

THE LION

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Issue 1

Curate's Corner

Fr. Randall Russell

The story you are about to read is a work of fiction, but I assure you that it is work of fiction with a point. Its primary purpose is not so much to entertain as it is to teach.

Once upon a time there was a medium sized church on a small little hill just outside a fairly large city. It was a Sunday morning and the preacher of this particular parish had just finished preaching when, all of a sudden, a miracle occurred. Suddenly the Lord Himself appeared to the congregation, standing right in front of them all. Needless to say, no one said a word, but neither did the Lord. Instead, the Lord just extended His arms out to the congregation with open hands, as if He were inviting each member to come forward and touch those hands and to actually see and feel the place where the nails had gone. And so, that is exactly what each member did.

One by one each member stood before the Lord and reached out and touched the Lord's hands. And as they did this (and I should add, and as they did this in faith) each person who touched the Lord had his or her sins forgiven, each person who touched the Lord received mercy and peace and grace, and no one went home that Sunday not knowing that God was with them, that God loved them, and that with God all things are possible. For they all had just stood in the presence of their Lord and Savior; they all had just received the Lord's blessing and been reassured of their salvation; and now they were all ready to live their lives for Christ and then the Lord simply vanished.

Needless to say everyone was dumbfounded and after about five to ten minutes of everyone just standing around staring at one another the preacher finally said, "Well, let's all just go home now and try to live lives that are worthy of this great and wonderful miracle and let's come back next Sunday and give thanks to God for all that He has done and encourage one another in the faith." And so, that is exactly what everyone did.

Parents whose children were not with them that Sunday went running home to tell their children, "I don't care if you have another basketball, baseball, or football game. If it's happening on Sunday you're not going. You are coming to church and do you know why? Because we love the Lord and He is there at church for us and we are going!" Likewise, men and women whose spouses also had not attended church that Sunday ran home to tell their spouses pretty much the same thing. One man was even so bold as to run home, call his boss, and reschedule an important business meeting for the following Sunday because he wanted to see Jesus and receive His grace.

And so, the following Sunday comes around and something odd happened, something that if we are honest doesn't really happen all that often except for maybe twice a year. For on that following Sunday not only did everyone from the previous Sunday show up for church, but so did a few guests as well as other members of the church who were not there before. And the church was packed! And wouldn't you know, just as soon as the preacher stopped preaching, just as soon as he had ended his sermon, the very same thing happened that had happened the week before. Suddenly the Lord Himself appeared with outstretched arms and open hands, and again no one said a word, but everyone who came forward in faith and touched His hands and felt His wounds received mercy, grace, and peace. And once again, the Lord vanished from their sight.

And this actually continued on for quite a while. Each Sunday the preacher would preach, end his sermon, and pretty soon the Lord Himself would appear and be present with His people in a most peculiar yet absolutely phenomenal way. Pretty soon the church started to grow because its members just couldn't stop talking about Jesus; and even if they didn't talk about Jesus they were still telling others about Him through their acts of kindness and mercy and love. The church just continued to grow and grow and grow until one day it just stopped. Not the Lord appearing before the congregation mind you, but the growth. One day the numerical growth just stopped.

Curate's Corner – Continued

And in about a month Sunday attendance at the church slowly started to decline. Then one day after the service a member asked the preacher, “Um, is that really all He is going to do?” “What do you mean?” said the preacher. “Well, I mean, is that really all He is going to do? Just show up, bestow mercy, give grace, and hand out salvation? I mean, is that it?” said the member. “Isn’t that enough?” asked the preacher. And the man just shrugged his shoulders and walked away, and church attendance continued to decline, as Jesus continued to stand before the congregation each and every Sunday in order to bestow mercy, grace, and peace upon all who believed. *The End.*

Now as I wrote in the beginning, the story you just read is a work of fiction. However, here is the reality: In Holy Communion Jesus really does come to us in a most peculiar yet absolutely phenomenal way. In Holy Communion we really do touch our Lord; we really do receive Him; Christ truly is present with us in order to strengthen us, sustain us, and give us our salvation. The only questions are: Do we still recognize our Lord’s presence in Holy Communion? Or have we become bored with His presence or just simply take it all for granted? Do we kneel at the communion rail because it’s what we have always done or do we kneel at the communion rail because there on the altar is our King? Summer is always a busy time for us all, but let us never become so busy that we begin to forget who it is we receive at the altar and who it is all the children of God have been called to serve.

Music Notes

Kathleen Knott, Music Director

Funeral Hymns

Hymn 356 (*1982 Hymnal*)

vs. 1 May choirs of angels lead you to Paradise on high,
Where dwell the white-robed martyrs who now no more can die.

Word: F. Bland Tucker

Recently Father Ward reminded us that funerals are much easier to plan if we have taken the time and energy to write down specifics regarding our wishes. Part of these plans includes picking hymns for our funeral service. While the *1982 Hymnal* only has five hymns (#354 – # 358) in the burial section, one of the most uplifting is #358, “Christ the Victorious,” which uses the tune *Russia*.

