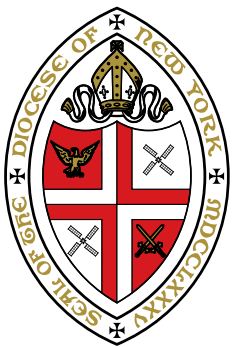


Jesus Issue

THE EPISCOPAL NEW YORKER

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IN THIS ISSUE

Bishop Dietsche Page 3

Hero Jesus Page 5

Jesus Model of Inclusion Page 9

Jesus My God Page 12

Christa Pages 13

Historical Jesus Page 15

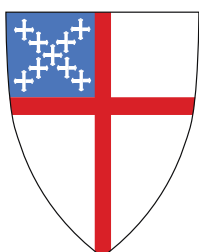
Hard Jesus Page 17

What About Jesus? Page 18

Jesus' Scars Page 19

Jesus Prayer Page 20

Understanding Jesus Page 22



'Sermon on the Mount,' Cosimo Rosselli (Sistine Chapel)

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THE EPISCOPAL NEW YORKER

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10 | The Crucifixion

Laura Saunders interviews the Rev. Fleming Rutledge and discusses her new book, *The Crucifixion*.

13 | Christa and Jesus

Margaret Diehl on Edwina Sandys' once (and still) controversial sculpture of a female crucified Christ, and its relation to the historical Jesus.

15 | The Search for the Historical Jesus

Kenneth Citarella concludes that knowing what Jesus was like as a man might be interesting, but that it just doesn't matter.

16 | Teenage Attitudes to Jesus

The Rev. Garrett Mettler relays some thoughts on Jesus from teenagers preparing for confirmation.

17 | Jesus – The Hard Bits

The Rev. Charles Kramer on some of the things Jesus said that are hardest for us to deal with.

28 | Views and Reviews

Mark Risinger on Ian Caldwell's novel *The Fifth Gospel*, and Pamela Lewis on the Met's newly acquired spectacular piece of Colombian gold work, the Crown of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception.

30 | Diocesan News

Episcopal Charities grant awards; Bedell Grant to East Jerusalem Center for Disabled Children; Treble Choir Festival; Women rectors panel discussion; transitional deacons.

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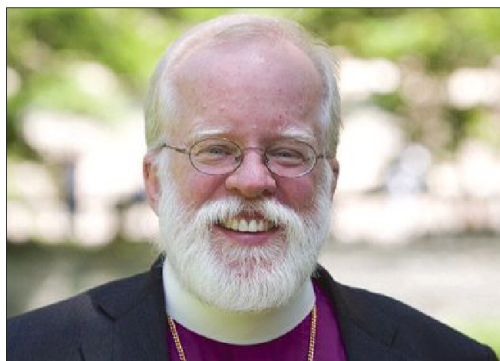
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An Enigmatic Figure

By the Rt. Rev. Andrew M.L. Dietsche



The Rt. Rev. Andrew M.L. Dietsche

In 1940, the same year in which he wrote *This Land is Your Land*, Woody Guthrie wrote a song titled *Jesus Christ*. He said later that “I wrote this song looking out of a rooming house window in New York City in the winter of Nineteen and Forty. I thought I had to put down on paper how I felt about the rich folks and the poor ones.”

Jesus was a man who traveled through the land,
A hard working man and brave.
He said to the rich “Give your money to the poor.”
And they laid Jesus Christ in his grave.

He went to the preacher, he went to the bar,
He told them all the same,
“Sell all of your jewelry and give it to the poor,”
And they laid Jesus Christ in his grave.

When Jesus came to town, all the working folks around
Believed what he did say,
The bankers and the preachers they nailed him on a cross
And they laid Jesus Christ in his grave.

For many more verses Guthrie continued his critique of an economy and social order that we take for granted, but which he is certain that Jesus would not recognize and could not countenance, until at the end of the final verse he says that in our own day

If Jesus was to preach what he preached in Galilee
We would lay Jesus Christ in his grave.

This issue of the *Episcopal New Yorker* is on the theme of Jesus Christ, and that opens us to a breadth of interpretation and myriad creeds. Because if there is anything that the experience of the church trying to be the church in a world of such extraordinary complexity teaches us, it is that everyone will project onto Jesus whatever they do or don't want Jesus to be. For all the magnitude of his influence on history, Jesus remains one of the most enigmatic figures ever to have lived. Almost anything we will say about Jesus will likely say more about our own desires, hopes, fears, politics and expectations of God—will say more about who we are— than it will say with any objectivity about Jesus.

As it was in the beginning and is now. The disciples came to Jesus and asked in their mystification, “Why must you teach in parables?” And the crowd which surrounded Jesus in the Portico of Solomon asked, “Why must you keep us in suspense? Tell us who you are. Tell us plainly.” And Jesus asked in return, “Can't you hear the shepherd's voice? Don't you recognize it?” These were good questions, but the confused went away confused. The gospels are as much the story of the doubts, uncertainty and mystification, along with the dreams, hopes, longings and desires, of those who brought their hearts and needs to Jesus as they are the story of Jesus himself.

It has been observed that the ways in which people talk about salvation, in which they express their religious hopes and spiritual needs, and in which they understand and read the gospels are all seriously culturally conditioned. Specifically, poor Christian people—especially those in the developing world (above all in places where the church is persecuted, or where Christians largely occupy the lower places in society)—look to the gospel for the assurance of divine justice. Those who do not experience this world to be just look to God in Christ for the reversal to reset the balance in the human economy and so to make justice where there currently is none.

In contrast, Christians in affluent cultures look to the gospels and to Jesus to meet other, different, spiritual needs. In a culture in which so much wealth and so many comforts are available to so many, and in which materialism inevitably proves empty, the primary religious desire that brings people into our midst is to find meaning. People who are continually defined as consumers need to find ways to do something important with their lives and make meaning where there is no meaning—purpose where there is no purpose.

The justice seekers will see in Jesus the Liberator, the Freer of the Oppressed, the Healer of the Breach. Those looking for meaning for living will see in Jesus the Teacher, the Rabbi, the Ethicist, the Guide. In the same way the sick and the sorrowful will look to Jesus to be the loving friend, the consoling shoulder. The guilty and shameful will look to Jesus to be the strict judge of integrity. The evangelist will look to Jesus to be the lighthouse in the storm who heralds safe harbor. The missionary will look to Jesus to be the clarion voice of truth rising in every language and place.

The winter of 1940 occurred in the middle of a pattern of severe winters that lasted for several historically harsh years. And on one frozen winter day, Woody Guthrie sat at the window of a New York City rooming house looking out into the black and white and gray colorless world of ice and storm, and looked to Jesus to make warm (*continued on the next page*)

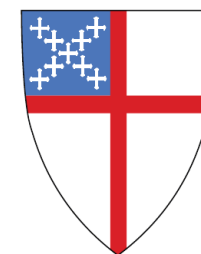


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summer for the cold. He saw in the pitiless assault of winter a symbol of the indifference and inhumanity with which people look upon people, and with which power looks on the powerless. This friend of workers and wanderers looked to Jesus to be the son of Mary he was born to be, the child heralded by the Magnificat, who came into the world that it might be a better place for the

poor and the worker; a fairer place for the marginalized; an equal place for the set-aside and left-behind. And he wrote a song—and it's pretty good.



Una Figura Enigmática

Por el Revdmo. Obispo Andrew M.L. Dietsche

En 1940, el mismo año en que él escribió *Esta Tierra Es Tu Tierra*, Woody Guthrie escribió una canción titulada Jesucristo. Más tarde él dijo, “Escribí esta canción mirando hacia fuera por la ventana de una casa de huéspedes en la ciudad de Nueva York en el invierno de mil novecientos cuarenta. Pensé que tenía que poner en el papel como me sentía acerca de los ricos y de los pobres”.

Jesús era un hombre que viajó a través de la tierra,
Un hombre trabajador y valiente
Le dijo a los ricos “Denle su dinero a los pobres”.
Y ellos pusieron a Jesucristo en su tumba.

Se dirigió al predicador, fue al bar,
Les dijo a todos lo mismo,
“Vendan todas sus joyas y dáselo a los pobres”,
Y ellos pusieron a Jesucristo en su tumba.

Cuando Jesús llegó a la ciudad, todos los trabajadores en los alrededores
Creyeron lo que él decía,
Los banqueros y los predicadores lo clavaron en una cruz
Y pusieron a Jesucristo en su tumba.

En muchos versos más Guthrie continúa su crítica a un orden social y económico que damos por sentado, pero él está seguro que Jesús no lo reconocería y no lo toleraría, hasta que al final del último verso dice que en nuestros propios días

Si Jesús fuese a predicar lo que predicó en Galilea
Nosotros pondríamos a Jesucristo en su tumba.

Esta edición del *Episcopal New Yorker* es sobre el tema de Jesucristo, y eso nos abre a una amplitud de interpretaciones y una mirada de credos. Porque si hay algo en la experiencia de la iglesia tratando de ser la iglesia en un mundo de tal extraordinaria complejidad nos enseña que todo el mundo va a proyectar en Jesús lo que quieren que Jesús sea o no sea.

A pesar de la magnitud de su influencia en la historia, Jesús sigue siendo una de las figuras más enigmáticas que jamás haya existido. Casi cualquier cosa que diríamos acerca de Jesús probablemente hablaría más acerca de nuestros propios deseos, esperanzas, miedos, políticas y expectativas de Dios —hablaría más acerca de quiénes somos — que lo que hablaría con alguna objetividad acerca de Jesús.

Como era en el principio y es ahora. Los discípulos se acercaron a Jesús y le preguntaron en su mistificación, “¿Por qué debes enseñar en parábolas?” Y la multitud que rodeaba a Jesús en el Pórtico de Salomón preguntó, “¿Por qué debes tenernos en suspenso? Dinos quién eres. Dínoslo abiertamente”. Y Jesús les respondió con otra pregunta, “¿No escuchan la voz del pastor? ¿No lo reconocen?” Estas eran bue-

nas preguntas, pero los confundidos se fueron confundidos. Los evangelios son tanto la historia de las dudas, la incertidumbre y la mistificación, junto con los sueños, las esperanzas, los anhelos y los deseos, de quienes trajeron sus corazones y sus necesidades a Jesús ya que son la historia de Jesús mismo.

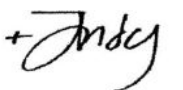
Se ha observado que las formas en que la gente habla de la salvación, en las cuales expresan sus esperanzas religiosas y necesidades espirituales, y en las cuales ellos entienden y leen los evangelios están seriamente condicionadas culturalmente. En concreto, los cristianos pobres, especialmente aquellos en el mundo en desarrollo, (sobre todo en lugares donde la iglesia es perseguida, o donde los cristianos ocupan gran parte de los lugares más bajos en la sociedad), buscan en el Evangelio la promesa de la justicia divina. Aquellos que no experimentan este mundo como justo miran a Dios en Cristo por la reversión que restablecerá el equilibrio en la economía humana y hará justicia donde actualmente no la hay.

Por el contrario, los cristianos en culturas afluentes acuden a los evangelios y a Jesús para satisfacer otras y diferentes necesidades espirituales. En una cultura en la que tanta riqueza y tantas comodidades están disponibles para muchos, y en la cual el materialismo inevitablemente resulta ser vacío, y el deseo religioso primordial que conduce a la gente en medio de nosotros es encontrar un sentido.

Las personas que continuamente son definidas como consumidores necesitan encontrar formas de hacer algo importante con sus vidas y proporcionar sentido donde no hay sentido, propósito donde no hay propósito.

Los que persiguen la justicia verán en Jesucristo al Liberador, el Libertador de los Oprimidos, el Sanador de los Quebrantados. Aquellos que buscan un significado para vivir verán en Jesús al Maestro, al Rabino, al Experto en Ética, al Guía. De la misma manera los enfermos y los afligidos buscarán en Jesús al amigo cariñoso, el hombre consolador. El culpable e infame verá en Jesús al juez estricto de la integridad. El evangelista verá en Jesús el faro en la tormenta que anuncia puerto seguro. El misionero verá en Jesús la voz de clarín de la verdad alzándose en todos los idiomas y los lugares.

El invierno de 1940 ocurrió en medio de un patrón de inviernos severos que se prolongaron por durante varios años históricamente duros. Y en un día de frío congelante de invierno Woody Guthrie sentado junto a la ventana de una casa de huéspedes en la ciudad de Nueva York y mirado hacia el negro y blanco y gris mundo incoloro de hielo y tormenta, miró a Jesús para que hiciera del frío un verano caliente. Vio en el asalto implacable del invierno un símbolo de la indiferencia y de la falta de humanidad con que la gente mira a la gente y el poder mira a los impotentes. Este amigo de los trabajadores y de los errantes buscaba en Jesús al hijo de María, que había nacido para ser el niño anunciado por el Magnificat, quien vino al mundo para hacerlo un lugar mejor para el pobre y el trabajador; un lugar más justo para los marginados; un lugar igual para los rechazados y los olvidados. Y él escribió una canción—y es bastante buena.



Traducido por Sara Saavedra

Jesus is my Hero

By the Rev. Edwin H. Cromey

I am an octogenarian. In my childhood, Superman, Batman, and Captain Marvel were not my heroes. It was Jesus then and still is now.

Here is how it happened.

I was eight or nine years old when my life was influenced by two forces—comic books and Sunday school. Superman, Batman, and Captain Marvel were my library of comic books, and the Church of the Redeemer in Astoria, Queens and Trinity Church in East New York, Brooklyn, made me aware of Jesus. At that time the comic book crime fighters were my heroes, but they were all replaced by Jesus.

I realized Clark Kent had to hide so he could take off his clothes, reveal his marvelous costume, and be Superman. Bruce Wayne had his Bat Cave. There he became Batman. Young Billy Batson said “Shazam.” Lo and behold! Captain Marvel.

Jesus was always Jesus.

My heroic crime fighters always did the right thing. They went after the bad guys; caught them; brought them to justice. Jesus had a different approach, which made him my hero. His kindness and forgiveness deeply impressed me.

In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, showing mercy, being a peacemaker, and having a gentle spirit were qualities he wanted us to have. They expressed kindness, as did his healing those who were deaf, blind, lame, or diseased. I remember being moved by searching for the one lost sheep and the man taking care of the wounded person on the

roadside when three others passed him by. Kindness. Kindness. Kindness.

On looking back on making Jesus my hero, the most staggering and influential scene was Jesus on the cross, when he said to God about his persecutors, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

That was a WOW.

Forgiveness. Jesus showed it in many ways. There was the adulteress where Jesus did not comment on her sin but told her “Don’t do it again.” There was the beautiful story of the father forgiving his prodigal son who was lost and then found.

Now older, I find myself enormously impressed with Jesus’ remark to the thief on a cross next to him at the crucifixion. “Today you shall be with me in paradise.” This was “instant forgiveness.” It did not matter to Jesus what crime the thief had committed. Instant forgiveness is a great, courageous, heroic quality—no revenge; no getting even; no reparation; no compensation; just forgive and immediately get on with a new, productive, reconciled relationship.

There are many areas in the world where this type of forgiveness should be applied. Think about making Jesus your hero.

The author is a priest in the diocese.



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A Glorious Reality

By the Rev. Deacon Novella Lawrence

As far back as I can remember, I have loved the Episcopal Church. I loved the liturgy, the colors of the seasons, the beautiful vestments, the hymns, and the community that we shared at St. Timothy's Church in Brooklyn. I left the church at age 19. Except for my children's baptisms, I would not return until they reached school age. Then, I once again became deeply involved in every aspect of the church and enjoyed it. I knew the "BCP," but not much about the Bible—as the lessons were read each week, my mind was usually focusing on something else.

In September 1979, everything changed. If I had known then how wonderful that change would be, I would have remembered the day, the hour, and the minute. About a year earlier, I had met a woman from another faith tradition. As we became friends, she began to ask me about a relationship with Jesus. I thought she was a bit strange to ask me such a thing. I assured her that I went to church, and took Holy Communion. She commended me, but said that there was much more. She read her Bible on her break at work. It looked worn out. At times I was annoyed with her. She invited me to her church. It was totally different from mine.

Around that same time, I was facing discrimination at my New York City civil service job. It was a shock, because I was born and raised in Brooklyn. I had only faced real discrimination for the first time when I joined my husband in North Carolina, where he was stationed in the military. I survived the shock of experiencing Jim Crow there, and was certainly glad that I would one day return to New York City. So now, a few years later, this episode at work threw me for a loop. I was determined to fight it and win. I asked my friend if she would pray for me, since she had this "personal relationship with Jesus." She told me that she already was.

