



The Epistle

March, 2008

A publication of St. John's Episcopal Church, Boonton, NJ

God's Love and the Jersey City Viaduct

The miracles of the church seem to me to rest not so much upon faces or voices of healing power coming suddenly near to us from afar off, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always.

Death Comes for the Archbishop, Willa Cather

It was a sweltering August and I was stuck in traffic, with my friend Melvona, by the Jersey City viaduct. I'm hating the city—the smell of rotten garbage and gasoline, the way the black top shimmers with waves of heat, and I'm having a fantasy about spontaneously turning into a six-foot tall, muscle-bound guy and pulling the person who is honking behind us out of the car window by his head.

Even so, I can't help laughing at the things Melvona is telling me. I don't remember which of her hundreds of hilarious monologues she was in the middle of. She might have been telling me about putting on her shoes that morning—"Girl, I've gotta lose weight. I looked down and couldn't tell if I was wearing a boot or a flap." Or she might have been talking about her latest boyfriend—the guy who calls himself "Brick" and has a mouth full of gold teeth, or maybe it was the boyfriend who likes to go dancing. "The only problem is," says Mel, "This guy wants *me* to lead. I think he's got some sugar in his tank, Laurie. I think he's more your people than mine. You know what I mean?"

Mel is all about the city—born and bred there, she could care less about a sky full of stars or a walk in the woods. She *loves* the feel of the bass from the speakers in the car next to us making the church van shake, and later, after we get out of the traffic, I know she'll be sitting on the stoop in front of her apartment with a half frozen bottle of water in her hand talking to everyone hanging out on the street. While I'm laughing and listening, I'm

thinking about how I love Mel's easy way with life and people. This is when she looks up. The traffic on the viaduct above us has begun to move—red, yellow, green, blue, brown cars shimmering past in the blur of light and heat. And Mel says something that changes me inside forever:

“It's beautiful, ain't it?”

I look for a moment through Melvona's city eyes. And because I love her, miraculously, I *can* see beauty where only a moment before I saw nothing but grime. It was like waking up—being given new eyes. When I think back on how God found me in the city, this moment is one of the book marks.

The Thursday Night Adult Forum has been reading a book called *Rabbi Jesus*, by Bruce Chilton. In it, the author explains that the sentimental idea we tend to have about God's love being an attitude of general tolerance for others is exactly what Jesus was *not* saying. Instead, Chilton explains, “Love is the power of divine creativity released through human relations.”

The love God wants to give us in Jesus changes who we are, how we understand the world around us, and how we live with one another. We wind up loving what otherwise might have seemed wholly unlovable and touching those who before would have been, to us, untouchable. What was ugly becomes beautiful, what was profane becomes holy because our hearts have been set on fire with the creative love of God.

As we approach Holy Week almost all of the Sunday Gospel readings challenge us to find God where we least expect to find God. In Jesus' world, these places were in Samaria with a marginal, unclean woman, in a cemetery with a man possessed by demons, with a blind beggar near the pool of Siloam, by the tomb of Jesus' friend Lazarus and later at Jesus' own tomb.

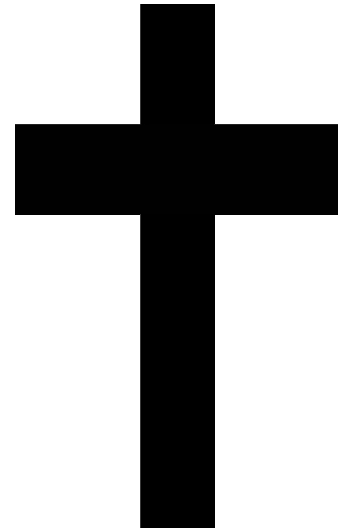
Where is your Jersey City viaduct? Where is your Samaria? Where is your tomb? During Lent, what would happen if you go there looking for God? What would it be like to have God roll away the stone?

Your sister in Christ,

Laurie

The Reverend Laurie Jean Wurm

Lent and Stewardship Perfect Together



Remember the old “New Jersey and You- Perfect Together “ ads that used to air during a previous governor’s term in office? During this season of Lent, I’ve been doing a different linkage, but I think it works!

Lent is that time where we are supposed to fast, give things up or take things on. Get right with God. Be with Jesus as he walks to his death to bring us new life in those 40 days of our waiting. It surely is not Christmas when we wait with joyful expectancy. Rather it is a time of reflection and acknowledgment of suffering.

