

ST. MATTHEW'S ONLINE NEWSLETTER



MARCH, 2009

The Episcopal Church of St. Matthew Tucson, Arizona

Lent: Growing strong through self-reflection

By Fr. Rick Wilson



In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we read of Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist and then going to the desert. In Matthew and Luke, the Spirit is leading Jesus to the desert. In the Gospel of Mark, the Spirit drives Jesus to the desert. Jesus makes his sojourn to the desert in preparation for the public ministry he is about to begin. Why does he go to the desert? Well, to use a term taken from some Native American cultures, he goes for his Vision Quest, a time of self-reflection and clarification for one's life purpose.

The stories about this period of time allow for us to understand that Jesus has given himself some space to reflect on who he is. In both the Matthew and Luke stories, the Adversary appears to try and manipulate how Jesus is to be but Jesus refuses to be caught in this trickery. Jesus rebukes any attempt to rob him of the relationship he already has with God. In spite of the vulnerability he is experiencing in his desert retreat, he remains centered in God.

In Genesis, the ancient Hebrew story of Adam and Eve has the Adversary present also. The story of the temptation of Eve centers on the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil from which neither she nor Adam are to eat. The Adversary says that eating from the Tree will open her eyes and she will know what is good and evil. There have been some thinkers that have asked the question: Isn't the Adversary right about that? What is wrong with learning the difference between good and evil? Does God want them to remain naïve?

A response by Irenaeus of Lyons, a second century Bishop, was that it was not God's desire for them to remain naïve but to grow to the point that such knowledge would reflect the process of maturity by which they could understand such knowledge. In other words, there would be a development of living life and making

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The Online Newsletter is the production of the volunteer staff and the Priest in Charge. Please email all articles before the

5th of the month to:

stmattsnewsletter@hotmail.com

LENT AND EASTER SERVICES

Wednesdays—6 pm—Evening Prayer, Supper, Study Group

Maundy Thursday Service—April 9—7:00 pm

Good Friday Service—April 10—12:00 noon

Stations of the Cross (shorter walk) - April 10—6:00 pm

Easter Vigil—April 11—7:00 pm

Easter Services—April 12—6:00, 8:00 and 10:30 am

Easter Egg Hunt—April 12—9:15 am

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The Power of Prayer By Deacon Terry Burke

Many of you may have read in newspapers such as the New York Times and magazines such as Time about studies that show that prayer doesn't work. Well I would like to tell you a story. Two weeks ago a woman named Carol was out to celebrate her birthday with her husband and two sons. As they were about to leave the restaurant she collapsed. Her heart had stopped. Luckily there were two paramedics who immediately started C.P.R. It was difficult to re-start her heart and she lost oxygen to her brain. Three days later the doctors told her family that her brain was badly damaged and was little hope of recovery. Carol was prayed for at our Circle of Prayer service and added to our prayer list. A week later Carol was able to sit up in bed and began talking! Her recovery will take a long time so we need to continue to pray for her.

I believe that the power of prayer is first felt inside of us. It's a sense of God's assent, somewhat like someone answering our phone call when the phone has been ringing for a long time and we're wondering if maybe we should just hang up and try again another time. Then a voice answers and simply says, "I'm here. I'm listening to you." Communication has been established!



God has assented to our calling. God has assented to be in relationship with us. God has assented to us - to you, to me, to who we are and who we hope

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Christ heals

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decisions which would prepare them for such understanding. The Adversary offered a short cut which denied them the benefit of growth and what is learned from that process. Instead of coming to know the knowledge of good and evil through developing as male and female in a healthy way, they chose to experience the end without the preparation of what they would learn. The journey is as important as the destination. It would be like being tested on something and having access to the answers without studying and knowing the topic, cheating in other words.

This temptation of manifesting the end without the necessary means of growing and maturing has a similarity in the temptation of Jesus. One of the temptations in the desert for Jesus is to throw himself down from the parapet of the temple only to be caught by the angels. The idea is to reveal who he is without living who he is. But the vindication of Jesus' message would come through the resurrection after Jesus had lived the life he is to lead and not through having to prove himself at the request of another.

During this Lenten period, we are invited to look within ourselves and see where we are as people who have responded to the message of Jesus Christ. It is a time for us to see if we are holding on to anything that is obstructing our spiritual growth. In other words, what are the adversarial aspects that accost us in our trying to reveal God's presence within us? We are so incredibly special to God that we do a disservice to ourselves and others when we allow ourselves to be stunted in manifesting the presence of Christ.