One morning, during the middle of that ordeal at work, I was really learning the truth about the saying "You can't fight city hall." I wanted to resign. I decided to pray for God to intervene. My friend had already told me how. I said the most difficult prayer I have ever had to say. "Dear God," I wanted to say, "I believe you exist, I believe you sent your son Jesus Christ to die on a cross for my sins, and I believe you raised him from the dead. I ask forgiveness for my sins and ask you to come into my life as my personal savior." But I fully realized that I could not truthfully say those words—that after all of my years in the church, I did not, in fact, believe any of it! To me, it was a nice story for Christmas and Easter. And so, instead, I said "I want to believe..." I had a hard time asking forgiveness for my sins. What sins? I went to church. Instead I said "I'm sorry if I have ever done anything against You or anyone else." I ended with "Jesus Christ, if you are real, come into my life." Amen.

Nothing spectacular happened that day. But things soon began to resolve themselves in two areas in my life that needed it—first in my family and then on the job. It was miraculous!

As I began to experience the presence of Jesus in my life, I wanted to learn more about him and so I turned to the Bible. Now it began to make sense, and I wanted to read more and more. I thanked my friend, and even considered leaving my church and joining hers—I was actually willing to give up the bells and smells. But God, in His mercy, led me to an Episcopal church that was in the "Renewal Movement," where there was a heavy emphasis on Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures. And so I had it all, including the "bells and smells." I also went to Cursillo. The liturgy, the Book of Common Prayer and the Scriptures became even more meaningful, as did my awareness of the Living God. From that time on, I became fascinated by the early church in the book of Acts. I was especially influenced by the way the early Christians loved and took care of one another. I began visiting all of the sick and shut-ins of the parish with the rector's permission. This led to me being "called" to ordination as a permanent deacon. Shortly afterwards I became a Board Certified Chaplain and served a hospice for 18 years.

Since that September years ago, Jesus has been very present in my life. He informs my daily actions. I have always told my fellow Episcopalians about my conversion experience over the years. Jesus has been faithful to me through difficult times and good times. He is never absent. I tell others about my relationship with him because I want to share the joy and hope that only he can give. When people come to me with some need, I give them practical advice according to their situation but I also often tell them of the need for Jesus in our lives. Some accept and some don't.

As a deacon in my new and vibrant parish of Christ Church on Staten Island, I try, with the help of the Holy Spirit, by my actions, my preaching, by leading a prayer group, and by conducting Bible study, to encourage others to know Jesus and to develop a relationship with him. The late Fr. Chuck Howell said he brought me on staff, specifically, to assist in adding more spiritual offerings to an already vibrant and active parish and to develop the pastoral care ministry. I believe that every aspect of my life has been ordered by the Lord since that fateful day in September 1979. For me in the Spring of 1980, Easter would never again be just a nice story, but instead a glorious reality for which there is absolutely no doubt.

The author is deacon on staff at Christ Church, New Brighton, Staten Island.

Image and Likeness

By Ann Satterfield

He was my first patient on my first day as a hospital chaplain intern. He had just been told he was in the last days of his mortal life. “I am a very sick man,” the patient, Mr. C, told me. He was angry. I asked him, “What is most important to you now?” His reply: “I want more time. I want to watch my children grow and raise children of their own. I just want more time.”

Time was precisely what had been taken away from him. He was in a double room with no roommate, often given to patients who are expected to die. His teenage daughter was in a chair several feet from the bed with one earphone in her ear, texting on her phone. I looked from her to him and back, trying to assess the dynamics of their relationship. She seemed calm, pleasant, detached. I wondered, was her father’s illness old news to her? Were she and her father estranged? She smiled and nodded when I asked her if she wanted to join her father and me in prayer. Having told me he was a non-denominational Christian, I prayed with him in the name of Jesus Christ. I voiced his anger and bewilderment to God; asked that he be made whole in body, mind and spirit, and gave thanks for the blessing of love he had for his family. I asked that if God chose not to grant him more time, his family members would feel his love for them continue throughout their lives, and that they’d feel strengthened by the loving presence of God. Before I left the room, he said he wanted another visit and another time to pray.

Our next visit was very different. Mr. C was lying almost flat in bed, twisting and turning. A nurse was present, quietly completing her tasks. He nodded that he wanted me to stay, and I pulled up a chair to sit beside him at eye level so he wouldn’t have to strain. The nurse left the room, and after a few more turns, he settled on one side to face me. I felt grateful he could rest. He gave me his gaze; I gave him mine. We beheld each other. Something changed.

Neither one of us blinked or moved. It seemed we had just entered eternity, a holy present beyond linear time. Behind the surface of Mr. C’s face, a white light grew. It became stronger and intensely golden. Somehow I knew this light was God. Mr. C’s skin became translucent, his face like a thin mask through which Spirit was revealed. His whole head filled with this light. Beams radiated everywhere. Thoughts entered my mind: *Is this what is meant by the image and the likeness of God? Mr. C is not just the image anymore. He is becoming the likeness.*

In the light behind Mr. C’s face, I saw another face forming. It was Jesus the Christ. Cheekbones; a head; a face. Not solid, but in shades of luminous gold. Jesus’ head turned—carefully, gently aligning each feature in perfect register to those of Mr. C. Jesus’ dark, golden eyes grew larger and more radiant. They shone through Mr. C’s eyes, then his entire face and body. Mr. C seemed to be in a state of ecstasy, of ecstasy and astonishment. The light grew even more intense, and a complete union—yet with each identity still distinct—was made between Mr. C and Christ. *Image and likeness.*

I can’t tell you how long I sat there in witness, in awe. It could have been seconds, minutes, before Christ pulled Mr. C out of his mortal body. Christ literally *lifted* Mr. C up and out through the top of his head.

I saw the pale grey outline of Mr. C’s mortal body, hollow as a dry shell. A misty,

silver light swirled inside. It took the form of a double helix, continued to flow like a breath. I thought: *Is this the “tail” of the Holy Spirit doing its final work?*

Mr. C died a few days later in the middle of the night. His family had come and left. The nurses reported, “They were fine.” To my chaplain’s ear, this meant they had not broken down emotionally on site. What had they understood before Mr. C arrived at the hospital? What would they feel after his death? I will never know. I only retain the hope of our prayer that they will feel Mr. C’s love in their hearts, and the healing strength of God.

What does this mean? What does this say about the process of death; the “workings” of the Trinity; revelation; the office of the Christ? What does this say about the resurrection of the body, of human purpose, of divine love as a *force* of transformation? I cannot answer this; I can only ask questions. What I was given was a profound and precious gift, freely given and completely unearned.

Recently I’ve been reading Paul. Romans 8:11 especially speaks to me.

But if the Spirit of Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the living Spirit aligns you in God. (translation by A. Satterfield)

The author is a member of St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

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Meeting Jesus at Grand Central

By Deborah A. Lee

Whenever I read the story of Joseph’s dreams of greatness and his brothers’ response, I wish I could just sidle up to one of the jealous brothers, tap him on the shoulder and say, “Bro, you are SO gonna eat crow!” I want to tell him that Joseph’s dreams *will* come true; that the brothers will be proved wrong.

Of course, we all know how the story ends: how God, through Joseph, keeps the family from starvation because Joseph eventually gets to belong to Pharaoh’s “in crowd.” To his brothers then, though, Joseph was undesirable, unwelcome, and as unsavory as crow. When he joined them at the age of seventeen to become a shepherd, they looked at him—their father’s golden child—with suspicion and distrust.

This strained relationship came to a climax when he began to tell about his dreams; for these, by their very nature, affirmed his brothers’ fears that he aspired to rule over them. Back then, Pharaoh’s “in crowd” was years off, and his brothers couldn’t imagine this so-called “favorite son” ever having anything of value to offer them. Their jealousy and hatred blinded them, and they believed, of course, that it was *they* who were wiser and more deserving—not this callow seventeen-year-old!

When God speaks God’s truth, we can all, like those brothers, be too quick to dismiss what we hear, thinking that we know better—particularly when that truth comes to us in the words of those at the margins. Who, after all, are *they* to tell us something valuable?

I learned this lesson myself one evening during rush hour after work. While waiting for my train at Grand Central Terminal, I saw out of the corner of my eye a figure moving towards me—an unusual event in the huge station’s zigzagging rush-hour swarm of people. As the figure came more directly into my line of sight, I saw that it was an older woman, a little bent over, wearing a shabby and dingy dress. This woman looked up at me and asked, plaintively, “Please, would you be



able to provide something for me to eat?”

Chapter 53 of the Rule of St. Benedict reads “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say, ‘I was a stranger and you welcomed me.’” I was feeling less than hospitable that evening, but since we were standing in the downstairs food court, I glibly gestured to her and said, “Sure. Order whatever you want.” I wanted to keep the interaction to a minimum. At this, she turned back to me, looked into my eyes, and softly asked, “Are you rich?”

No one had ever asked me that before. Her tone wasn’t accusatory or condemning, but she woke me up. I stammered “No!—I mean...!” She woke me up because, of course, to her I was rich—I was well dressed and had money to buy whatever food I wanted, whenever I wanted. But most of all, she woke me up because in that split second I recognized that it was not just this woman who had asked me this question—it was Jesus himself.

The Jesus of the marginalized had shown up to teach me something I needed to know. This woman, a person on the margins, had been given the power to reorient me profoundly. She took me from surface to depth in a fraction of a second. This woman whom I wished to ignore brought me face-to-face with my relationship with God in a way I couldn’t ignore, and made me ponder the true richness that I actually possessed in Christ, but had been squandering through indifference, pride, and self-reliance. “Look at your life! Look at your treasure! See yourself! See Me!” Christ was saying. Without knowing it, this woman had completely unmasked me with the deeper spiritual implications of her question.

After I regained my composure, I bought the food she wanted, knowing that we both had been nourished.

The author is a 2nd year seminarian at the General Theological Seminary. This article is an adaptation of a homily delivered in the GTS chapel on February 15, 2016.

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Jesus: The Model of Inclusion

By the Rev. Carla E. Roland Guzmán

Nowadays when we turn on the news, or read an article, or find a headline on social media, there is a lot of conversation about “those people.” Who are “those people”? Isn’t any one of us, at any one time, “those people” to others who may irrationally fear us, or have a need to find a scapegoat? Have we casually used “those people” in our own conversations with others who may be like-minded to refer to those who ideologically believe or identify differently than us? Today, “those people” may be LGBTQI persons in North Carolina, Muslims anywhere in Europe or the US, immigrants (whether they are or not, and have papers or not); or even the people we choose not to welcome in our churches because they participate in our outreach programs, have a different culture or race, don’t do things the way we do, etc. It seems that some are trying to find a way to order the changing, chaotic, and terrifying in their world by blaming or excluding whole communities for the unsettled, the angst, and the evil around them.

In Jesus’ time, there were many groups of “those people,” whether Samaritans, lepers, women, the palsied or infirmed; all persons or groups of people deemed outside of community, including the oft-mentioned group of tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners. Jesus finds a way, as needed, to heal, reconcile, restore, and include all of these persons and groups of people into the proclaimed kingdom of God. Yet, would Jesus stop there with the specific groups mentioned in Scripture? Shouldn’t

we, any time we find ourselves condemning a whole group for the actions of a few, or the stereotypes we choose to believe, have to pause, and try to understand more deeply how Jesus managed to include, restore, reconcile, and heal so many, and how we fall short from doing so? We may even choose to do this selfishly, for the sake of our own inclusion.

Could we dare and intentionally act in a more inclusive way as Jesus showed us? I believe that the reason the healing, reconciling, restorative, and inclusion stories in the gospels are so compelling and necessary is that they give us a glimpse into the fulfillment of the hope that we are also a part of the promised kingdom, that we can be included in community, that even when we fall short of doing the good we are capable of doing, that we can still belong and that nothing can separate us from the love of God. These stories are compelling for the imperative of the inclusion of those we love, whether family members or friends who are rejected for who they are or who they are perceived to be. These stories are also necessary because they show us a way to act out of the goodness, abundance, and love of God within us, rather than from the imprisonment of fear. Jesus freed so many from their societal and religious exclusion. Aren’t we called to do the same?

The author is rector of the Church of St. Matthew & St. Timothy in Manhattan.

Jesús: Un modelo de inclusión

Por La Revda. Carla Roland-Guzmán

Hoy día cuando escuchamos las noticias, o leemos un artículo, o vemos un titular en los medios sociales, hay muchas conversaciones sobre “esa gente.” ¿Quiénes son “esa gente”? ¿No somos cualquiera de nosotros/as, en cualquier momento, “esa gente” a otros que irracionalmente tienen miedo de nosotros/as o necesitan a alguien a quien culpar? ¿Hemos casualmente usado “esa gente” en nuestras propias conversaciones con otros que comparten nuestro punto de vista para referirnos a los que son diferentes ideológicamente o en identidad? Hoy, “esa gente” pueden ser personas LGBTQI en Carolina del Norte, Musulmanes en cualquier lugar de Europa o los Estados Unidos, emigrantes (aunque lo sean o no, o tengan papeles o no); o las personas que no le damos la bienvenida en nuestras iglesias porque participan en los programas de ayuda, personas con una cultura o raza diferente, o aquellos que no hacen las cosas como nosotros/as, etc. Parece que algunos/as están tratando de encontrar orden en un mundo de cambios, caos, y terror, y culpar o excluir a comunidades completas por su propia inquietud, angustia, y el mal a su alrededor.

En los tiempos de Jesús habían muchos grupos de “esa gente,” ya sean Samaritanos, leprosos, mujeres, parálíticos y enfermos; las personas o grupos de personas consideradas fuera de la comunidad, incluyendo los mencionados cobradores de impuestos, prostitutas, y pecadores/as. Jesús encontró una manera, según necesario, para sanar, reconciliar, restaurar, e incluir a todas estas personas o grupos en el reino proclamado de Dios. Sin embargo, ¿habría incluido Jesús sola-

mente esos grupos bíblicos? ¿No deberíamos en cualquier momento que nos encontramos condenando a grupos completos por las acciones de pocos, o por los estereotipos que escogemos creer, tomar un momento y tratar de entender más profundamente como Jesús logró incluir, restaurar, reconciliar, y sanar a tantos? ¿Y, como nosotros/as quedamos tan cortos/a de hacerlo? Hasta podríamos hacerlo por egoísmo propio—por nuestra propia inclusión.

¿Podríamos ser audaces y actuar intencionalmente de una manera más inclusiva como Jesús nos mostró? Creo que la razón por la cual los cuentos bíblicos de sanación, reconciliación, restauración, e inclusión son persuasivos y necesarios es que nos dan una idea del cumplimiento de la esperanza que tenemos de también ser parte del reino prometido, que somos incluidos/as en comunidad, que aún cuando fallamos en hacer el bien de que somos capaces, todavía somos parte y nada puede separarnos del amor de Dios. Estos cuentos son persuasivos por el mandato de inclusión de aquellos/as a quienes amamos, familiares y amistadas que son rechazadas por quienes son o por cómo se perciben. Estos cuentos son necesarios porque nos muestran una manera de actuar que viene de la benevolencia, abundancia, y amor de Dios dentro de nosotros/as, en vez de un encarcelamiento de miedo. Jesús nos libró de tanta exclusión religiosa y social, ¿no somos llamados/as a hacer lo mismo?

La autora es rectora de la Iglesia de San Mateo y San Timoteo en Manhattan.



Photo: Mike Marques

An Interview with the Rev. Fleming Rutledge

By Laura Saunders

What is the meaning of the Crucifixion? All four Gospels testify that Jesus Christ died a torturous, shameful death typically used to punish society's nameless castoffs. From the beginning, this death has posed problems both for believers and non-believers. St. Paul referred to the Crucifixion as a "scandal," a "stumbling block," and "folly," even as he insisted that it was utterly central to understanding God's work among us.

Taking her cue from Paul, who wrote "I was determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified," the Rev. Fleming Rutledge recently published **The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ** (Eerdmans, 2015). Rutledge is a celebrated preacher and teacher of preachers—and a true daughter of New York, although she was born and raised in Virginia. After studying at both General and Union Theological Seminaries, she was ordained here in 1977 as one of the first women priests in The Episcopal Church. She served in parish ministries in New York for 21 years before pursuing an international teaching and preaching vocation.

The Episcopal New Yorker recently spoke with Fleming Rutledge about her capstone work.

Why focus on the Crucifixion, rather than the Resurrection?

I was both amused and appalled to hear that a friend's rector told her, "The cross is not a good tool for church growth." This degree of superficiality and incomprehension is harmful to the church. Our understanding of the Crucifixion is too

small, and our understanding of the Resurrection is too small. If the Resurrection is not a victory over the greatest evils, then it is not worth much more than a flowery, generic greeting card.