Most people or families like to select favorite hymns that have special meaning in their worship experience and life. Era Hawkins told me that Clyde loved to sing “Amazing Grace.” Jack Haley told me numerous times that he wanted the hymn “Ancient of Days” for his funeral. Joan Hogan expressed that she knew Jack was listening to “On Eagle’s Wings” as the family processed into the church to celebrate his life. I selected “Dear Lord and Father of Mankind” for my father’s funeral because it was his favorite hymn.

Most importantly some of the music should include hymns of praise, joy, hope, and victory. #287, “For all the saints,” is a fine example of a celebratory hymns with text by William How and wonderful music by Vaughan Williams.

vs. 6 The golden evening brightens in the west;
Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest;
Sweet is the calm of paradise the blest.
Alleluia. Alleluia!

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions regarding hymn choices for funerals. I will gladly provide suggestions or play over tunes.

Lay Pastoral Care Ministry

Steven Kinkel

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Galatians 6:7-10

The St. Mark's Lay Pastoral Care Ministry was instituted in order to offer the parishioners of St. Mark's an extended level of pastoral care, beyond that which Father Mike and Father Randall provide. The ministry is not a substitute for the pastoral care rendered by our Priests, but rather a supplementation of it. As we know, Father Mike and Father Randall are faithful in their attention to the spiritual needs and support of us all, whenever they are made aware. Especially in times of sickness and loss of loved ones, they are devotedly on site, whether at the hospital, home or care facility. With approximately 160 members on the rolls, they are very busy with pastoral care duties, in addition to the demands of preparing weekly sermons, attending required meetings, and conducting the day to day business of the church. But even so, they are very attentive to our personal spiritual needs.

The Lay Pastoral Care Ministry can provide another tier of care and attention to our parishioners by offering companionship, assistance, communication, and spiritual support. Lisa Brenneman, Janice Johnston, Cal Brown, Linda Philpott, Carol Strong, and Steve Kinkel are the Lay Pastoral Care Ministers who have offered to give of their time to support our parishioners. While we do try to identify and address needs within our congregation, any parishioner who has a need and wishes to engage with a Lay Pastoral Care Minister may simply let one of us know and we will assign an LPC minister to them. Or, you may choose the person that you would like to assist you. The ministry is in no way intended to thrust a Lay Pastoral Care Minister upon you, but rather to make us available to you. Some examples of how an LPC minister may serve our members are:

- Companionship through visits to the home, a lunch engagement, meeting for a cup of coffee or tea,
- Communication through an occasional phone call, email, text message or card,
- Spiritual support through requested prayer, conversation or study of scripture.

There are also many other ways in which an LPC minister may help such as reading to an individual with impaired vision, whether it be news, the Bible, the mail, a book or any other written material, caregiver respite, or sitting with a homebound or hospitalized person. Most of these are functions that one would not likely ask of Father Mike or Father Randall. And that is the purpose of the Lay Pastoral Care Ministry, to provide that additional level of service to our beloved church family. We are here to assist you with your need. Please do not hesitate to let us know if you need us. We are yours in service.

And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." I Peter 4:8

What a way to begin our day, thanking our heavenly Father for the gift of his presence

Debbie Kanehl

A few months ago I realized starting my day off at 5 a.m. in the morning, listening to the news and all of the negativity was not a great way to start the day. I heard a very quiet but firm "voice" speaking to me that said, "Debbie, if you will start your day with Me, I will direct your steps, and just know that as long as you abide in my Word, I will always be with you. I will never leave nor forsake you!"

I was so taken back by our heavenly Father speaking to me that day. Taking His advice has changed life forever! No more "news on the TV" and listening to those words has prompted me to share with others that it might be helpful to you to do the same.

The Gift of God's Presence – Continued

There are many passages in the Bible that refer to "his presence" and the directing of our steps. Perhaps the following passages might guide you to love and enjoy your everyday walk with him. And it might change your life too!

- Isaiah 55:9-11 (NKJV): *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

- Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT): *For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*

His message was not sent by accident (this is the reason I am sharing with you). Start your day knowing that our heavenly Father will be taking care of you. As you make the plans for your day, remember that it is he who plans our steps and events of our day. On days when things "go your way" and just the way you want them, you may be unaware of his supreme presence. On days when your plans are not being accomplished, be on the lookout for him. Our Lord may be doing something important in your life, something quite different from what you expected. It is very important at such times to stay in communication with him, accepting that his ways are better than ours! Please do not try to figure out what is going on; simply trust him and thank him in advance for the good that will come out of it! He knows the plans he has for you and they are good!

- Psalm 46:10 (KJV): *Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*

- Romans 8:1 (NIV): *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

May our heavenly Father bless you while resting in the quietness of his presence as he prepares your day. Let his glory shine upon you while you wait on him in confident trust!

Upcoming Holy Days

August/September/October

August 24 (noon) – St Bartholomew the Apostle

September 21 (noon) – St Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

September 29 (noon) – St Michael and All Angels

October 18 (noon) – St Luke the Evangelist

October 28 (10:00 a.m.) – St Simon and St June, Apostles

St. Mark's Anglican Church

Rev. Canon Michael L. Ward, SSA

Rector

1795 – 45th Street

Vero Beach, FL 32967

772-563-0450

www.stmarksvero.org