Jesus offers us a way of living that leads to the completion of our holy identities as children of God. He gives us an example to follow. So dear friends, let us grow stronger in this season of Lent by letting go of what inhibits us from being who we are as living presences of God. Let us be clearer about who we are and what we are to be about.

Fr. Rick Wilson Joins St. Matthews

On February 7, 2009 Father Rick Wilson joined St. Matthews as Priest In Charge Under Special Circumstances in the wake of the retirement of Fr. Allen Breckenridge. Parishioners have come to know his kind and gentle nature and hear in his homilies his extensive knowledge of Church history. So, what is the scoop on Fr. Rick's history?



Fr. Rick was born in Peoria, Illinois and raised in a nearby smaller town named Pekin. He attended Trinity College where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies and English Literature. His theological education was at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, near Chicago, Illinois. There, he received a Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology (S.T.B.), a Master's of Divinity (M.Div.), and a Licentiate in Sacred Theology (S.T.L.). His S.T.B. and S.T.L. are in Patristic Studies (the first 600 years of the Church's existence).

During the seven years Father Rick belonged to a small Benedictine Community that was founded at the invitation of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Peoria, he was ordained a deacon in 1983 and a priest in 1984. Later, he served as a parish priest in the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Peoria and Lexington.

In 1995, he left the Roman Catholic priesthood and became a Fund Development Professional. He worked with several nonprofits including the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation and the Tucson Symphony Orchestra in strengthening their funding base.

On December 21, 2007, he was received as a priest in the Episcopal Church after completing an "Anglicanization" process. He served as a Priest Associate at Grace St. Paul's Episcopal Church until he began his position here.

Shrove Tuesday Enjoyed By All!

Pictures courtesy of Linda Ffolliott

Our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner was a big success due to the culinary skills and serving prowess of our Matty's Men! Thank you, gentlemen, for an excellent evening celebration full of luscious delights! You are great! Also, thank you to the ladies who decorated the Parish Hall, transforming it into the festive atmosphere of green, gold, and purple that it was. How marvelous a celebration it was the night before the beginning of Lent!





CARING FOR YOU

by Carol Walker



Do you have a family member or friend who has just been laid off from work, been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, is sad, or experienced a loss, or just looks "down" for whatever reason? Do you know how to show that you CARE? It is really very easy to do and something that will bring great rewards to you.

The easiest way to show you care is by smiling, being cheerful and to give hugs. Support can be given by listening, understanding, and encouragement. Accept that person for who s/he is and not who you think s/he should be. Offer assistance to those who are physically handicapped or alone by offering to drive them to church, doctor, hospital or airport. Those who are physically handicapped may need help with opening a door, or sitting or standing. Treat someone to a meal, in times of crises, or at a holiday, etc, while socializing. Communicate with the lonely or those recovering from an illness or surgery by phone, email or greeting cards. Tell the person s/he is in your thoughts and prayers, and then pray for her/him. Reassure her/him that you are available if needed. Be empathetic.

By doing these things, you will be rewarded three fold. I have found that the more I give of myself, the more hope, joy, and love I receive. What a great feeling!

The Power of Prayer (continued)



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to be. But why? You might ask. And why now? Because that is God's deepest desire and what God has been hoping for all along.

The power of prayer is the power that comes to us when we realize that God can be our point of reference in the midst of all the confusions of our daily lives, the steadfastness of God rather than the incomplete, fragile inconstancies of ourselves. It's the power that comes when we're able to be centered, anchored in a belief and rooted in a Truth, which is stronger and deeper than the day-to-day truths we struggle with.

The power of prayer is the constant renewal of perspective. Prayer opens our eyes. It extends our horizons. It sheds light into the darkness of our fears and our sorrows, our hopes and joys, our shame and our pride. It gives us new ways of seeing life and relationships, of understanding work and the cost of growing.

The power of prayer is real and palpable. You can feel it and know it and depend on it. It comes to us as a gift, but we need to do our part as well. God calls us to pray and through our prayer, God empowers us and gives us strength.

Recycling Info from Deacon Bill and the Green Team

Please look at the bulletin board outside the Parish Hall. There is a list of things you can recycle that you might not realize along with info on just how to do that.