Well, it's not possible to say exactly, since it has been a trend for a long time, but it has something to do with a wholesale turn away from the idea of substitution—Christ's death not only *for us* (on our behalf), *but in our place*. This very simple idea was overly rationalized and overly focused on wrath and punishment. Worse still, it was preached and taught in a way that seemed to divide the Trinity, placing the Father over against the Son, whereas we should understand that the crucifixion of the Son was a work undertaken from within the Trinity itself.

The sad result, though, was a reaction by academic elites against the whole concept of substitution, depriving the ordinary person in the pew of a great consolation that has struck the hearts of many throughout Christian history. I was one of those in the pew who was badly hurt by being told that "we don't believe that idea of atonement any more." And yet we continue to sing, on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, "Lo, the Good Shepherd for the sheep is offered/The slave hath sinned and the Son hath suffered... 'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee/I crucified thee." In other words, I am the guilty one, and the innocent one dies in my place, "for my salvation." Thank God for our great hymns.

For 30 years straight, from 1975 to 2005, I preached on Good Friday at some church somewhere in the U.S., usually for all three hours. Then the invitations

stopped coming. Maybe it's just me! But I don't think so. The Good Friday liturgy in the 1979 Prayer Book contains many pre-Reformation practices, such as veneration of the cross and reception of the Reserved Sacrament, which were not previously familiar to most broad-church Episcopalians. Stations of the Cross, another practice discontinued after the Reformation, was also re-introduced and is now popular in many parishes. The result has been a significant de-emphasis on the preached interpretation of Christ's crucifixion that was standard practice in larger churches until the 1980s. For many years, Good Friday services featured several sermons, often in the form of seven meditations by a specially invited guest preacher. A very few parishes such as St. Thomas, Fifth Avenue still continue this preaching tradition, but they are the exception. The 1979 liturgy is very effective as devotion, but the crucial opportunity to convey the full *theological* content of the crucifixion is lost.

You say that many preachers speak mainly of two agencies in the world—God and human beings—but you say the Bible identifies a third agency, which is evil, or Satan. What does that mean?

Yes. This is the subject of the chapter in my book that means the most to me, called “The Descent Into Hell.” It took me two years to write it. In a sense I've been struggling with the problem of evil all my life. That's a major reason that I wrote this book about the Crucifixion. If the Christian faith cannot stand up to the fact of radical evil in human nature, it's just religious wishful thinking.

After the Enlightenment, many thought we had evolved into a much more rational and sensible race, having no use for outmoded notions of a Devil. Since World War II, conversation about the Devil has begun anew. Many serious scholars and journalists have taken up the subject. I like the essayist Lance Morrow's definition of Evil personified. He wrote a book called, simply, *Evil*. In it he writes that the concept of evil “suggests a mysterious force that may be in business for itself.” Various other writers, even nonbelievers like Andrew Delbanco of Columbia University, have recently expressed the opinion that the symbolism of the devil, or Satan, was useful for understanding the world and that we are worse off without it.

In the New Testament, the presence of an evil antagonist is simply assumed. This Enemy is a major player in every New Testament book. As the Yale theologian Miroslav Volf has argued with considerable passion, God is actively engaged in warfare against this Enemy of his purposes. When the Son became incarnate, he didn't step into a neutral situation. He entered occupied territory. That's why casting out demons is the first thing he does in Mark's gospel. When we talk as if the only people on the stage are ourselves and God, we've lost sight of the New Testament world-view.

The horrors of the 20th century, such as genocide and atomic war, made it a lot harder to believe in human progress. What light does the Crucifixion shed on such events?

How right you are to say that it's getting harder to believe in human progress—and the 21st century shows no signs of being any better than the 20th. I was just reading about the extreme cruelty being inflicted on helpless people in South Sudan. Philip Yancey calls the problem of evil and suffering “the question that will not go away.” It's the greatest conundrum in all of theology. I like a phrase of David B. Hart; he writes at some length about the insufficiency of all the attempts that have been made to “explain” evil and suffering, and concludes that the only honest response is “rage against explanation.” We don't know why there is suffering, and saying such things as “everything happens for a reason” is too glib.

I've tried in my book to show that while the Crucifixion of Christ is not an “answer,” it shows us something about God that enables us to hold on to faith and hope. In Christ, God has taken on the Powers of Sin and Death—I capitalize them to show their significance as agencies of terrible, annihilating destruction. God has taken them on, and in submitting to them, has conquered them. The Resurrection has to be understood as the vindication of the Crucified One, or it becomes just a vague, generic message of renewal and “rebirth”—whatever that's taken to mean.

The Crucifixion was anything but a generic religious event. It was a horrific, state-sponsored, religiously approved method of torturing someone to death in public, and it happened within history, at a specific place and time. This makes it irreligious and godless at its very core. God experienced Godlessness, within history. That means, doesn't it, that there is nothing human beings can suffer that is equal to the suffering of the man who cried on the Cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” He was forsaken so that we would never be. If we don't look directly at that, then we don't understand that the Resurrection was the conclusive

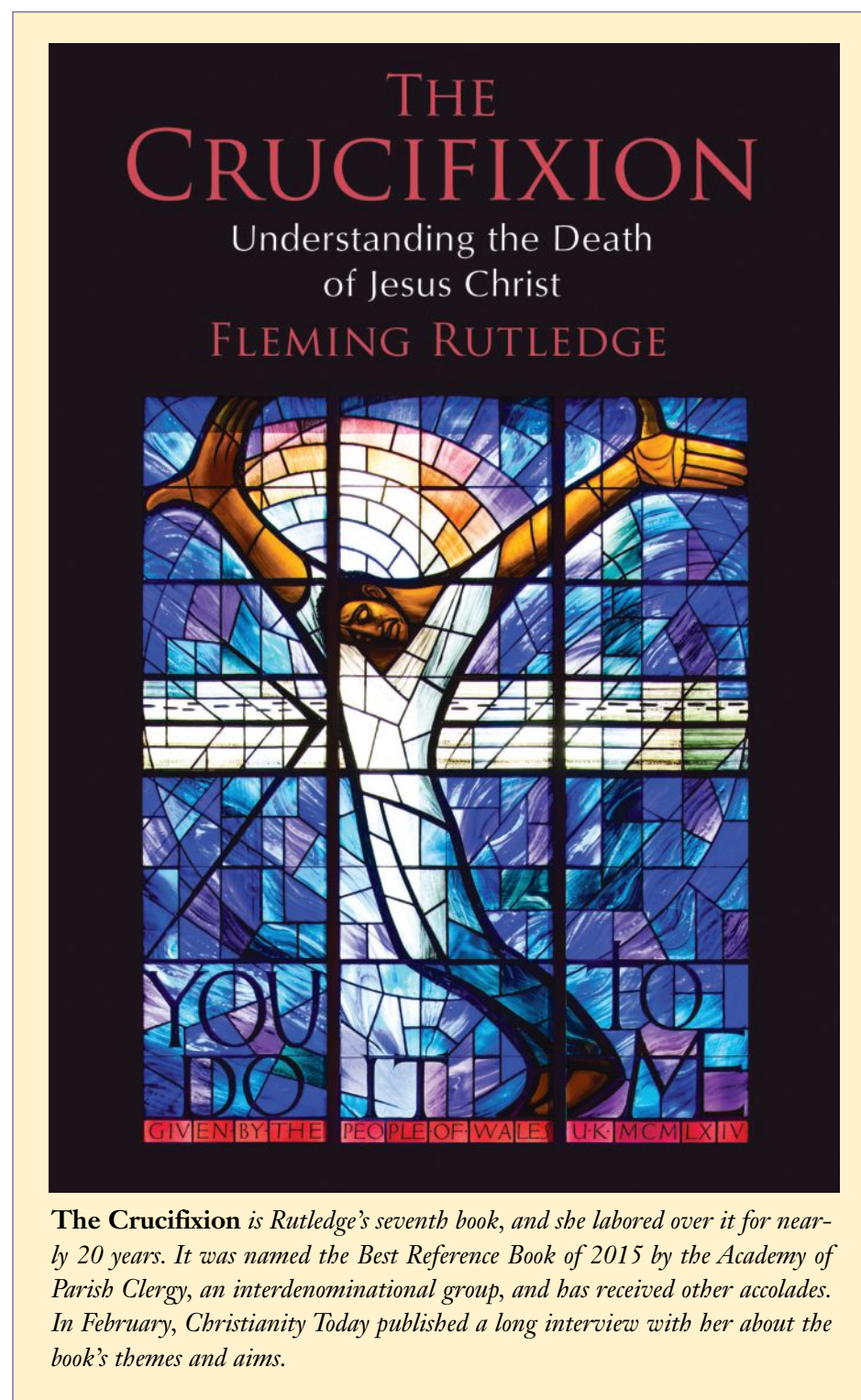
transhistorical victory over godlessness. In that respect I'm convinced that the Christian gospel has uniquely unexpected and compelling features.

You write a great deal about the “justification of the ungodly.” Who are the ungodly?

That's easy. The ungodly “r” us. It's all of us. “There is no distinction.” St. Paul wrote that. It's funny that we call him “Saint” Paul. I do think the Protestant insistence on leveling the people of God is correct and should be held on to. The so-called “saints” are the first to admit their inner ungodliness. I was relieved when it was disclosed that Mother Teresa, soon to be canonized, struggled with doubt and resentment. Dorothy Day famously said, “Don't call me a saint! I want to be taken seriously.” Vaclav Havel, who lived through the Soviet era in what was then Czechoslovakia, wrote that everyone was drawn into some form of collaboration. He concluded, “The line between good and evil runs through each person.”

The “justification of the ungodly” is the center of the gospel. That's not a thought that I came to by myself. It's been identified by quite a few New Testament scholars. It's in Romans 4 and 5. An easy way of remembering this is contrasting two sayings. A lot of Christians think that “God helps those who help themselves” is in the Bible. It's not. Here's what's in the Bible: “While we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). That ought to be great news for us all. A favorite hymn, “Abide with me,” means more and more to me as I approach old age: “Help of the helpless, O abide with me.”

Saunders serves as chair of the Episcopal New Yorker's editorial advisory board, and is a member of the Church of the Heavenly Rest in Manhattan.



The Crucifixion is Rutledge's seventh book, and she labored over it for nearly 20 years. It was named the Best Reference Book of 2015 by the Academy of Parish Clergy, an interdenominational group, and has received other accolades. In February, Christianity Today published a long interview with her about the book's themes and aims.

Yes, Jesus is my God

By Sheba Ross Delaney

The question “Who is Jesus?” is not particularly useful. “Who is Jesus to you?” is more to the point.

Traditionally, the miracles proved that Jesus was God. Even if he was born in the midst of adoring angels, walked on water, turned water into wine and found himself a reanimated corpse wandering around freaking people out, if he has no personal meaning to you, none of that matters.

On the other hand, if the idea of Jesus is a powerful presence in your consciousness then the traditional miracles attributed to him, again, may not be relevant. If Jesus is a God to you only because he worked those miracles, I would respectfully suggest that you are applying a litmus test to God (if he can walk on water I will accept that he is God) which is not only hubristic but forbidden by Jesus himself: “Thou shalt not test the Lord thy God.”

The Gospel miracles were never of interest to me except as metaphor. I don’t have the kind of mind to believe them literally. I also find the word “supernatural” meaningless. In my world there is only the natural—the natural past, the natural present, the natural future, the natural that is visible, and the natural that is too small or too large for us to see.

So how did Jesus cast such a spell on me, an atheist, that I now self-identify as a born-again Christian? What was/is he to me? How did I come to accept him as God?

I first experienced Jesus as a character in a narrative. He was an idea, something I was exploring intellectually. As I moved towards and through conversion he became a very powerful idea, and one that I was attached to emotionally. But he was still an idea, something in my head.

After several years, when my conversion came to a crisis, I had a religious vision. This scared the daylights out of me, but I chose to follow it where it took me. As a consequence, Jesus changed from an idea into a living presence that I felt both in my consciousness and physically in my heart. This happened from one moment to the next in a very clear and definable way. Something that had been dead in me for as long as I could remember came to life and it took its shape from the teachings and the sacrifice of Christ.

There is nothing supernatural in this to me. All of us internalize, as infants, parents or caretakers. This internalization forms the basis of our personalities and guides our actions and our interactions with human community. It tells us how to be human.

For some of us, sadly, this early internalization either didn’t connect properly or is destructive to a good life. The place at the center of our consciousness that should

be occupied by a healthy self is instead filled with anger and fear and behind that a terrible emptiness.

Nature is opportunistic. Given the chance, it will take what it needs where it finds it. In order to be fully human, we each need to feel connected to a healthy self and to family community. So for me, Jesus became my healthy parent. He gave me life and taught me how to be human through his love, teaching and sacrifice. I say that I am a Christian in the same way one might say they are a Smith or a Jones. In the same way you may go home to your family to reconnect and strengthen your sense of identity, I go to church and take communion to reconnect to Jesus. It’s no big deal. It’s just who I am.

Does this make Jesus God? What is a god after all? Without getting into metaphysics, we could say a god is one who gives us life, who has complete control over our fate when we are powerless and who tells us how to behave. We are all born tiny creatures into a world of god-like beings. Our parents lift us into the air and put us down, feed us, control us and teach us how to be human in the world. The treatment we receive at the hands of our parents is our first experience of the agency of the forces of the universe. The lessons they teach us form the matrix of personality; and most of us, for better or worse, live our lives in obedience to what we learned in the days of our helplessness.

The actual nature of God—a shorthand word for the forces that shaped objective reality as we know it—is unknowable. In the person of Jesus we imagine what God would be like if he/she/it took human form. Because we imagine him, we can make him perfect, or at least pretty darn good. Jesus is human to me, but shimmering just behind him, in my consciousness, are all the forces of creation. So yes, Jesus is my God. I try never to act in opposition to his teachings.

But this isn’t such a big deal either, in the normal scheme of things: All I have to do is try to be at least as nice to other people as I am to myself. If you have a good parent this comes kind of naturally. And because Jesus is a good parent he doesn’t demand perfection—I only have to be mindful and do my best. If I fall short sometimes it’s okay because I’m only human.

As I was walking my dog this morning I saw a hand-lettered sign nailed to a tree. It read “Jesus says, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.*”

Exactly.

The author is a member of the Church of the Heavenly Rest in Manhattan.

Christa and Jesus

By Margaret Diehl

In 1984, the Cathedral exhibited Edwina Sandys' statue "Christa"—a female Christ—in the context of a larger program highlighting women and spirituality. There was a great deal of controversy about this, in the media and in letters to the Very Rev. James Parks Morton, dean of the Cathedral during that time, both from other clergy and from laity. People were angry about what they saw as "political correctness"—before that term was in use—and insisted that Scripture was very clear about who Jesus was: a man, a very particular man, with specific characteristics and a specific biography. The argument was that God could have chosen to have a daughter, had He so wished. Behind the anger and disappointment in these letters, one senses a deep connection to the person they know as Jesus: not only the resurrected Christ, but the Jewish carpenter born in a manger. They saw in the Cathedral's exhibition of Christa an assumption that the details of Jesus' life didn't matter, that he was nothing but symbol, and that that symbol could be manipulated without offense or blasphemy.

In 2015, Edwina Sandys donated her sculpture to the Cathedral. The Department of Programming and External Affairs has been planning an exhibition around this sculpture, including other artists as well as scholars and performers, exploring the idea of incarnation: what does it mean that God put on the flesh of a mortal man? What does it mean to Christians and to those of other faiths or no faith—to anyone who cares about the dignity and value of human beings? The immediate point of Sandys' work is that Jesus was born or imagined male because male and female roles—such that females could not be spiritual or political leaders—are deeply embedded in the history of Judeo-Christian civilization (and of course many other civilizations). The larger interest of the upcoming exhibition is in how such categorizing, discrimination, victimization and loss of dignity applies not only to women but people of color, ethnic and faith minorities, those of non-normative sexuality and the differently abled. It's about how we distance ourselves from those we don't feel an immediate connection to—how we choose to heighten and stereotype that disconnect rather than using our curiosity, compassion and vulnerability to overcome it. The exhibition will include participants who look at the incarnation from a strictly symbolic viewpoint—as Sandys herself did—artists who are not Christian, or Christians who do not necessarily believe in the historical Jesus. But the exhibition of Christa at the Cathedral, as Dean Morton made clear in 1984, does not comment on the historical gender of Christ. It does not deny the life of Jesus. It is an exploration of broader questions, summarized roughly as: Why do we not recognize our fellows as made in the image of God, worthy of respect? Why do we not care for them as we do ourselves, or those close to us? Or, to quote bumper sticker lore: what would Jesus do?

