

THE LION

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Message from the Rector

*“And let us consider one another ...
not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...”*

Hebrews 10:24-25

Part 3

“Do you know John Doe?” one of the people on our fundraising committee asked. “I’ve been trying to get in touch with him but his phone is disconnected and his email doesn’t work, and I don’t have a current address for him. Do you think anyone at the 8:00 a.m. service who knows him would have his cell number? I’ve never met him.”

“Well,” I said, “everyone knows him about as well as you do since he doesn’t come very often, and when he does come he heads straight out the back door after the service. Let it alone,” I said, “I don’t think there’s anything more that you can do.”

So much for the sense of community that is supposed to be one of the hallmarks of the Christian Church.

But in a lot of ways that scenario is very much the norm today since it is nothing other than a reflection of the society in which we live. As Rod Dreher writes in *The Benedict Option*, “The rootlessness of contemporary life has frayed community bonds. It is common now to find people who don’t know their neighbors and don’t really want to. To be part of a community is to share in its life. That inevitably makes demands on the individual that limits his freedom” (p. 67).

To see how this fragmentation of community is reflected in the Church, all we have to do is alter the wording just a little bit. “The rootlessness of contemporary life has frayed *church* bonds. It is common now to find people who don’t know their neighbors *in the pew* and don’t really want to. To be part of a *church* is to share in its life. That inevitably makes demands on the *church member* that limits his freedom.”

In many instances, what is now normal in society has become normal in the Church. Building community is hard; egocentrism is easy. Sacrificing our own self-interests is hard; satisfying them is easy. Learning to get along with others can be challenging; drifting off to another place is easy. Learning to love another, in spite of our many differences, takes patience; searching for a place that has “people like me” is easy – although is there ever such a place? In other words, staying put and actually working to build community is hard because it goes against the “easiness” that our consumerist approach to virtually everything in life has instilled in us, including our view of the church.

And yet, it is in community that we grow. It is in community that we learn to set aside our pride and self-centered nature and, instead, learn to put the welfare of others ahead of ourselves. It is in community that the sharp edges of our own individuality are worn down and we learn to serve others in spite of our racial, social, economic, and various demographic differences. As Rod Dreher writes, “Life in Christian community ... is about building the kind of fellowship that every one of us needs to complete our own individual pilgrimage” (p. 70). In other words, we need one another as the fire needs the individual coals that make up the fire if we are to successfully complete our own individual and collective pilgrimage towards Christ. As counter-intuitive as it might seem, is our individual commitment to a life in community that helps form us into the “divine reality” that we call *the Church*, and that is the solution to the loneliness, isolation, and lack of deep commitment that marks our society today.

Message from the Rector - Continued

This brings me to the third element that Rod Dreher mentions as an antidote to the new “dark age” that is coming upon us, and that is the Church’s commitment to hospitality. The Church must be a welcoming place of refuge in the fragmented world in which we live. It must be a place where true Christian hospitality is practiced, and where strangers are made to feel welcome in our midst, where strangers are made to feel a part of our community. As a matter of fact, we are to welcome strangers as if we are welcoming Jesus Christ himself, because in doing so we really are (cf. Mt 25:35).

Unfortunately, however, all-too-often that simply isn’t that case. All-too-often visitors are made to feel unwelcome simply by virtue of not being actively welcomed in our midst. In other words, it isn’t a case of being excluded as much as it is a case of simply being ignored. If we are to practice hospitality, welcoming people into a community where they are made to feel included regardless of race, social, and/or economic status, we must self-consciously get out of our comfort zone and greet them, again, just as we would greet Jesus Christ. Many people are looking for a place to escape the depersonalization and fragmentation of the world around us. The Church must be that place.

To be honest, I don’t have any illusions that we as a church will ever get entirely beyond my opening illustration. We will always have people for whom the church is more or less peripheral to their lives. But if we are going to not only combat the new “dark ages” that Rod Dreher (as well as many others) see dawning upon us, but also be a place of refuge from them, then we, as individual members of the church, will have to commit ourselves to developing a deeper sense of stability, community, and hospitality as we navigate the increasing deep waters of the “liquid modernity” that is now upon us. We must consciously hold the influences of the world at bay and preserve the Faith that we have been given. St Benedict kept the light of that Faith burning in the darkness that surrounded him through prayer, formation, stability, community, and hospitality. May we be faithful to do the same.

Music Notes

Kathleen Knott, Music Director/Organist

Two Lenten Hymns”

142 “Lord, throughout these forty days”

#143 “The glory of these forty days”

The 1982 Hymnal

We often usher in Lent by singing “Lord, throughout these forty days.” This hymn reminds us of our Lord’s forty days in the wilderness where he struggled with the human needs of thirst and hunger and also with Satan. The text of this hymn was written by Claudia Hernaman (1838-1898) who was born in Surry, England, and was the daughter of an Anglican priest. As an adult she was married to a minister and involved in children’s religious education. She wrote over 150 hymns and these words first appeared in her *Child’s Book of Praise; A Manual for Devotion in Simple Verse* (1873). In our hymn book the text is paired with the sixteenth century *St. Flavian* tune which adds a solemn flavor to the hymn.