Discipleship

TEN Ways to Improve Relational Skills Dr. Richard J. Krejcir

Romans 12:1-3

1. **SPEAK TO PEOPLE.** There is nothing as nice as a cheerful word of greeting!
2. **SMILE AT PEOPLE.** It takes seventy-two muscles to frown, only fourteen to smile.
3. **CALL PEOPLE BY NAME.** The sweetest music to anyone's ear is the sound of one's own name!
4. **BE FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL.** If you would like to have friends, then, be friendly!
5. **BE CORDIAL.** Speak and act as if everything you do were a genuine pleasure! (If it is right and good, it really should be.)
6. **BE GENUINELY INTERESTED IN PEOPLE.** Empathy means involvement!
7. **BE GENEROUS WITH PRAISE** and cautious with criticism!
8. **BE CONSIDERATE WITH THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS.** It will be appreciated.
9. **BE THOUGHTFUL OF THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS.** There are three sides to controversy—yours, the other fellow's and the right one!
10. **BE ALERT TO GIVE SERVICE.** What counts most in life is who we are in Christ and then what we do for others!

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*Faithful to my Lord's commands,
I still would choose the better part;
Serve with careful Martha's hands
And loving Mary's heart."*

John Wesley

Health Ministries News from Nurse and Health Ministries Network

Vitamin D

Many people are deficient in vitamin D, especially those who are over 60, live at northern latitudes, have darker skin, or are rarely outdoors. There has been a lot of recent research on vitamin D. Many studies have looked at its potential to reduce the risk of everything from some common cancers and multiple sclerosis to diabetes, hypertension and age-related muscle weakness. A recent meta-analysis found that people taking vitamin D supplements had a 7% reduction in total mortality rates. Many experts

now advise people to get tested for vitamin D and to take enough in supplement form to get blood levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D to at least 30 to 40mg/ml. Ask your doctor if you should consider taking 800 to 1,000 IU supplemental vitamin D a day. The type to use is Vitamin D3. For most people, that should raise blood levels to the desirable range or at least close to it.

UC Berkeley Wellness Guide to Dietary Supplements,
2008

PRAYER CIRCLE

We have a dedicated group of parishioners who are engaged in praying for everyone on our prayer list on a daily basis, and then gather the third Thursday of each month for Holy Eucharist, along with prayers, led by Fr. Rick. We meet in the chapel area of the sanctuary at 10 AM and the service generally lasts about an hour.



When we pray for one another, Christ's love flows through us to the other person. Daily intercessory prayer is one of the greatest acts of caring we can express to those whom God has given us to love, and is very rewarding. We can pray while we are doing dishes, driving in the car or in the silence of our bedroom. God hears all prayers and they are answered, although on His time, not ours. The shortest prayer is HELP.

We are called to pray for one another. Won't you join us on the third Thursday each month to help us pray for those on our prayer list?

We also have a Prayer Chain, that is activated when a parishioner has a crisis, about to undergo surgery, etc. Simply phone Fr. Rick, Deacon Terry, or Janet McKenzie, our office manager. The purpose is for immediate prayers for that parishioner. If you have a desire to assist in this ministry, please advise Fr. Rick or Carol Walker. God will bless you!

Meditations for Lent

Anibal Sanchez attended Christ Church in Columbia, MD while on a recent trip, and the Spiritual Life Commission there has once again published their Meditations. This booklet is written by members of the congregation; they work on it all year so it will be ready for Lent. This is an invitation to all those of you who have something to share to send it to the listserv to help us in our spiritual growth this Lenten season—or at any time.

The theme for Christ Church this year was "Be Not Afraid". Several poems, songs and thoughts submitted referred to a member of the congregation who had passed away. Since we have lost some good friends this year, I thought some parishioners might appreciate these meditations. Simply ask and you can borrow the booklet. By the way, members of the Youth Group also contributed, so any of you young writers / thinkers out there, pick up your computers and send us something.

Barbara Sanchez, DCF

Opportunities for Outreach

Is there something out there that you are interested in, which we have not mentioned? Sometimes it is easier in our busy lives to hook up with someone online than to saddle up and come over to the church for a meeting. Here is one possibility...

The Earth Care Commission: This is provided by the Arizona Ecumenical Council at www.aecunity.net or 602-468-3818.

They help restore the Earth through:

- ♣ Legislative advocacy
- ♣ Liaison with our local church
- ♣ Program development
- ♣ Environmental workdays
- ♣ Nature hikes and trail restoration