The exhibition will follow paths of association and symbol to find new insights into self and other, sacred and profane, and the nature of community. But it would have no relevance without the deep attachment millions have to Jesus, whether he



is thought of as the true Son of God or an extraordinary man. The bedrock of this endeavor is the understanding that human beings learn through experience and storytelling. The devoted parent, the charismatic teacher, the enthusiast who tempts you to try something new, the man or woman of faith whose inner light is visible are our templates for growth and change. These personages and the tales we tell of them, even long after their deaths, provide structures for our inchoate feelings and ideas. This is the way we were made, however that making came about. This is why it matters—beyond whatever one believes—that Jesus was a Jew, a carpenter, born in Bethlehem, that he attended a certain wedding in Cana and was baptized by a man named John. Without these details we have no human being at all—no one to talk to, no one who can listen, no one who can so profoundly reassure us that whatever our many mortal imperfections, we are beloved in the eyes of God.

Christa the statue, Christa the idea, does not have the specificity and emotional valence of Jesus Christ. She is not a portrait of a woman claiming to be the Daughter of God. Many artists exploring the idea of incarnation have gone farther and created individuals, characters—or co-opted historical figures—who are very specific. Some of these artists will be included in the exhibition, and we expect that their art will draw more varied emotional responses than the original abstract (and quite beautiful) statue did. In particular, the Cathedral has also asked Eiko Otake to curate a series of events to explore, in movement, word and music, the liberating ramifications of Christa. The project will involve a series of solo performances by Eiko, sometimes in collaboration with poets and musicians; an exhibition of "A Body in Fukushima," William Johnston's haunting photographs of Eiko dancing in ruined Fukushima Prefecture; and public discussions. These events will focus on what it means to be a body, to give and receive sensation of all kinds, to experience intimacy, threat and loneliness.

Behind all of this contemporary art and contemporary activism stands the figure a few ancient writers rendered gloriously, from what combination of memory and imagination we cannot say. Jesus of Nazareth, raised in the faith of the Old Testament. Good son, good neighbor, charismatic teacher, rabble-rouser, suffering human being, victim and victor.

The author is editor of the Cathedral's newsletter.

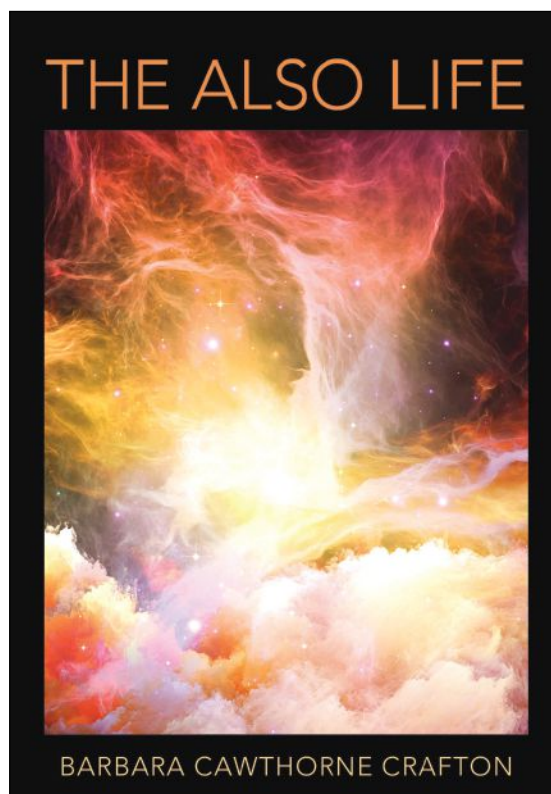
Beyond the Ache of Time

By the Rev. Barbara Crafton

Go to an Easter vigil, late at night on Holy Saturday. A fire is kindled in the dark. It is called the “new fire.” A fresh paschal candle, as beautifully ornamented as the parish can afford, is brought to the priest, who may prepare it by inserting five red nails into the cross incised in the wax. “Christ,” the priest says, inserting the nails one by one, “Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The Beginning and the End. The First and the Last. He is the Alpha and the Omega. His are the times and His the seasons. To Him be glory, forever and ever.” Then the priest lights it from the new fire, and the central liturgy of the Christian year begins once more.

The Great Vigil of Easter, then, which marks Christ’s crossing from death to life, is also a liturgy about time. In the Easter Vigil, the past is brought forward into the present. The creation of the world, and the terror of its inundation. The central miracle of the Hebrew people in their deliverance at the Red Sea. The devastating conundrum of how it is that Abraham is to relate to God, posed unthinkably in the aborted sacrifice of his son. The fanciful remembering of the dry bones that Ezekiel saw. The hope and the glimpse of life beyond the boundaries of the life we know. These stories are told again, slowly unfolding once more. The Easter Vigil is not a service for people in a hurry. It takes time to tell all the stories.

When the Vigil begins, we are still tired and sore from Good Friday. It soaked us in history and death: a specific martyrdom, in a specific city, at a specific time. A specific man. Political and religious leaders whose names we know: Pontius Pilate,



Caiaphas, Annas. Dense psychological accretions of centuries cling to Good Friday—combining with our exhaustion, they threaten to reduce the Crucifixion either to a tale about a monstrous political injustice or a fable about our personal misdeeds. But although the Passion narratives have been host to both ideas in later centuries, neither of them is complete on its own. The stories of the Vigil widen our focus, reminding us of everything that has made us what we are: the beauty, the love, the terror, the betrayal, the hope. In the darkness, lit only by candles, the stories locate themselves in a matrix larger than any one place or time. It is as if we soared high above the surface of the earth, beholding all its beauties and all its sorrows. Our faith isn’t just about a wrongful death, nor is it just about an essentially mercantile exchange of one innocent Victim for an entire race of the guilty. It is also about the life beyond the boundaries of the life we know, the beating down not only of death, but of the ache of time. The only reason time hurts us at all is that it brings us closer to death—our own death, and the death of all we have loved. To know our provincial experience of linear

time as part of a continuity, rather than the whole of what time is, is to begin to break free of its sting.

The author is a priest in the diocese and director of The Geranium Farm. This article is an excerpt from The Also Life, to be published by Church Publishing in fall of 2016.

An Unseen Companion in Tough Times

by the Rev. Alison Quin

In my heart of hearts, I believe that God called me to be a priest knowing it was quite unlikely that I would read the Bible faithfully and wrestle with it if I were not obliged to write a sermon each week.

I am grateful because I come away from reading and struggling with Scripture changed in some way. I am challenged, comforted, disturbed, offended, awed, thunderstruck, convicted, inspired, angered, liberated, illuminated—but hardly ever unchanged.

I feel that Jesus himself addresses me (and all of us) through Scripture, especially the gospels. He gives us not just his teachings, his parables, the story of his life, death and resurrection, but also himself, his friendship and his love.

From ancient times, rabbis described the words of Scripture as black fire, while the spaces between the words are white fire. God speaks through both. So it is with the gospels—the words we read are black fire, and the white fire, the space between the words, is Jesus’ spirit, his love freely offered to all.

I also encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, particularly in the faces of the faithful as they stretch out their hands to receive the mystery of God in a piece of bread: the 90 year-old woman who drove through snow to be there; the hesitant newcomer; the eager child; the hardworking parents—all of God’s struggling, broken yet glo-

rious people become Jesus when our eyes are opened.

As an atheist who converted to Christianity in midlife, I continue to be astonished that the Church’s claim that we meet Jesus in word and sacrament is actually borne out in experience. There are many other ways to encounter Jesus, but I am profoundly grateful to be able to meet him in the stories about him and the sharing of bread.

I have also encountered Jesus in a profound way in times of suffering. One year, a dear friend of our family died in a fire, my son lost two of his high school classmates in car accidents, and my husband became very ill. The grief that year seemed bottomless. But I felt Jesus accompanying me through the suffering. For the first time in my life, I understood why we have crucifixes, even though Jesus triumphed over suffering and death. His wounds became a sign of his solidarity with me and with all who suffer. He was an unseen companion, not offering any answer to the question of why, but offering constant presence and love. That turned out to be enough. Seeing him on the cross reminded me that beyond suffering and death there is new life, as impossible as that seems at times.

The author is rector of the Church of Christ the King, Stone Ridge.

The Search for the Historical Jesus

By *Kenneth Citarella*

Imagine the reaction around the world, particularly among Christians, some fateful day when the discovery is announced of a diary kept by a follower of Jesus. Here, finally, is not only a first person account of Jesus' teachings and acts, but a living portrait of the man. His personal life is laid out in detail. Perhaps we would learn what Jesus looked like, his favorite foods, the names of all his family members, even whether he was married and had children. What an astonishing discovery that would be: Jesus might literally come into full human focus.

Now let's make the scenario even more fantastic. After this incredible announcement, someone grabs the aged and fragile document and throws it into a shredder or a fireplace, completely destroying it. Think of the outcry at what we have lost and now will never know! Of course, this whimsical tale leaves us right where we are now. We have the Gospels and other scriptures, none of which are biographical. Our scripture, tradition and reason support what we believe about Jesus, including his humanity, but provide precious few reliable facts about the human Jesus of Nazareth. Historical research has told us a great deal about first century Palestine and the world he lived in, but this only provides background for the historical Jesus. When we try to draw the figure of Jesus into that background, we end up with a mere silhouette, without any personal features.

But consider this: Jesus and the Emperor Augustus were contemporaries for the first few years of Jesus' life. We know a great deal about Augustus. We have sculptures and documents that permit us to recreate a very detailed history of his physical appearance and his imperial and personal life. Yet two thousand years later, Augustus' legacy is a vanished empire and crumbling ruins. Jesus, on the other hand, about whom we know almost nothing, transcends history as the dominant influence in all of Western history and culture. The Emperor Tiberius, who succeeded Augustus, declared Augustus to be a god; but his cult died out within 300 years, as Christianity supplanted the Roman polytheism. Our theological understanding of Jesus evolved far more slowly, and 2,000 years later Christians worship him around the world.

Seems backwards, doesn't it?

Augustus used his army to bend the empire to his will and to make himself supreme. Others were either loyal, or they were enemies. Those who followed Augustus used that same model. Jesus, on the other hand, sought nothing for himself. He lived and died in service of others. He saw no one as his enemy.

The Augustan model had one man on top and all others subservient to him. The Way left behind by Jesus had everyone serving each other in an egalitarian model. Augustus could never tolerate having someone try to be just like him; an emperor cannot have competition; Jesus wanted nothing more than for everyone to be just like him. Jesus really operated on a franchise system: Love one another as I have loved you; here is my example, follow it and do the same. His followers tried their

best. Two thousand years later we still try to keep The Way of Jesus alive. As for Augustus, we just read about him in history books.

Consider also, the reason we learn about each of these men. We can chart how Augustus rose to power. The battles, the allies and enemies, the shifting alliances, how he governed and expanded the empire: These are all facts. We turn to Jesus not for the what of life, but for the how. We study Jesus to learn about faith, compassion, love, forgiveness and other qualities that mark how we are to live with God's people and creation. We have great stories about the life of Jesus. Their factual accuracy is never the point. For example, we know from history that Augustus never ordered the census that sent Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, causing Jesus to be born there. But we also know that story is part of how Jesus has been described as the Davidic heir who fulfills the longing of Israel for a Messiah.

What we want from Jesus is the personal transformation that saves us from the selfish inclinations that arise in all human life. He teaches us how to accept God's grace and extend God's love to everyone. These are not the stuff of history; they are the substance of a soul. It is the exact opposite of what Augustus offers.

So what then do we make of the search of the historical Jesus? Personally, I find the work of Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan and others to be invaluable aids to understanding the context within which Jesus lived—aids that gives greater color and depth to his teachings. Learning to strip away myth from facts enriched my faith in Jesus; adding those myths back onto the facts enriched it even further.

But would that fictitious diary mentioned above change any of that or add to it in any way? If we knew the sequence of Jesus' siblings, for example, or even if we had more actual quotes, would it really make a difference in how we relate to him now? We would still debate what he meant, sit in wonder at the depth of his compassion and marvel at his capacity always to speak to the deepest truth of a situation. Even if our imaginary scribe had been there at Calvary and stayed through until Pentecost recording every detail, what difference would it make? It is not the stories about Jesus that transform us, it is what those stories teach us about God, and ourselves, and our relationship with God that cause us to change. Stories that hold great mystical and mythological power transcend their historical validity to provide us a greater truth. The Holy Spirit uses those stories as a means of entry into our hearts and minds and souls to remake us into the image of the child in whom the Father is well pleased.

Maybe archeologists will find a few more scraps of historical record about Jesus someday. Maybe not. I do not think it matters. What we know of the historical Jesus is enough. He did live. He did teach. Most importantly, he transcends history, and continues to live and teach in us to this very day.

The author is a first-year postulant for the diaconate.

Don't Tell Me, Show Me

By the Rev. Garrett M. Mettler

"Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." John 1:50

Once upon a time a heavenly messenger visited an unsuspecting Jewish girl to share some important news. God had chosen her to become the *Theotokos*, the mother of a holy child. Dumbfounded by this terrifying honor, she managed to utter a simple question—how can this be?

The one called to this momentous new identity was a teenager!

When the revelation emerges in our society that a girl or boy of Mary's age is responsible for a pregnancy the same question often arises from dumbfounded adults—how can this be? The question is, however, usually worded in more exasperated and explicit language. Teenagers can't possibly bear the responsibility for another life. It would devastate them.

God didn't seem to think so with Mary. Her declaration to the angel "let it be with me according to your word" and subsequent trek of more than 70 miles to Bethlehem at the very end of her pregnancy were the bold beginnings of an intimate lifelong journey with Jesus.

It is fitting, then, that teenagers today are invited to take up their own lifelong journeys of relationship with Jesus through preparation for confirmation. As they do, it is essential that they also have "angels" close by to share how Jesus continues to come into our midst, to hear their uncertain and doubtful questions (how can this be?), and to model the actions of faithful discipleship.

Gabriel Harrison, Martina Rossi, and Robert Lecker are all in high school, close to Mary's age, and were recently asked to share their understandings and uncertainties about Jesus of Nazareth.

"The one thing I find so interesting about Jesus is that so many people follow him now," Harrison said. He is currently participating in the confirmation course at St. Andrew's Church in Brewster. "The sheer improbability that an average person talking against their government would spread to a movement that went global is amazing."

Harrison does not believe that the Jesus of history embodied the presence of God, but he does take inspiration from Jesus' teachings and way of life. "I like that his perspective is so much different from the normal approach to things. The idea of forgiving people unconditionally is very useful."

Rossi, who is also a part of St. Andrew's confirmation class, has a different take. "He wasn't a regular man," she asserted. "He could do things that a normal man couldn't. He was given the power of God on Earth and he was able to use that power as a sign that he was special." She believes God took on the life of a human being with a seminal purpose. "He intends for [some] things to only happen once but to have a great impact."

Lecker, a member of Trinity Church in Fishkill, said Jesus' martyrdom and extraordinary capacity for enduring hardship are what stands out for him. He cited "the struggles [Jesus] faced trying to overcome obstacles that most people would crumble under" as the most relatable part of Jesus' life. "That makes him look more human than how divine most people portray him as."

Harrison and Lecker both expressed a desire to know more definitively about the events of Jesus' life. "It's like a very long game of telephone," Lecker said when asked about the stories in the Gospels. "Some real facts are missing, some have been changed. You just don't know what is accurate."

"Regarding the miracles, none of it has ever worked when it has been scientifically studied," Harrison commented. "I would very, very much love for someone to prove that healing is real and open a new way of science."

When the questions shifted from historical accounts to how or whether Jesus is present in the lives of people today Harrison, Rossi and Lecker all labored trying to find words to describe what that looks like. "I don't really think that I'm being directly guided by Jesus," Harrison said. "I don't believe that he's hovering over my head helping things. But every person who has led a movement is alive in the results of their movement. What existed in him physically now exists in people's brains when they communicate what he said."

Rossi eventually landed on an example from her own experience. "I'm a musician. I feel that God is in music. During the service when we have the hymns and we sing the psalms, I feel that God is with me and that Jesus is with me."

Personal experience is a powerful influence. Jesus' first followers were not as much changed by the words they heard him speak as by the actions they saw him take. And they were changed even more by the actions he invited them to take in his name.

Teenagers today, just like the teenage Mary, come to know Jesus best when they are asked to take part in his life. And they look to the examples of those around them for evidence of the life that Jesus modeled. When they see Christians creating relationships of deep, committed love and caregiving in families and communities, and actively opposing forces of injustice, abuse and exploitation in the world, they see Jesus.

God knows the limitless curiosity, creativity and capacity for faithfulness in teenagers. And God is not put off by their questioning and exploring. Instead God beckons them to share in the rich and holy life of Jesus.

The angel spoke to Mary those many years ago saying, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." Let us affirm the teenagers in our lives with the same enthusiasm.