A very old Lenten hymn is “The glory of these forty days.” This ancient hymn is attributed to Pope Gregory I and was translated from the sixth century Latin into English by Maurice Bell in the 1800s. In this hymn we celebrate Christ’s suffering for us and his triumph over evil. The text is set to a German tune with harmony by J. S. Bach. The key of e minor is especially appropriate for a Lenten theme.

May the words and tunes of these old hymns inspire us as we walk through the forty days of Lent and prepare our hearts through penitence and devotion.

Blue Tarp Campaign

Cal Brown

(with *N.B.* from Fr. Mike)

As most of you know, it is time for a new roof. The original roof called for it to be slate. When the church was built, we did not have the funds to install the slate. Shingles were installed. In Florida, shingles have a life expectancy of twelve to fourteen years.

We have received bids for a shingle roof and a slate roof:

Replacing with shingles...cost...	\$375,000
Replacing with slate...cost...	\$700,000

By replacing with shingles, we will have the ongoing issue of having to replace the roof every twelve to fourteen years. A slate roof has a life expectancy of over one-hundred years.

Your Vestry has elected to install slate, resulting in eliminating the requirement to replace the roof every twelve to fourteen years. It will also match the overall architectural design of the church.

This is a huge commitment from our congregation. Remember, we own St. Mark's. It is our house of worship. Just like when our home roofs needs repairing, we address the issue with a new roof. It is the same with the roof on our house of worship.

St. Mark's has an anonymous donor who has pledged \$350,000 under the condition that the roof is slate and the balance of the congregation matches this \$350,000. Pledges and payments from the congregation must be made by November 15, 2018; otherwise, the anonymous donor's pledge is revoked.

We want to start construction no later than December, 2018. Pray that we can get through this upcoming hurricane season with no big storms which would result in our current roof failing.

How can St. Mark's raise \$350,000 in the next few months? By commitment and faith! Just as a few members banded together and raised the necessary funds to build St. Mark's and pay off a mortgage of \$1,572,000, so can we raise \$350,000 for our roof.

Our Capital Campaign Committee will be reaching out to each of you for your pledge. Pledge cards will be available for everyone. We have approximately 105 family units in St. Mark's. Some will be able to make a substantial contribution, but all should contribute. Remember: what you give to the Lord will be repaid to you by His Grace. May the Lord be with you.

N.B. Sacrifice: it is what many individuals did in order for us to enjoy the church building in which we now worship. Many of those who made that sacrifice never got to see the completed project, and many more are no longer with us; but because of their sacrifice, we are able to worship in what is arguably one of the most striking church buildings in our community.

But it was a collective effort on the part of *everyone*, meaning that no one person made it all happen (contrary to local legend). Every individual sacrificed something, whether large or small. And it truly was a sacrifice: the gifts that were made really did cost each of us something. But like all sacrifices made to our Lord, he has repaid us many times over.

We live in a society in which fifty-percent of the population is more than happy to enjoy what the other fifty-percent pay for. Unfortunately the community of the church is no different, and that applies to St. Mark's as much as any other worshipping community. Many of us are enjoying the fruits of someone else's labor.

But this is not the way it should be, nor can it be. Each and every one of us must not only do our part to help fund the day to day operations of the church, but we must also do our part to preserve what we have been given so that generations after us will be able to do the same.

That being said, let us all do our part to help fund the upcoming replacement of the roof. No one wants to see our church building in a state of disrepair and decay, but if we all don't sacrifice to replace the roof, that is exactly what we will see. Think about it, pray about it, and make your own sacrifice to our Lord. He will repay you when you do.

Upcoming Holy Days

February/March/April/May Holy Days

February 2 (noon) – Feast of the Purification of St Mary the Virgin
February 14 (noon and 6:00 p.m.) – Ash Wednesday
February 24 (10:00 a.m.) – Feast of St Matthias the Apostle
March 26-28 (noon) – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday in Holy Week
March 29 (6:00 p.m.) – Maundy Thursday
March 30 (noon) – Good Friday
April 2-3 (noon) – Monday, Tuesday in Easter Week
April 4 (noon) – Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
April 25 (noon) – Feast of St Mark the Evangelist
May 1 (noon) – Feast of St Phillip and St James, Apostles
May 10 (noon) – Feast of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ
May 21-22 (noon) – Whit-Monday, Whit-Tuesday

New Vestry

At the annual meeting, Priscilla Reilly and Wanza Murray were elected to the Vestry. The Vestry slate consists of Calvin Brown, Michelle Cook, Wanza Murray, Priscilla Reilly, and Cory Rudder. Fr. Mike has asked Wanza Murry to serve as the Rector's Warden for the coming year. Officers will be elected by the Vestry at their February meeting. Should you ever have questions about your church, please contact any Vestry member.

St. Mark's Anglican Church

Rev. Canon Michael L. Ward, SSA
Rector

Rev. Randall S. Russell
Curate

1795 – 45th Street
Vero Beach, Florida
772-563-0450

www.stmarksvero.org

Mailing Address
P.O. Box 6994
Vero Beach, FL 32961-6994