Stewardship is a time when we are also asked each Fall to consider our relationship with St. John’s and our own relationship with God. Careful discernment of our talents and other gifts all by God’s grace- our abundance.

I don’t know about you, but I rarely hear people say, “Oh great- it’s Lent!”. And I suspect that there are at least a few folks who dread stewardship in the Fall. I believe it’s because neither is an easy walk. The parallels are similar if you look at the choices you are called to make.

In Lent you are to take up a challenge or live in a way that makes you appreciate abundance, acknowledge suffering- what to take on or what to abstain from? It is making a choice in an intentional way and staying with that choice daily.

The same is true for stewardship. Rather than thinking of whether it’s the perfect volunteer activity or if the pledge amount is the right amount, just starting somewhere with a conscious effort to expand and grow is what you are called to do.

Just do it. Take action, either in Lent or in Stewardship. And stay the course all the way to new experiences of yourself in our communal life together. St. John’s and you- Perfect Together.

In faith,

Nancy Seus

What's Missing From this Picture?



If you said, *the right panel of our stained glass window which is being restored*, congratulations! You win a cigar! But something else is missing too— the lovely free standing altar that usually obscures the congregations view of the original, and even more beautiful altar, dedicated in memory of Mary Thomas in 1898.

The vestry is currently discussing Rev. Laurie's plan to re-structure the current configuration of the altar. Before describing this plan, please note two things: 1) This

plan is still under discussion and all members of St. John's will be invited into the conversation this month and probably for months to come, 2) *This beautiful altar will remain*, although in a different configuration, which will better our view of one of St. John's crown jewels: the window depicting the raising of Jarius' daughter.

So, here's the plan:

- 1) Lower the altar by one step
- 2) Drop the back of the altar down by one step, giving more clearance for the view of the window
- 3) Pull the table from the altar out to create a free standing altar in place of our current, smaller free standing altar.

Confused? Fear not! Mark Morehouse will provide us with a photo shop version of how this renovation would look. It will be available for viewing, and Vestry members and Rev. Laurie will be available for questions, at all March coffee hours beginning on March 9th. So come, share your questions and ideas!

*An excerpt from
The Bread and the Wine
- Benjamin Comings*

Some reach for the cup
Others open their mouths, faithful that you will tip carefully
Some grasp the bottom of the cup
And control the tip
Some just sip, so timidly that you wonder if they received
Others manhandle the cup and take a significant helping

Some raise their hands for the bread
But many, many leave their hands low
Their hands cupped, almost closed
You must reach down
Reach in
And place the bread inside their hands
Like a seed within a pod
Like a child within a womb
Encourage them to take, to taste



Big Bothers Big Sisters at Cedar Hill CDC

In anticipation of seeing his "Big Sister," one little boy could not stop jumping up and down with excitement. The same eagerness was obvious in many of the other children attending the after-school program at St. John's Episcopal Church in Boonton. For on this afternoon, the teenagers from Mountain Lakes High School were visiting as they do twice every month, forging special bonds with the youngsters.



Little Sister Michelle Tom, Big Sister Rachel Shoemake, Little Sister Mishairy Cotto, Big Sister Aubrey Rosati, and Little Brother Wilson Chapparo enjoy their time together

This was the first paragraph of a wonderful article, in [The Neighborhood News](#) written about teen age students from a local high school who visit St. John's on a regular basis to spend time with the youngsters from the CDC. It has become very difficult to recruit adults who have less time than ever before and who are also turned off by the rigorous background checks and training now required by the State. Big Brothers and Sisters have therefore added to their traditional program one involving teenagers, in this case students from Mountain Lakes High School who are looking for ways to fulfill what might be called civic duties required by the school, a program called Learning in the Community.

We know what these volunteers mean to our children. What was perhaps more interesting to CDC members was what we have come to mean to them. The pairing is only 18 months old and when it first started, there were "Littles" waiting for "Bigs" to adopt them. Now the numbers have been reversed with half a dozen teens serving as reserves, a situation we like much better. There is much disappointment among the Littles when a Big is unable to be there, but because there are more Bigs than Littles, a substitute Big Brother or Sister is always available. However, such instances are not common because attendance by the teens is very consistent, according to Patty Morton from Big Brothers. Originally there were only Sisters in attendance, but now a group of boys visit regularly. The relationship with Cedar Hill is something that Big Brothers & Sisters point out to other schools as a model of how well the program can work.