The author currently serves as the interim priest at Trinity Church in Fishkill.



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No Exceptions

By the Rev. Charles Kramer

Last month at a funeral, we read John 14:1-6. I love that line, “In my Father’s house there are many rooms...” It’s so hopeful, so inviting. But then Jesus concludes with, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

This is one of the hardest sayings of Jesus. At least for me.

Most people don’t think of this passage in connection with Jesus’ hard sayings. Instead, we think of those verses that make us look up and say, “Is he crazy?” You know the usual suspects:

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:25)

“If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off.” (Matthew 18:8)

“None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.” (Luke 14:33)

“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26)

Oh, and pretty much all of Matthew Chapter 5.

You could go on.

So, why do I find John’s saying so hard? Why is it hard to hear, “No one comes to the Father except through me”?

Before we get to that, let’s consider what makes the other sayings hard.

They are hard because they rip us out of our complacency. They are hard because even though we really want to follow Christ, we also want security, and we don’t want to have to think about the slave labor that built our iPhone. And we don’t want to think about our complicity in screwing up the environment. And we don’t want to examine our roles in institutional racism. And, dear God, please don’t make us respect the dignity of every human being because some of them are just such evil jerks.

We expend a lot of energy inventing reasons why Jesus didn’t really mean I have to change anything about my life. He was employing hyperbole. He didn’t intend us to “hate” our families, just love them less than him. He meant a gate, not an actual eye of a needle.

We go through these mental gymnastics because what Jesus asks of us is hard. You don’t have to take every word literally (which we don’t) to understand that. He meant for us to live a different kind of life, one in which following him is our only priority. Where our sole focus is to love God and our neighbor. Where we cling neither to security (at the risk of not loving neighbor) nor life itself (at the risk of not trusting God).

Because we’re not literalists, we can see the Good News in these sayings. Through Jesus, we understand the power of God’s love, and are not only commanded, but empowered, to bring that love to a world filled with fear.

These sayings remind us that we have work to do—that the first job is to look within, but that we can’t stop there.

And yet, none of these sayings comes into play until after we choose to follow Christ. The question on many minds these days is, “Why should I follow in the first place?” Is it really—as John’s gospel suggests—because I can’t come to the Father except through Christ?

Which brings us back to my hard saying.

For much of our history, we have understood “No one comes to the Father except through me” to mean if you don’t accept Jesus as your Lord, if you don’t get baptized, if you don’t proclaim Jesus as the Son of God, you will go to hell. Down through the centuries, this has led to forced baptisms, eradication of entire non-Christian (well, non-European) cultures, and a triumphalism on the part of the Church that is at odds with the Gospel.

This is a hard saying because it can easily be used to shut people out of God’s loving embrace. Even in a funeral, the potential for harm exists. Often, many of the bereaved are not Christians. It seems as if we say “Be consoled” out of one side of our mouths, yet tell them out of other side that, “If you don’t accept Christ, you’re condemned.”

Even if that’s not our intent, that’s what a lot of people hear. If we don’t reconcile with this passage, if we don’t speak to it with those who have no faith in Christ, they may walk away thinking our God is one of arrogant small mindedness rather than unspeakable joy.

But there is Good News here, because God is love, and Christ is God’s love incarnate. So, coming to God through Christ means to come through Love. This changes the dynamic, because it tells us that what God looks at is not our religious affiliation, not our sexual orientation, not our nationality, not our pedigree.

God is interested in whether or not we love. And this is something open to anyone. There are as many Muslims, or Jews, or Sikhs who act out of love of neighbor as there are Christians. There are as many Democrats who act out of love even for those who hate them as there are Republicans. There are no boundaries for those who love.

That’s it. Despite how harsh and exclusive it sounds initially, Jesus here opens the path to God far wider than we might accept. For all I know, this passage could mean that nobody comes to the Father except through Christ—and Christ’s love is so deep, so abiding, so unconditional, that everyone is embraced, no exceptions.

Yes, those other hard sayings may point to what it means to live a loving life of following Christ. But the fact that God loves us is always the entry way.

The author is rector of St. James’ Church, Hyde Park.

What Has Jesus Got to Do with It?

By the Rev. James Burns

“I believe Lord, help my unbelief.”

It was a warm July day and I was on the number 6 train headed downtown for a lunch meeting. I was in my usual clerical attire and was, as always, aware that riding the subway in such garb was sometimes a leap of faith in and of itself. The subway car was crowded but not packed, and I gradually became aware of a woman who kept eying me while trying not to seem obvious about it (the sign of a true New York subway rider!). Finally, just after we pulled away from Grand Central and the car thinned out, she broke her silence. Pointing to my wedding ring, she asked, “Does that mean you are married to Jesus?” I smiled and invited her to think that idea through, hoping that a little humor might disarm her and save me a long conversation which I wasn’t really in the mood for, but she persisted, “But you are a father, aren’t you?” I said that yes, I was a priest in the Episcopal Church and also a father, having two children named Eric and Sarah. She frowned and shook her head in puzzlement, “But what about Jesus? Aren’t you married to him too?” I smiled again and said that my relationship with Jesus was meant to be servant not spouse, to which she shook her head again and said, “I don’t get this church stuff. What about Jesus?” I paused to think of an appropriate answer and we pulled up at 33rd Street, the doors opened, and she disappeared in the departing crowd.

What about Jesus? It is a question that haunts many, and should haunt every serious Christian. And it is good to remember that as Paul Tillich reminded us, “The opposite of faith is not doubt, it is certainty.” With Tillich I believe that it is vital for the care and feeding of a living faith to ask questions, and for the Christian faith perhaps the best question is, “What about Jesus?” I would even suggest that this question should be incorporated as a part of Daily Morning Prayer the next time we revise the Prayer Book: “The Lord be with you. And also with you. What about Jesus? Let us pray.”

Over my 30 plus years in parish ministry, and in my continuing work in retire-

ment, I have unfortunately encountered far more certainty than doubt, but I must confess that it was, and always is, in the fertile fields of doubt that my faith and the faith of many others has grown and flourished the most. Few if any have questioned the centrality of Jesus to their faith, the questions more often than not center on the how, who, and why of Jesus. How am I to relate to him? Who am I supposed to be as a Christian? Why can’t I succeed at living a faithful life? The questions always involve the relationship between the person of Jesus and the person who is doing the wrestling. Was Jesus simply a figure in the past who taught, healed, and ultimately paid the debt of sin for all, once and for all, or is Jesus a living presence who inspires, challenges, teaches, leads, and sometimes pleads with those who claim to follow, or is he some combination of the two? Is Jesus simply the proof text for a particular world view or life choice, or is he the living Word that constantly speaks, calls, challenges, and writes and rewrites a life’s script?

There is profound scene from Samuel Becket’s play, “Waiting for Godot” that provides the best example of this struggle that I have found. After an extended discussion of the existential dilemma of waiting for a possibly hypothetical figure, the two central characters have this interchange. It begins as Estragon removes his boots:

Vladimir: Your boots, what are you doing with your boots?

Estragon: (turning to look at the boots). I’m leaving them there. (Pause.) Another will come, just as . . . as . . . as me, but with smaller feet, and they’ll make him happy.

Vladimir: But you can’t go barefoot!

Estragon: Christ did.

Vladimir: Christ! What has Christ got to do with it? You’re not going to compare yourself to Christ!


Estragon: All my life I’ve compared myself to him.


Vladimir: But where he lived it was warm, it was dry!

Estragon: Yes. And they crucified quick.

“What about Jesus?” It is, I believe, the central question of our faith, and ought to be the central one of our religion, too. It is the how, who, why question for the living room, the board room, the work room, the vestry room, the Sunday School classroom, and all the rooms where we live and move and have our being. Wherever you exit whatever train you are riding, however you engage the next moment of your life, as you plan your day, your future, try asking yourself, “What about Jesus?” The answers may, most certainly will, lead to some sort of a crucifixion. But then as Jesus has shown us, crucifixion is the pathway to resurrection.

The author is a priest in the diocese.

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Jesus and His Scars

By the Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin

On the Second Sunday of Easter, the Gospel story we hear is the so-called “Doubting Thomas” story. When the risen Jesus appears to them, the disciples recognize him upon seeing his scars. Jesus breathes upon them and gives them the mission of forgiveness and reconciliation. This mission is intricately connected to Jesus’ scars and the redemptive story they tell. His scars have the power to renew and convert the disciples to deeper faith. They are now given the power to forgive and heal the broken and wounded world.

Garrison Keillor once said, “It’s a shallow life that doesn’t give a person a scar or two.” I don’t think anyone gets through life without them. Everyone has a scar story. Scar stories often evoke a sense of holiness and awe and bring people together with a shared sense of the holiness of life. Scar stories, especially when they are redemptive, can bind a family or a community or even a nation with a common myth and identity.

In my family, it’s my grandmother’s scar story that creates the family myth and identity. When the North Korean army invaded Seoul during the Korean War, the first thing they did was to execute educators and community leaders. One day, they came for my grandfather, who was a school principal. He hid away in a secret place. When they couldn’t find him, they took my grandmother away for interrogation and torture. After some weeks, they brought her out blindfolded for execution. Just then, the Allied planes flew into Seoul and began bombing. The soldiers fled in an instant and my grandmother’s life was spared. This experience converted her to a life of deep faith in Jesus and of caring for others scarred by life. Grandma’s scar story is inevitably shared whenever my extended family gathers for reunion.

In the fifth century, a great theological controversy arose regarding how to describe the mystery of the union of the divinity and the humanity in Jesus without obliterating the integrity of each. The divine pathos in Jesus’ suffering on the cross was the stumbling block, for the ancients believed in the strict impassibility of God—that is, that God does not experience pain or pleasure at the hands of another being. The ecumenical councils adapted the personal (hypostatic) union and the phrase, “two natures in one person.” The simple elegance of this formula is unparalleled in the history of Christian doctrine. It captures the deep union of God and human in Jesus, yet keeps the integrity of each. While the divine pathos is still debated by theologians, Jesus’ scar story has inspired many conversions since the time of the disciples and binds all Christians in a common mission and identity. Jesus’ scar story is the Gospel story of redemption and healing for all broken humanity.

The author is bishop suffragan of the diocese.

What A Beautiful Name

By Santana Alvarado

I wonder what you would think if You saw how they see You,
I wonder if they would destroy You if they saw You now.
Dark brown with kinky curls,
This can’t be the one to whom God gave the world.

Would Your emotion still be justified?
Would that temple still stand because anger cost You Your life?
Do you have any more room for holes in Your body,
Lord knows they love to crucify.
Perhaps Herod would be idolized as they begin see that night through his eyes,
Though they never needed a reason to kill a Middle Eastern baby.

I wonder what You would think of those who hold the power
And all those Holy books laced with gunpowder;
Your words the ammunition,
Your colorless hands point the automatic,
And automatically an entire pigment faces demolition.
I wonder if You would be so forgiving.
I wonder if You would last long enough to explain those words written.

You taught us the sin of one is the sin of many,
Are we to blame?
That a man lost those dark hues as he began to paint.
Soon after they began to acquaint You with them,
Started to deform history and peel your skin,
Drop bombs swearing they needed to clear a path for You to come again;
All in Your name,
And what a beautiful name it is.

I wonder if you would have blessed those Spanish missions,
Lining the west coast that proclaimed salvation while engaging in the sacrilegious.
Taking and raping and bleaching and preaching to those savages
I wonder if You would have died trying to learn their languages, learn their values
supposedly Your values only Your values can’t be the same as those stone cold statues.
Can they? Are they?

I wonder if You’d come back to this world knowing our lives, Your life is no longer sacred.
Knowing Your Body and Blood would be seen as tainted,
Your disciples filled to the brim with hatred,
Casting stones as sin plagues them.

I wonder if You hear our prayers and feel our pain,
If You suffer knowing we suffer still forced to let free will reign.
I wonder if You realize You’ve made a mistake,
I think You’ve made a mistake.
I think You thought You’d taught the lesson of Love.
I think You thought parables and a sacrifice was all it would take
I think You underestimated the power of fear and hate.
I think I hate You for that.
And yet,
My lips can’t seem to form a curse against Your name,
For what a beautiful name it is.

The author is a member of Canterbury Downtown.

Jesus: The Prayer

By Matthew Paul Buccheri

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

What's in a name? Do names have power? The U.S. Supreme Court certainly believes so—ruling in 2002, and again in 2010, that people's *Miranda* rights do not include the right to withhold their names. There's much information in a name, and the justices recognized that it is the key to its owner's legal history: Our names can tell a lot about us—not only who we are, but also where we're from, and even what we've done. Names do indeed have power.

THE PRAYER'S HISTORY

For centuries in the Church, especially in Orthodox Christianity, there has been a great emphasis on the name of Jesus—emphasis which we Episcopalians echo and share in hymn 434 in our 1982 Hymnal, “At the Name of Jesus”—itself drawn from St. Paul's words in Philippians 2:9–11: “Therefore God also highly exalted [Jesus] and gave him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This Orthodox recognition of the power in the name of Jesus is most apparent in the historic “Jesus Prayer,” of which “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of (the living) God, have mercy on me (a sinner)” is the (much varied upon) basic form.

It began nearly two millennia ago in the deserts of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, as a tradition of short, repetitive prayer, when monks and nuns would ask their spiritual fathers and mothers for a “word”—a small bit of wisdom or a biblical verse to take away. This soon developed into a full-blown tradition of prayer centered on the name of Jesus—a tradition that also has biblical roots. Most scholars believe the prayer's current form to be a collision of two biblical texts: the healing of the blind beggar (Luke 18:38), “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” and the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (Luke 18:13), in which the tax collector prays, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” To employ the prayer is, therefore, simply a matter of reciting conflated Bible verses.

THE PRAYER'S THEOLOGY

The Jesus Prayer may be precise, but in its brevity it encapsulates the entirety of the gospel. It is, indeed, fully, if subtly, Trinitarian: It acknowledges that Jesus is the

Son of God, and thereby implicitly recognizes the Father; and it begins with the profession of Jesus as Lord, which 1 Corinthians 12:3 tells us, “no one can say... except by the Holy Spirit.” The Spirit is, therefore, the enabling power behind the prayer's practice, and all three persons of the Trinity are plainly invoked.

What is more, the prayer also comprehends the inner workings of the gospel: that salvation comes not by works, but by grace! It understands that the hope we are given in our baptisms is a free gift from God, through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It does this in two ways: First, it acknowledges the Creator-creature distinction, since the person praying identifies as a “sinner”; second, by asking for mercy, the person praying recognizes that mercy (Greek: *eleison*) is a gift to be received, and received by grace.

PRAYING THE PRAYER

While some curious practices have crept into the Jesus Prayer tradition over time, they are all later additions. What is essential is the prayer's *repetitive* nature. It is recommended to be said over and over for long stretches of time—even whole days. While some monastics do, in fact, say the prayer from morning until evening, thousands of times a day (and some even claim to say it while they sleep), other practitioners say it at set times, or on specific days of the week, or prior to the Morning Office and following the Evening Office. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware calls these forms of practice the “fixed use”—the “free use,” meanwhile, being the practice of the Prayer at any time, anywhere and for any reason. A monastery in Essex, England, has developed a service in which a leader repeats the Jesus Prayer while others contemplate in silence what they are hearing. Elsewhere, a “round-robin” style has been adopted, passing off the recitation to someone else every few minutes.

A prayer rope or prayer beads are also customarily used—not merely to count the number of repetitions, but to help maintain a rhythm, and to assist in remaining still and focused. Using a prayer rope ensures that we engage both dimensions of our humanity, our soul and our body, when saying the Jesus Prayer.

INVOKING THE NAME: MY PERSONAL PRACTICE

I use the Jesus Prayer in all the different ways mentioned above, depending on my current needs and my weekly schedule. Every Wednesday evening, I attend a corporate prayer event where a priest recites the prayer for 30 minutes while we all quietly contemplate what we are hearing. If the priest is absent, we shift to the round-robin application. I also add in another, private 30-minute session on Friday evenings. Most Tuesday mornings, I meet with a group to meditate for 10–15 minutes. During this time I employ the Prayer.

On nights when I go to bed with much on my mind, as I put my head on the pillow and close my eyes, I recite the Jesus Prayer over and over. Sometimes this puts me straight to sleep; other times it simply clears my mind so that gradually I can attain sleep.

Lastly, I find myself saying the Jesus Prayer as I go about my day: walking the streets of Manhattan, waiting for a train on a subway platform, or during the rare occasions I am again gripped with anxiety.

It truly is a versatile prayer!

All names are powerful. But only the name of Jesus—his name, the name of the man from Nazareth, who died and rose from the grave—if faithfully uttered, has the power to help us sense the forgiveness we have obtained in the water of the font, which is the access point to eternal life. When we say the Jesus Prayer we are ultimately reminding ourselves with each and every utterance what the name Jesus essentially means: God saves!

