and answer them do I have to the right to preach to the world out there.

Here, Sunday by Sunday is where we are offered the chance to enter into this mystery..... but it cannot only be here, it must be taken with us and worked on in our life of prayer, in our life of service and ministry to the world out there..... allow it to transform us.....

This Month's Celebrants and Preachers

Saturday, December 3, 2011
Advent 2 Latin High Mass
Celebrant: Jane Shaw
Preacher: Paul Burrows

Sunday, December 4, 2011
Advent 2
Celebrant: Robyn Arnold
Preacher: Paul Burrows

Sunday, December 11, 2011
Advent 3
Celebrant: Paul Burrows
Preacher: Jude Hill

Sunday, December 18, 2011
Advent 4
Celebrant: Louis Newton
Preacher: Alex Martin

Saturday, December 24, 2011
Christmas Midnight Mass
Celebrant: Paul Burrows
Preacher: Robyn Arnold

Sunday, December 25, 2011
Christmas Day
Celebrant and Preacher: Paul Burrows

December Anniversaries

- 2 Brother Jude Hill, SSF + - priesthood
Lauran Pifke + - priesthood
Rod Thompson + - birthday
- 4 Catherine Costas - diaconate
Vincent Jang - diaconate
- 5 Paul Burrows + - confirmation
- 6 John Porter + - baptism
Martha Stookey - birthday
- 8 Lesley McCloghrie + - birthday
Mark Rose - baptism
- 9 Loren LeJeune - birthday
- 11 Cameron Fitzsimmons - confirmation
Lesley McCloghrie + - confirmation
Michael McGinley - reception
Daniel Schwartz - birthday
Daniel Schwartz & Christopher Fredricks - marriage
- 12 Jim Cromwell - birthday
Basil Parker-Matthews + - confirmation
- 13 Lizette Larson-Miller + - baptism & confirmation
- 14 Michael Barlowe + - priesthood
Jack Fredricks + - priesthood
- 15 Kimba Anderson - birthday
- 16 Geoffrey Glaser + - diaconate
- 19 Lou Troga - birthday & baptism
- 20 Vincent Jang - baptism
- 21 Tom Veitch - baptism
- 24 Patrick Russell - confirmation
- 26 Fred Hansen & Lauran Pifke + - marriage
- 28 William Ray Branson, Jr. - birthday
Bob Kossler + - confirmation
- 31 Megan Anderson - birthday

The Gospel life isn't easy..... and it isn't for sissies, but if we live into it, it can transform our lives. If we look at the challenges of Jesus honestly as they speak to us they can move, heal us and make us whole. Entering into these stories in this way Sunday by Sunday can enable us to look at ourselves honestly and face ourselves with integrity... and when we do that our lives can change and we can truly lead lives worthy of our calling.

Perhaps the dismissal at the end of our Mass on Sunday should be the phrase they end each twelve step meeting with:

'Keep on coming back - it works!'



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