Patty McElduff works out of Mt. Lakes High School. She says the teenagers were "'floored by the enthusiasm and honesty of the little kids" and that some of them are now considering teaching as a career. And the quote from one of the high school students, "When I leave here, I always feel good. It is one of the best things I've ever done" speaks of how valuable the experience is from the view of the "Bigs".

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Race Results

Over forty people from St. John's Church and Cedar Hill CDC turned out for one last Hurah before Lent at St. John's Annual Pancake Supper. The dinner was delicious thanks to the flipping expertise of Debbie and Jim Henschel (how do you get those pancakes so light and golden anyway?) with the help of Jean Stewart. And once again, Diane Stamelos led the Annual Kids Pancake Race up and down the parish hall with fabulous prizes for all participants. Thanks Diane!

And thank you too to the Cedar Hill CDC kids who provided entertainment by singing musical Selections from *High School Musical!*



**Samantha Savercool
a Proud Pancake Flipping
Champion**

Notes from our Choir Master

There is a wealth of wonderful music appropriate for Lent and Easter. Our choral music comes from many diverse sources. Two of our coming anthems have ties to our 1982 Hymnal. Jane Marshall has provided an anthem setting of her fine hymn, Eternal Light (Hymn 966). In Victorian composer Herbert Parry's case, the anthem, Dear Lord and father of Mankind, (text by John Greenleaf Whittier) probably came first, and then a simpler version followed, (Hymn 653). We are preparing especially meaningful music for Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter, ranging from Thomas Tallis (Elizabethan England) to John Rutter, (the Anglican Church's answer to Andrew Lloyd Webber).

Our choir is devoted and talented, but just one or two extra voices on each part could help tremendously. Any volunteers?

— Anne Reiners

Celebrating Kids at Cedar Hill CDC



**The distinguished Director
of our CDC, Mr. Tim, playing
A birthday party game**

St. John's hosted it's first birthday party for children at Cedar Hill CDC, Boonton's *only* after school program for low income kids. Project Leader Debra Gordon has received an overwhelming show of support in this new ministry. About a half dozen St. John's folks have already volunteered the gifts of time and treasure.

You GO St. John's!



Charlotte and Martha

Up Coming Events & Programs

Lenten Labyrinth Journey

Sunday, March 2nd, immediately after the 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. services

Boonton Food Pantry Sunday

March 2nd

Communion Services at Victoria Mews

Thursday, March 6th & 20th, 9:30 a.m.

Passion Narrative Rehearsal

Sunday, March 9th 8:30-9:30 beginning at Wilson House
Sunday, March 16th, 8:45-9:30 beginning at Wilson House

Cedar Hill CDC Board Meeting

Tuesday, March 11th, 7 p.m., Wilson House

Boonton Clergy Alliance Meeting

Wednesday, March 12th, 11:30, Wilson House

Palm Sunday, March 16th

Vestry Meeting

March 18th, 7 p.m., Wilson House

Maundy Thursday Events, March 20th

Pot Luck Supper, 6:00 p.m., Parish Hall

Foot Washing Service, 7 :30 p.m.

All Night Vigil, 8:30 p.m.– Friday, 7 a.m.

Good Friday Services, March 21st

Morning Prayer, 7 a.m.

Noon Service at St. Peter's, Mountain Lakes, Rev. Laurie Preaching

7 p.m. Service at St. John's, The Rev. Susan Butler, Interim at St. Peters, preaching

The Great Vigil of Easter

Saturday, March 22nd, 7 p.m.

Combined Easter Sunday Service, March 23rd Followed by Kids' Easter Egg Hunt and Brunch!

Children's Sunday & Ice Skating Trip to Mennen Sports Arena, March 30th

Children's Service at 10 a.m. followed immediately by
Ice Skating Trip

Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays

3/2: Bill Bender	3/12: Renee & Ian Comings	3/21: Jacob Jennings
3/2:: Morgan Jennings	3/12: Rosemary McLaughlin	3/27: Marion White
3/6: Nicole Villamil	3/13: Caroline Kolb	3/27: Emma Wethered
3/10: Joanne Cross	3/17: Lucy Kathleen McLaughlin	3//28: Peter Henschel & Patty Florio
3/11: Eric Weltner	3/19: David Horton	3/28: Patty Florio
	3/21: Richard Storey	Anniversaries
		3/9: Irene and Rich Millahn

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WORSHIP SCHEDULE

8 am Rite 1 Eucharist
10am Choral Eucharist with Children's
Homily and Sunday School
The Reverend Laurie Jean Wurm, Rector
Email: revlwurm@optonline.net

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