The author is a postulant for the priesthood in the diocese and a member of the parish of Calvary-St. George's in Manhattan.



The Gaze

By John Avery

As Jesus looked at me, the mask fell off my soul, the robe dropped from my body, the floor separated from my feet, and the locks fell off the doors of my being. Had anyone ever seen me so completely? His gaze left no doubt that he saw all truth, accepted every iota of my frailty, knew my every artifice and virtue. Hopes and joys and shames, triumphs and flops, my hungerings and my capacities for taking, giving, loving. He saw them.

There was no hidden wink in that gaze. No judgment. Just...what was it? Perhaps bottomless compassion mixed with an invitation to step out of myself and look back at truth.

His lips were slightly parted. His hands rested on a staff. His face beamed from the shadows. I sensed an invitation to follow but feared the implications. His yoke may be light, but his path can demand more than I am prepared to give.

Mark 1:16-18 relates that: *As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, or they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him.*

Is that the entire story? Did Simon and Andrew just drop their lives, leave the tools of their trade (which were probably their most valuable possessions) and follow? Didn't Jesus need at least an hour to persuade them?



Follower of Rembrandt. *Christ with a Staff*. Oil on Canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

room—*Christ With a Pilgrim's Staff*. Go see for yourself, but go prepared to surrender your life.

The author is a member of St. Michael's Church in Manhattan.

Some people are pure takers or givers. But by far, most of us are matchers. We calculate what someone gives us and what we give in return. A tally in our heads stretches back for years. Like double entry accounting, our tallies of give and take must balance for us to feel satisfied. Even if they prospered, these two fishermen would likely have always been poor, but even in their poverty they would have made their tallies.

Then along comes Jesus who says: "Give me your lives." And they go. No thought or tallying, they just go.

There are many ways to follow Jesus—loving our neighbors, respecting the humanity in the least of us, forgiveness, tolerance, compassion, self-control. These are good things that are within us to practice as Christians. More than anything, Jesus taught us how to be, and we honor him by imitating his ways.

But back to that gaze. I was standing face to face with the *difficult* Jesus who asks if I am prepared to give my life. This gently beautiful and terrifying Jesus is often on view at the Metropolitan Museum in the Rembrandt

I Saw Him Standing There

By Muriel DeLorio

Many years ago, at a very small parish, we held our weekly Bible studies in our members' homes. One particular evening, I was asked to say the closing prayer. It was never a printed prayer, but one from the heart.

That night was a challenge for me, as I hadn't prayed aloud for a group since my teen years when I was a leader of our youth group, Christian Endeavor. Closing my eyes as I have always done, and thanking the Lord Jesus Christ, there came over me a strong urge to mention and ask favors for two of the ladies there. One was health-related and the other personal.

At that time, even though my eyes were closed, I actually saw Jesus in the center of our circle stretch out his arms toward the two ladies—almost touching them. And then he and the light around him were gone. It took but a few moments, but I'll never forget it. It remains clear in my mind, and was only divulged to those two individuals when they thanked me after the next Sunday service. Both ladies remarked how that prayer impacted their lives.

I do not remember our topic that night, but I'll never forget when Jesus appeared in our midst, and I actually saw him on behalf of those two, about thirty years ago.

I continue to pray for others. Jesus is very real and near, whether one sees him or not.

The author is a member of St. John's Church, South Salem.

The Lord is My Strength

By Susan Regisford

The Lord Jesus is at work every day in our lives, and nowhere is he more present than in my work as an anesthesiologist. I have needed his help in several very difficult cases where a patient's life hung by a thread, and He intervened every time.

Every day, I encounter a wide range of religious beliefs among my patients and fellow medical workers, running the spectrum from non-existent (atheists) to the deeply religious (who pray before their surgery). My own faith is tested when patients are uncomfortable with my West Indian accent and with the color of my skin. I have many times silently prayed and asked Jesus for the strength to extend love to them, despite their insulting comments.

My introduction, which has not changed in twenty plus years goes like this: "Good morning, my name is Dr. Regisford and I am going to be your anesthesiologist today." Within seconds, patients will ask: "Are you a real doctor?" or "Did you train in the USA?" This is not friendly curiosity, but a combination of narrow-mindedness and an attempt to counter a subconscious fear of surgery and being put under. I try to remember that for many patients, surgery is a monumental loss of control.

I know that fear is a negative force, and so I try to remain filled with love, even when the verbal jabs pierce my defenses. No matter the tone of the encounter—good, neutral or bad—I give every patient the best medical care I am capable of. For the worst patients, the ones whose attacks are personal and filled with hate, I ask the Lord Jesus to guide me and I put my trust in him to keep my heart soft.

The author is a member of the Church of the Incarnation in Manhattan.

Jesus Understands

By Daniel Fowler

Although Lent is now behind us, many of its key themes still keep popping into my head. One of them is the constant reminder that the season in which we try to keep various disciplines (no chocolate, no alcohol, no swearing) usually reveals that we have a difficult time keeping even the smallest commitments. Certainly that is the case for me! Not that this should come as a surprise to any of us. As Presiding Bishop Michael Curry reminded us in his Message for Lent, following Jesus—being a part of the “Jesus Movement”—is difficult. “It’s hard work,” he says. “It’s the work of following Jesus to the Cross.”

What makes it so hard is that we do not *want* to follow Jesus to the Cross. In fact, the work of following him—even after we’ve had the bonds of sin loosened—seems so hard that many of us yearn for our previous enslavement. Like the ancient Israelites, we think the trials and path before us are too difficult. We want, so to speak, to go back to Egypt. So we return to our personal idols: power, comfort, busy-ness, distractions—and we complain that following Jesus is too hard, that God does not provide us with enough, that God just doesn’t understand.

But is it true that God doesn’t understand?

“...We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness-

es,” writes the author of Hebrews 4:15, “but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin” (NRSV).

And how do we know that Christ has been tested for us? Because we know that first, Jesus’ earthly ministry began with the temptation—the testing—in the desert, during which he fasted for 40 days and then still withstood Satan’s tests—the temptations of comfort, of power, and to recklessly test God to see if God is really there. We know too that Jesus’ ministry ended with a testing—the temptation to forego the infinitely painful work of taking on humanity’s iniquity as well as being cut off from the Father.

So who is Jesus to me? He is my Savior, and he reminds me not only that he has already loosed the bonds of my sin but that, like the Israelites finally entering the Promised Land, a life with him as the center of my being is infinitely better than anything that the temptations of sin can offer. And because he himself has endured the temptation to turn away from God’s will, I know I have an advocate who understands my frail humanity.

The author is a member of Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

Join in the discussion about the future of the diocese – plan to attend one of the **Diocesan Strategic Plan Listening Sessions**

Bishop Dietsche launched a strategic planning process for the diocese in the fall of 2015—and since then the consultants engaged to guide the process have been actively gathering information and canvassing the views of clergy and lay people.

This process continues in early May with a series of “Listening Sessions” around the diocese, at each of which members of the Strategic Plan Advisory Group and one of the two consultants will together

- share progress to date
- elicit discussion and feedback from those attending.

Listening Sessions for Lay People

Thursday May 5, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

- Poughkeepsie (St. Paul’s Church)
- Manhattan (St. Bartholomew’s Church)

Friday May 6, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

- Tarrytown (Christ Church)
- Bronx (St. Peter’s Church)

For more information and to register, please go to

www.dioceseny.org/listen

Sessions are free and open to all members of the diocese, but registration is required.

Who Is This?

By the Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool

There are many different ways of asking the question. You can ask it in the first, second, or third person; in the singular or the plural; from a distance or close-up. And you can turn it around and hear it asked of you. You can say, “Who do I think/believe Jesus is?” or “Who do we (the Christian Community) believe Jesus to be?” We can ask it at a distance: “What do the history books and scholars say about who Jesus was?” Or we can hear Jesus, himself, ask us, as he asked Simon Peter and the other disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” However we ask it, it is the single most important question in the life of any Christian.

Who is Jesus for you? Who is Jesus for me?

In 1988, the movie *The Last Temptation of Christ* caused a big controversy among many religious groups, which objected strongly to its depiction of Jesus. I went to see it, because I feel strongly that if you’re going to opine about a movie or a book, you really should see or read it so that you know what you’re talking about. I thought that *The Last Temptation of Christ* wasn’t a very good movie. But it did challenge my faith in a way I hadn’t anticipated—and which had nothing to do with the more controversial scenes.

I left the theater thinking, “Boy. The Jesus they portrayed in that movie isn’t attractive to me at all. And the Jesus I believe in is a very attractive person. The Jesus they portrayed in that movie wasn’t a very good public speaker: he begins his first sermon kind of stuttering into it. MY Jesus was an excellent public speaker. The movie’s Jesus didn’t seem very intelligent. My Jesus was highly intelligent. The Jesus portrayed in the movie was tortured by conflicting voices in his head, and seemed, most of the time, without a sense of direction in his life. MY Jesus was a lot more together than that. He may struggle—just as we all do—but he had a sense of direction. He knew his mission.

My picture of Jesus is that he was attractive, articulate, smart, and clear about his mission. But that analysis says much more about me, and what I value in life, and who I need or want Jesus to be than it says about who Jesus really was, and is. No one individual, or group of people, has a monopoly on describing or even knowing who Jesus was or is. The important thing is that individually and together as church, we continue to be challenged to ask and explore the important questions: “Who is or was Jesus? Who is Jesus for/to me? And, in light of the first two questions, Who am I?”

The author is assistant bishop in the diocese.



The Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool took up her position as assistant bishop in the diocese on April 12 – just in time to write this article.

Photo: Nicholas Richardson

“Noodged” by Grace

By the Rev. Rhonda Joy Rubinson

Something—or somebody—was nudging me. Well, not “nudging” me, exactly: more like “noodging” me—“noodging” being the Yiddishkeit expression for “bugging” or “nagging.” I didn’t know what exactly this “noodging” was about, and I couldn’t quite pinpoint its source. It was a nagging, persistent sense that somebody wanted me to do something—and, even more bizarrely, that *somebody who loved me very much* wanted me to do something. Eventually, I understood that it came from God, that the person who loved me very much was Jesus, and that what Jesus wanted me to do was to come to baptism.

That’s the short version. Here are some details.

The year was 1985. I had been happily working as technical director in the theater and latterly the dance department at Barnard College and, I thought, I was quite content. I had quite a nice career going doing lighting design and production work, touring nationally and internationally, even working regularly for the Little Orchestra Society, the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera. And yet something was noodging me, and it wouldn’t stop.

I had longed since I was eleven years old to be like people who seemed to be “religious”—folks who practiced either Judaism or Christianity (it didn’t matter which) and who seemed to carry an almost tangible aura of faith that secular folk like me just didn’t have. Our family had moved to Fair Lawn, New Jersey, and we had joined a synagogue for the first time, having not belonged to a *shul* in Brooklyn, where I was born and had lived until then. We were a definitely Jewish family, but as many Jewish families at the time, combined Jewish heritage and culture with American liberal and secular politics and daily life. I do, though, remember going to *shul* in Brooklyn on the High Holy Days and being shocked—and excited—by the crowd around me fervently *davening* (praying aloud in Hebrew and bowing repeatedly). I

was happy to follow along in English, but I was keenly aware of a hunger for a deeper experience.


Time passed, and when I wasn’t in temple the longing would dissipate. Occasionally, something besides the High Holy Days would cause it to flare up: one of my professors at Barnard was the late Barry Ulanov, with whom I was blessed to take several classes. He was himself a Roman Catholic convert, and had known the famous Roman Catholic priest/Trappist monk Thomas Merton personally from their student days together at Columbia College.

Slowly, “coincidences” accumulated. (I put the word “coincidences” in quotes because I subscribe to the belief, first stated to me by my first rector, the Rev. Jim Burns, that “coincidences are God’s way of remaining anonymous.”) Ulanov suggested we read Merton’s best-selling autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain*, although it wasn’t required. Years later, what he said in those classes—and did in his life—would come back to help me to baptism.

Tempus fugit. In 1982, I began stage-managing some choirs which often performed in churches, including the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and the Holy Trinity Greek Archdiocesan Cathedral on East 74th Street. Surprisingly, it was at Holy Trinity that I had my first two memorable religious experiences. The first was actually getting down on my knees and praying in a church—something Jews *never* do, so I checked around carefully to see no one was looking. I prayed for something hilariously minor in hindsight: we had misplaced the expensive microphone we needed to narrate that evening’s performance of Handel’s *Messiah*, and I prayed as hard as I could for it to be found. Not two minutes later, the choir manager came rushing in waving the microphone. My very first prayer was answered!

The second experience was more spiritual in both style and substance. Holy Trinity is the seat of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of North America, who at the time was the very deep and gentle Archbishop Iakovos. Upon entering the cathedral, he would often lay a hand of blessing on each person he passed. He knew that I was Jewish, but one day he laid his hand on me anyway, and that was literally the first touch of grace that I experienced. I felt wonderful for days afterward. It was also at Holy Trinity that I experienced a Christian liturgy for the first time; it was the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, which I found very compelling. Something was drawing me in, or trying to.

Plus temporis. My first boss at Barnard got colon cancer and died, in horrible fashion. Then a relationship that I thought was going somewhere broke up; he went off with a woman who could help his career. The noodging started in earnest; the persistent nagging feeling plus the psychological vertigo that accompanied it eventually convinced me that I needed help. So I went to see a very strange psychotherapist who had placed an ad in the *Columbia Spectator*. Not much help came from those sessions—I think she said I was neurotic,



BEARING WITNESS : THOMAS MERTON, CONTEMPLATION & ACTION
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Saturday, April 23, 2016
2:00 – 4:30 p.m.

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Monica Weis, SSJ:
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which of course I was—but I do remember that she sat in a fancy kimono-like robe on a couch in her living-room/office stroking a cat while talking to me.

So, I resolved to figure this thing out on my own. Being a very good student and skilled researcher, I began reading. For some reason, I had the sense that the Bible might have an answer, so I began reading it, differently this time than I had in grad school, when I had taken a class called “Bible as Literature.” Oddly, when I read it, I felt comforted for a time. Then the life and words of Barry Ulanov came back to me. I went back to reread Merton’s *The Seven Storey Mountain* and BANG—there it was!—laid out in front of me in glowing Technicolor. Merton described his conversion from The Episcopal Church to the Roman Catholic Church in terms that echoed my spiritual, psychological, and emotional state very strongly. Plus he had that experience at Columbia—where I was—and one of his best friends lived in the very building that I lived in. Coincidences, indeed! Now I knew the identity of the “somebody who loved me very much”—it was Jesus—and what he wanted me to do: get baptized.

The clarity was an enormous relief. I began for the first time to enter into a personal interior dialogue with Jesus, and of course a whole new set of issues emerged. What was I going to tell my family? I was always close with my father, mother, and brother, and I knew that this would upset them, to put it mildly. Christianity was

not viewed kindly in our house—every year we would watch Midnight Mass from the Vatican on Christmas Eve so that we could get to “know our enemy.” Yet something inside me told me that my identity was not only Jewish but Christian, and that Jesus himself wanted me as part of his family, too.

Tenuit tempore transitus. I was waiting for a sign that it was the right time to be baptized. Meanwhile, I existed in a state of tortured limbo, making myself increasingly miserable. Finally, it was Merton again to the rescue. In his autobiography, he says something like (in paraphrase), “If you know what you are supposed to do, don’t wait for angels and trumpets to call you to action—just get on with it!”

So then, in 1987, I resolved to be baptized. I had begun hanging around St. John the Divine the year before, attending chapel services, sitting in the back, hoping not to be noticed, taking communion because I didn’t know I wasn’t supposed to do that yet. One day, I walked up to Canon West at the Cathedral and said, “Father, I think I want to be baptized.” To which he replied, “That’s a good thing, dearie, seeing as how you’ve been taking communion.”

At the Easter Vigil, 1987, I was baptized and confirmed at St. John the Divine.

The author is priest-in-charge, Church of the Intercession, Manhattan.

SAFE CHURCH TRAINING / CAPACITACIÓN IGLESIA SEGURA

Q&A

WHAT IS SAFE CHURCH TRAINING?

Training about the signs of sexual abuse, the behaviors of sexual perpetrators, how to respond to such behaviors, and screening information to help stop abuse before it happens.

HOW IS TRAINING COMPLETED?

In-person OR online (web-based.)

IS ANYONE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE TRAINING IN-PERSON?

Yes. In-person training is mandatory the first time for all clergy, all persons in the ordination process, and all lay chaplains.

WHO CAN COMPLETE TRAINING EITHER IN-PERSON OR ONLINE?

All employees / volunteers.

HOW DOES SOMEONE COMPLETE TRAINING ONLINE?

For information about online training (Safeguarding Online) see the diocesan Safe Church webpage: www.diocesen.org/safe-church.

DOES TRAINING NEED TO BE UPDATED?

Yes. Everyone who must complete training must also update their training every five years.

OPTIONS FOR UPDATING TRAINING?

All clergy, employees and volunteers may update their training either in-person OR online.

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT SAFE CHURCH TRAINING?

Detailed information and resources are available on the diocesan Safe Church webpage: www.diocesen.org/safe-church.

Upcoming In-Person Trainings

- May 7, 2016 at Trinity Church, Fishkill (in English)
 - June 18, 2016 at St. Thomas’ Church, Mamaroneck (in Spanish)
- Register online through the diocesan website calendar:
www.diocesen.org/calendar

R&R

¿QUÉ ES LA CAPACITACIÓN IGLESIA SEGURA?

Es una Capacitación sobre las señales de abuso sexual, los comportamientos de los agresores sexuales, cómo responder a este tipo de comportamientos, detectar información para ayudar a detener el abuso antes de que suceda.

¿CÓMO SE COMPLETA LA CAPACITACIÓN?

En persona o en línea por medio de Internet.

¿HAY ALGUIEN QUE DEBE COMPLETAR LA CAPACITACIÓN EN PERSONA?

Sí. La capacitación en persona es obligatoria la primera vez para todo el clero, todas las personas en proceso de ordenación y todos los Capellanes Laicos.

¿QUIÉN PUEDE COMPLETAR LA CAPACITACIÓN, YA SEA EN PERSONA O EN LÍNEA?

Todos los empleados / voluntarios.

¿CÓMO PUEDE ALGUIEN COMPLETAR LA CAPACITACIÓN EN LÍNEA?

Para obtener información acerca de la Capacitación en línea (Salvaguardando en línea) véase la página Iglesia Segura de la red diocesana.

¿DEBE SER ACTUALIZADA LA CAPACITACIÓN?

Sí. Todas las personas que han de completar la Capacitación también deben renovarla cada cinco años.

¿QUÉ OPCIONES HAY PARA RENOVAR LA CAPACITACIÓN?

Todo el clero, todos los empleados / voluntarios, pueden renovar su capacitación ya sea en persona o en línea.

¿TIENE PREGUNTAS ACERCA DE LA CAPACITACIÓN IGLESIA SEGURA?

Toda la información y los recursos están disponibles en la página Iglesia Segura de la red diocesana: www.diocesen.org/safe-church

Próximas Capacitaciones En-Persona

- 7 de mayo de 2016, en la Iglesia de la Trinidad, Fishkill (en inglés)
 - 18 de junio de 2016, en la Iglesia de Santo Tomás, Mamaroneck (en español)
- Regístrese en línea a través de la página calendario de la red diocesana:
www.diocesen.org/calendar

Two Congregations Celebrate Interfaith Cooperation

By Molly Gordy

An Episcopal parish and its Reform Jewish neighbor on Manhattan's Upper West Side in January celebrated a half-century of interfaith friendship that had an unlikely beginning—a devastating fire.

The Church of St. Matthew and St. Timothy and Congregation Rodeph Sholom, separated by a city block, shared worship, learning and fellowship Jan. 22-24 in the Jewish tradition of Shabbaton—a week-end focusing on the Sabbath. The two also announced a new partnership for community service.

Bishop Dietsche inaugurated the festivities by speaking at Friday night Sabbath services at Rodeph Sholom, followed by a joint reception at St. Matthew and St. Timothy.

Noting that no lives were lost in the Dec. 1, 1965 fire, he told the congregation that “your welcoming of that refugee community into this synagogue earned our profound gratitude and love.”

The “grace-filled interfaith celebration,” he said, had the ability to “transcend history,” specifically the persecution of Jews by Christians. Bishop Dietsche said he hoped the two congregations would “continue to grow in friendship and learn from one another.”

The church's current rector, the Rev. Carla E. Roland Guzmán, gave a teaching on Exodus in the synagogue's chapel on Saturday, Jan. 23, followed by a celebratory luncheon—despite the massive blizzard that hit the city.

Rodeph's senior rabbi, Robert N. Levine, spoke at the church's Sunday service, which Roland Guzmán called “an opportunity for us to thank Rodeph and show the fullness of our being a multilingual congregation with longstanding roots in the neighborhood.”

Rabbi Levine called the church “a big gift to us ... a blessing to us” and “God's instrument in returning this relationship to us.” In 1965, he noted, “Jews and Christians did not walk into each other's houses ... In some cases, they were forbidden to walk into each other's houses. So let us not take for granted the friendship that was founded 50 years ago.”

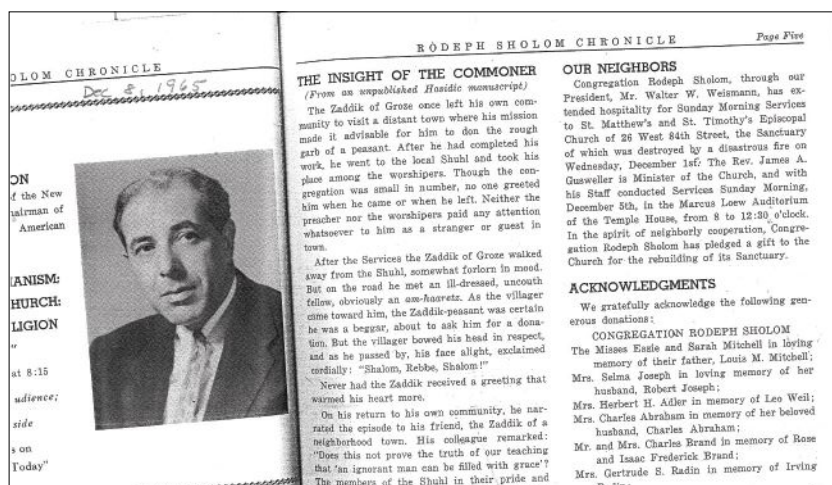
In 1965, the five-alarm blaze destroyed St. Matthew and St. Timothy's Gothic building. Rodeph Sholom's then-rabbi, Gunter Hirschberg, contacted the church's then-rector, the Rev. James A. Gussweller, and offered him free worship space at the synagogue.

The sight of Episcopalians celebrating Communion in a Reform Jewish synagogue's auditorium was rare enough to merit an article in The New York Times. Though few of the parishioners ever had been inside a Jewish house of worship before, one told the paper the welcome was so warm that it felt “almost like home.”

However, each congregation was experiencing difficult times. The area was con-



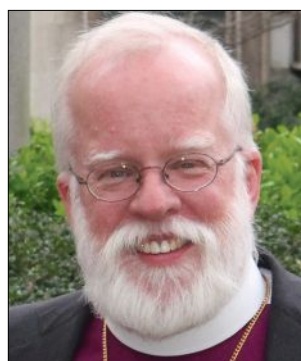
The New York Times notes the cooperation between Congregation Rodeph Sholom and the Episcopal Church of St. Matthew and St. Timothy after a disastrous fire at the church. Photo: Courtesy of Congregation Rodeph Sholom



Congregation Rodeph Sholom, in its newsletter, acknowledges cooperation with its Episcopal neighbor after a devastating fire.



Rabbi Robert N. Levine



Bishop Dietsche

sidered a dangerous neighborhood. Many of the church's 400 congregants spoke little English, risked unemployment and eviction, and fought to keep their children away from hookers and drug dealers.

Around the corner, many of Rodeph Sholom's 900 members refused to brave the crime-ridden neighborhood to attend services.

When the rebuilt church and new community center opened two years later, Hirschberg was invited to help lay the cornerstone. Over the years, the relationship became reciprocal. Rodeph borrowed space at the church for worship services when its sanctuary was undergoing construction.

But as the decades passed, and the neighborhood became more prosperous, the congregations intersected less frequently.

Both want that to change.

“For us to pray is not enough. We must leave the church and the synagogue and go into the community, to break the shackles of the oppressed, to feed the hungry, to shelter the homeless. Thanks to our rekindled relationship, we will respond to the voice of God as never before, to serve our common community,” Rabbi Levine said.

“Christianity and Judaism do not accept a passive faith in which God does everything for us. We must do everything we can on our own. We expect a lot from God, and guess what? God expects a lot from us! And so we will go into the community together to feed the hungry and shelter the homeless, with God's help,” he added.

In 2015, the two houses of worship began new cooperation on public-service projects. Rodeph now provides 20 backpacks filled with food each week to at-risk youth in the church's Angels basketball program. St. Matthew and St. Timothy solicits volunteers for the synagogue's men's shelter. Rodeph members tutor at the literacy center housed in the church. Members of both congregations meet monthly to knit and sew for people with medical needs.

“Whether we call this a ministry or a mitzvah, this is a long-term partnership that aims to overcome our parallel worlds and serve one community,” Bishop Dietsche said. “The relationship between the church and the synagogue is a model of what it is to live in a community of believers and people of faith.”

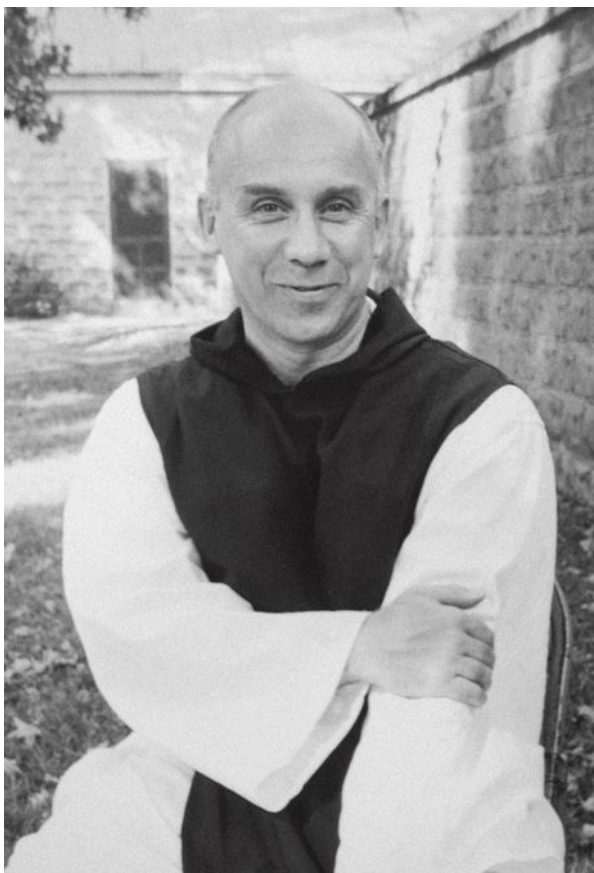
The author is a New York-based freelance journalist and a member of Congregation Rodeph Sholom. Solange De Santis, editor of Episcopal Journal (www.episcopaljournal.org), contributed to this story, which previously appeared in Episcopal Journal and is published here with permission.

Thomas Merton: An Enduring Legacy

By Judith Milone

In his address to the U.S. Congress last fall, Pope Francis pleasantly surprised many with the two Catholics he chose for special commendation: Dorothy Day, social activist and founder of the Catholic Worker movement, and Thomas Merton, contemplative monk and writer. To many, these were refreshing examples of the Christian life, not only for what each person achieved, but because both succeeded while thumbing a nose at the Catholic establishment of their time. Day tackled the resistance of Rome and of the Church closer to home—and the Catholic Worker movement remains active in its ministry and care for the poor to this day. Merton evoked shudders both from Rome and from his long suffering abbots. He died aged 53 in 1968—nearly 50 years ago—but the fact that he continues to be widely read and discussed today is evidence for many that the true Christian life can be articulated, and, in a real way, led. Merton has, in fact, spawned a huge industry of papers and publications, study groups, conferences, films, tours and pilgrimages, theater productions and exhibitions. The International Thomas Merton Society has 19 international chapters and affiliates and 42 chapters in the United States; its Daggy Scholarship Program encourages young theology students; and the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University in Louisville serves as a central point and repository of all things Merton-related. The current issue of the quarterly “Merton Seasonal” lists 16 recently published works by Merton and 105 items about him in languages including Dutch, German, Polish and Portuguese. The Episcopal Church recognizes him in its church calendar on December 10 (see *Holy Women/ Holy Men*).

Thomas Merton was born in 1915 in France, of an American mother from New York with Episcopal roots (her family worshipped at Zion Church, Douglaston, Queens) and a father of New Zealand and Scottish background. He grew up in France, Britain and the U.S.—and after leading the proverbial secular (nominally Anglican) and dissolute young life, joined the Roman Catholic Church and was baptized at age 23 in 1938, at Corpus Christi Church on West 121 Street. In 1941, he joined the Abbey of Gethsemani near Bardsdale, KY, where he lived until his death. He was also ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood. Merton was the author of over 70 books, and his autobiographical work *Seven Storey Mountain* has, remarkably, been in print ever since its publication in 1948. His wider output was enormous, consisting of hundreds of journal entries, correspondences, poems and essays, as well as photographs and paintings. In addition to writing on the contemplative life, he wrote about the then-emerging areas of ecumenism, East-West relations, economic justice, peace, race relations and nuclear disarmament (hence the Church’s disfavor). Although he was a monk committed to a cloistered life, Merton’s relationships and correspondences with others around the world were prolific (hence his abbots’ disfavor).



Thomas Merton.

What is Merton’s appeal today? What attracts his current followers, many of whom are passionate about his ability to speak to them in 2016? For some, it’s the sheer power of his compelling biography. For others, it’s his humility and authenticity, as well as the sense of irony that permeates his writing. One member of the NYC chapter of the Merton Society spoke of his being a bridge between spirituality and social activism, which she has found so helpful in her own life and work.

Twenty-one year old Iona College student and Daggy Scholar Ashley Hubaykah was introduced to Merton by the faculty at Iona. After reading *Thoughts in Solitude* she felt “something really empowering about his words... As soon as I let Merton into my life, everything became so peaceful,” she says. Hubaykah reads the Merton prayer daily.

For GTS adjunct professor and spiritual director Lindsay Boyer, Merton has become an important presence on her nightstand. “I see Merton as one of the most important forbears of modern contemplative practice,” she says, especially noting his “deep connection with God in silence and solitude.” She wonders, however, about his future significance, noting that Merton’s writings are uneven and some of his language dated to our 21st century ears.

Still, the pulse of Mertonia continues unabated. As to his relevance for today, perhaps he should have the last word, with the prayer that Hubaykah cites:

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

The author is a member of St. Bartholomew’s Church, Manhattan.

For Further Exploration

- The International Thomas Merton Society and the Merton Center; www.merton.org
- ITMS, New York City/ Corpus Christi Chapter; thomasmertonsociety-nyc.org

Views and Reviews

ARTS AND LITERATURE

THE FIFTH GOSPEL

BY IAN CALDWELL

SIMON & SCHUSTER, 496 PAGES

Reviewed by Mark Risinger

A holy relic. A vanished manuscript. A mysterious death. At first blush, the plot materials of Ian Caldwell's novel *The Fifth Gospel* (Simon & Schuster, 2015) may seem a bit of a cliché to fans of the Dan Brown franchise, particularly because the story unfolds within the walls of the Vatican. But this story, ten years in the writing, offers the reader a welcome opportunity to ponder spiritual truths and to reflect on the story of Jesus as presented in the Gospels in a fascinating new way. It also provides intrigue and suspense, a crash course in Vatican politics, and some esoteric tidbits of medieval church history.

Set in the waning days of John Paul II's pontificate, the plot centers around Alexander and Simon Andreou, a pair of 30-something brothers who have grown up within the Vatican as the sons of a Greek Catholic priest. Alex, the narrator, has remained a priest within this tradition, which allows him to be married with a five-year-old son, while his older brother Simon has become a Roman priest and diplomat who is quickly rising through the Vatican hierarchy. Alex narrates events in the present tense, interspersed with a series of flashbacks, all leading up to the opening night of a Vatican museum exhibition that underlies the whole tale. Without spoiling too much for the prospective reader, it is sufficient to say that the highly anticipated exhibition promises to shed new light on the Shroud of Turin's history and its context within the relationship between the Roman Catholic church and the eastern Orthodox.

Assisted by Alex and Simon, Ugolino Nogara, the exhibition's curator, is working to confirm certain aspects of the Shroud's history and provenance. As he does so, he becomes intrigued by a synthesis of the Gospels from the second century, commonly known as *The Diatessaron*. Authored by Tatian, an early Christian apologist and ascetic writing ca. 170 AD, the *Diatessaron* is the *Fifth Gospel* of

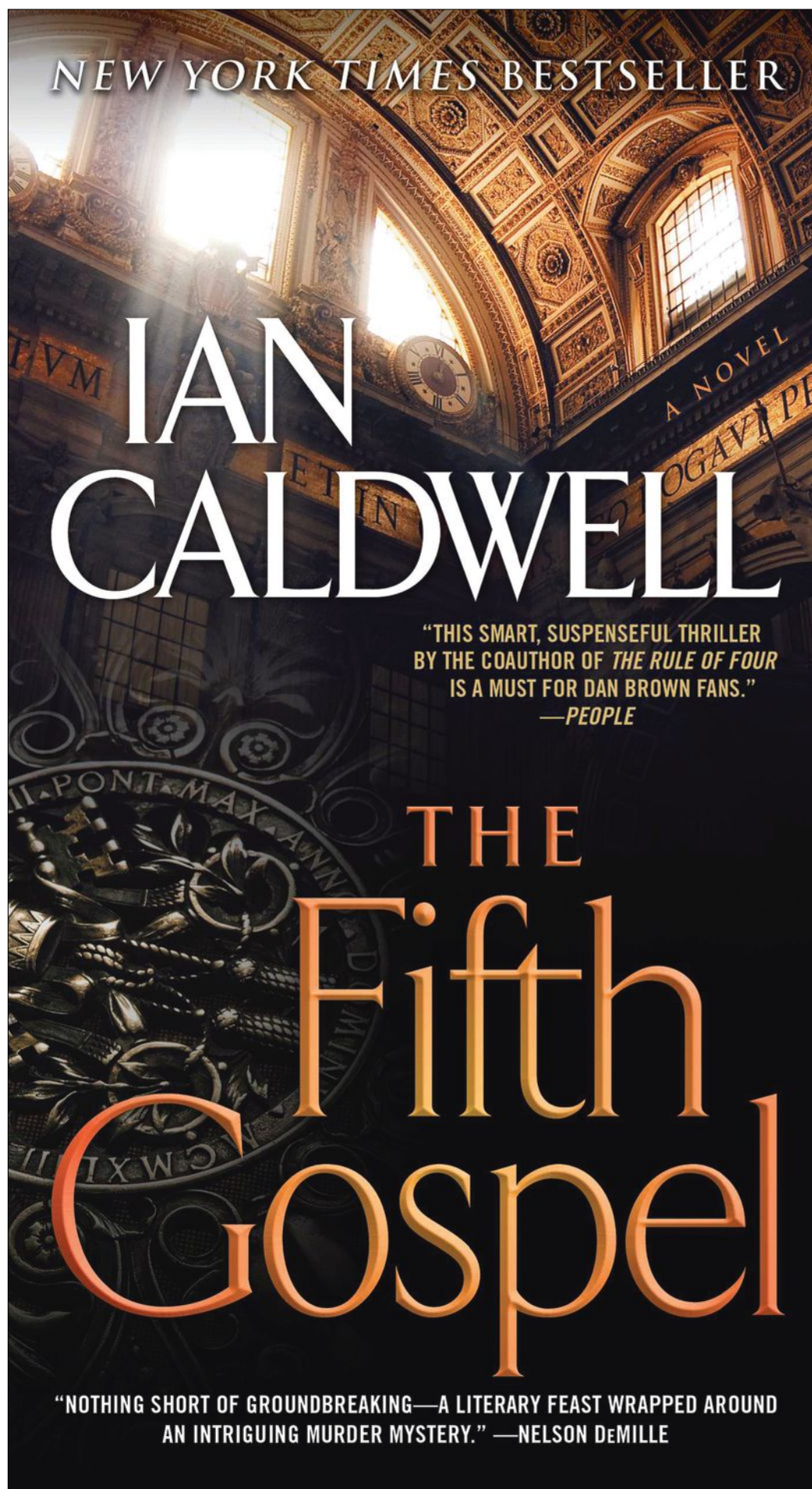
the title. Nogara discovers this manuscript in the Vatican library and begins scouring it for clues about the Shroud, closely comparing it with the four Evangelists' accounts of Jesus' death and burial. Thus the reader is taken on a journey not only through the (doubtless fictionalized) Vatican library, but also through the textual history of the Gospels themselves.

For the interested layperson without a substantial background in comparative textual criticism, this novel provides an engaging introduction to issues of content and interpretation, particularly regarding the differences and discrepancies

between the three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and the Gospel of John, written considerably later and with a substantially different purpose. As much as the Gospels tell us about Jesus, they also tell us a great deal about his early followers and those who cared enough to record his ministry and spread his message. Caldwell's narrative style is taut and compelling, moving the story forward at a steady pace but frequently turning back on itself, as a previous observation or assumption by the narrator is suddenly revealed to have been mistaken and subject to revision. This narrative strategy, satisfying in itself, cleverly mirrors the process of analyzing, comparing, and reinterpreting early Christian texts that also occurs in the story.

Caldwell has taken on a plot full of sacred texts and relics about which many readers will hold strong opinions and feel deep emotions. It is therefore impressive that he has successfully obscured any personal agenda or religious leanings in crafting his tale, from its beginning to the emotionally uplifting conclusion. *The Fifth Gospel* is historical fiction in the best sense, as it uses historical persons and objects to tell a compelling story without attempting to answer every question an inquisitive reader might have. It reminds us that, as with the study of all history, the process of investigation and understanding is perpetually incomplete.

The author is a member of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Manhattan and serves on the Episcopal New Yorker editorial advisory board.



**EXHIBITION REVIEW:
THE CROWN OF THE ANDES
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
GALLERY 357 (ARTS OF AFRICA, OCEANIA, AND THE AMERICAS)**

Reviewed by Pamela A. Lewis

It is a crown befitting a queen. The queen of heaven, that is. The Crown of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception of Popayán, which the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired in 2015, is popularly known as the “Crown of the Andes,” and was made to adorn the sacred image of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception venerated in Popayán Cathedral, located in the former Spanish viceroyalty of New Granada (now Colombia). In the words of Ronda Kasl, Curator of colonial Latin American Art at The Met, the Crown “is considered one of the most important surviving examples of goldsmith work from colonial Spanish America.”

This breathtaking object, an attribute of Mary’s divine queenship, is fashioned from 5.3 pounds of repoussé and chased gold, encircled by scrolls of acanthus leaves set with emeralds in blossom-shaped clusters symbolizing the Virgin’s purity. The crown comprises a diadem, made around 1660, and four imperial arches, dating from around 1770. Delicate pear-shaped emerald pendants are suspended beneath the arches, which in turn are surmounted by a cross-bearing orb signifying Christ’s dominion over the world. The crown is encrusted with more than 443 emeralds (likely from the Chivor mines in Colombia), the largest of which is a 24-carat gemstone known as the “Atahualpa emerald.” Legend has it that the crown was a thank-offering for the sparing of Popayán during a 1590s smallpox epidemic.

When Spaniards arrived in South America in the 16th century, they met an extremely rich and complex indigenous tradition of goldsmith work dating back millennia. During the 16th and 17th centuries, almost all of the Precolumbian gold works were melted down and repurposed for emerging religious and secular leaders both in Spain and the Americas.

The crown has had an unusual journey. It was commissioned by a confraternity of believers who not only promoted the cult of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, but oversaw the care and ritual presentation of the saint’s image. They also safeguarded the Popayán treasury that contained a simpler gilded silver crown, as well as jeweled rings, bracelets, and other adornments. Venerating the Virgin in the 17th-century Catholic world was done lavishly (but not without controversy): devotees who sought Mary’s intercession or wished to give thanks for it, heaped jewels and splendid garments on her sculptured and crowned image, which was carried in public procession on a raised platform on certain Marian feast days.

In 1914, Pope Pius X authorized the sale of the crown, the proceeds of which the Church intended for funding a hospital, an orphanage, and a home for the elderly. This and other attempts to sell the crown did not reach fruition until 1936, when Warren J. Piper, a Chicago gem dealer with a showman’s streak, acquired it. He renamed it “Crown of the Andes,” and gave it a new life of publicity and spectacle by putting it on tour. Piper fabricated colorful lore about the crown, surrounding it with tales of conquistadores, headhunters, and plagues. In 1938, Oscar Heyman & Brothers, a jewelry firm, acquired it, and the following year, it was featured at the 1939 World’s Fair. It was even displayed at Macy’s department store in 1941.

And now, after years of the kind of fame that celebrities would envy, the Crown of the Andes has settled into its well-lit new home in the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas galleries. In addition to its rarity, beauty, and impeccable craftsmanship, the crown is an outstanding example of work from a region that derived its wealth from gold and emerald mining.

With its addition to the permanent collection, the Crown of the Andes becomes more than an object linked solely to religious devotion; it becomes an important focus of the Met’s intention to move beyond the British-American story of American art to one that is more “hemispheric.”

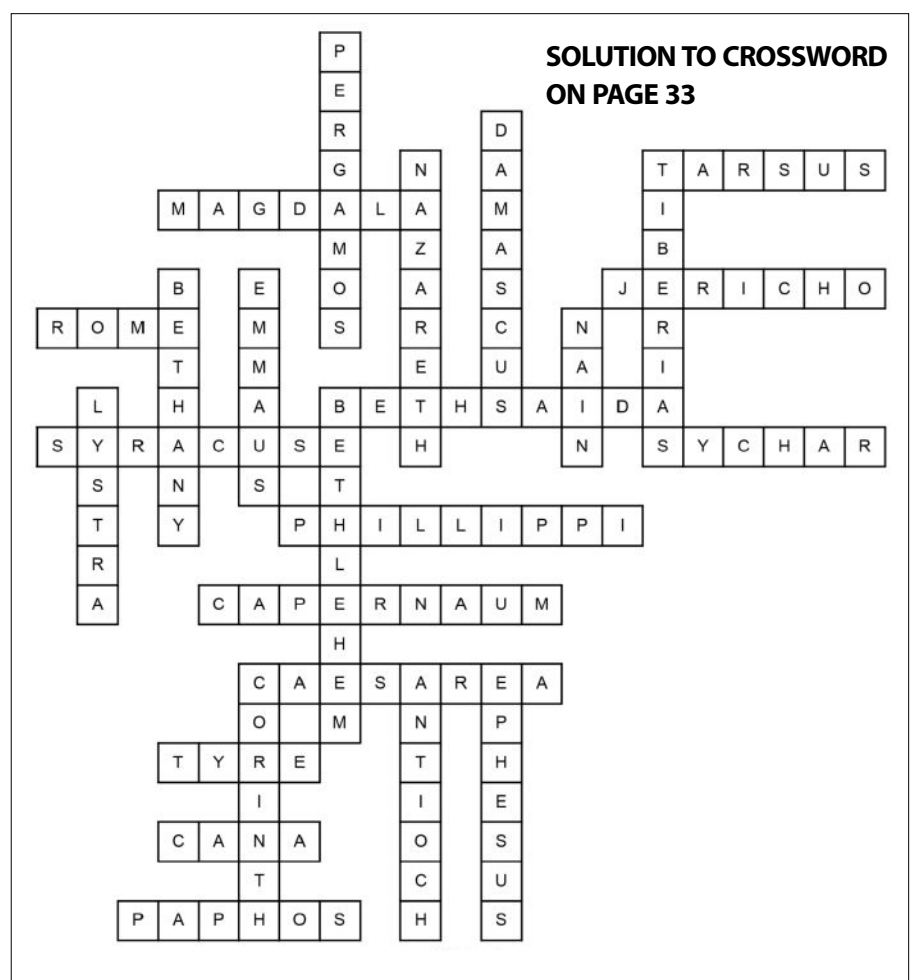
The crown will be in its current location into the fall, after which it will be included in other Met shows, when appropriate. Hopes are that the crown will become the centerpiece of the museum’s growing Latin American Art collection. For the time being, however, there is a silent but nonetheless lively conversation going on between



Crown of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, known as the Crown of the Andes, Colombia, ca. 1660 and ca.1770.
Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

this magnificent object and its less flamboyant but equally compelling pre-Columbian neighbors. Visit the gallery and listen in.

The author is a member of St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.



Episcopal Charities Awards Grants Totaling \$863,000

Episcopal Charities' Board of Directors recently announced that it had awarded 57 Basic Human Needs grants and 37 Youth Opportunity grants, totaling \$863,000. "The total represents a 5% increase over last year and was made possible by generous individuals, congregations, foundations and corporations that share our commitment to caring," said President John Talty.

Episcopal Charities provides critical funding and operational support to strengthen nearly 100 local programs that transform the lives of more than 900,000 people in need each year. Episcopal Charities:

- Fights hunger through food pantries and community kitchens;
- Strengthens communities through skills-building programs that offer a path to success for the unemployed, recent immigrants, and the formerly incarcerated re-entering society;
- Protects the most vulnerable through health and wellness programs that improve quality of life for senior citizens, the homebound, children with special needs, and recovering substance abusers;
- Creates opportunities for the next generation through children's arts, academic enrichment, and summer recreation programs.

Programs and parishes awarded funding through the 2016 Basic Human Needs and 2016-17 Youth Opportunity Grant cycles are listed below. For more information, visit episcopalcharities-newyork.org/who-we-are/our-programs/.



The Go Project at Grace Church, Manhattan provides year-round educational and family support services to children struggling in school.

Photo: Episcopal Charities

Church of the Ascension, Manhattan	Michael D. Fender Food Pantry
Church of the Ascension, Mt. Vernon	Summer Camp
Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Manhattan	Cathedral Community Cares
Christ Church, Bronxville	Fessenden Supportive Housing
Christ Church, Bronxville	Young at Arts
Christ the King Church, Stone Ridge	Rondout Valley Food Pantry
Christ Church, New Brighton	Children's Choir, Ukulele Group and Steel Drum Band
Christ Church, New Brighton	Community Feeding Programs
Christ Church, Poughkeepsie	Homework Buddies
Christ Church, Poughkeepsie	Summer Camp
Christ Church of Ramapo, Suffern	Feeding Ministries
Christ's Church, Rye	Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison
Christ & St. Stephen's Church, Manhattan	Brown Bag Program
Christ & St. Stephen's Church, Manhattan	West Side Campaign Against Hunger Chef Training Program
Church of the Epiphany, Manhattan	Wednesday Night Homeless Feeding Program
Church of the Good Shepherd, Granite Springs	Community Center of Northern Westchester Food Pantry
Church of the Good Shepherd, Newburgh	Shepherd's Kitchen
Grace Church, Bronx	Our Lord's Soup Kitchen
Grace Church, Manhattan	The GO Project
Grace Church, Middletown	Guild of St. Margaret Soup Kitchen
Grace Church, Millbrook	Engaging People in Change
Grace Church, Millbrook	Latino Outreach for Northeast Dutchess County
Grace Church, Nyack	Amazing Grace CIRCUS!
Grace Church, Nyack	Nyack Center Family Connections Program
Grace Church, Port Jervis	Fed By Grace Food Pantry
Grace Church, White Plains	Lifting Up Westchester Brighter Futures Mentoring Program
Grace Church, White Plains	Lifting Up Westchester Brighter Futures Summer Camp
Grace Church, White Plains	Lifting Up Westchester Grace's Kitchen
Church of the Heavenly Rest, Manhattan	New York Common Pantry
Church of the Holy Apostles, Manhattan	Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen
Holy Trinity Church, Inwood	The Pied Piper Children's Theatre
Church of the Holy Trinity, Manhattan	Neighborhood Center
Holyrood Church, Washington Heights	Friday Food Fest
Holyrood Church, Washington Heights	Washington Heights Choir School
Church of the Incarnation, Manhattan	Pioneer Village at Incarnation Camp
Church of the Intercession, Manhattan	English as a Second Language Program
Manhattan North Inter-Parish Council	Summer Educational Poject
Church of the Messiah, Rhinebeck	Jayne Brooks Memorial Food Pantry
Church of Our Savior, Manhattan	Jubilee Enrichment Programs
Iglesia Memorial de San Andres, Yonkers	After School Program
Iglesia Memorial de San Andres, Yonkers	Food Pantry
Iglesia Memorial de San Andres, Yonkers	Summer Camp
St. Andrew's Church, Brewster and St. James' Church, North Salem	Brewster Community Food Pantry
St. Andrew's Church, Bronx	After School Program
St. Andrew's Church, Bronx	Summer Day Camp
St. Andrew's Church and St. Luke's Church, Beacon	Food Pantry
St. Ann's Church, Bronx	After School Program

St. Ann's Church, Bronx	Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen
St. Ann's Church, Bronx	Freedom School
St. Bartholomew's Church, Manhattan	Crossroads Community Services
St. Edmund's Church, Bronx	After School
St. Edmund's Church, Bronx	Food Pantry
St. Edmund's Church, Bronx	Summer Camp
St. George's Church, Newburgh	Food Pantry
St. George's Church, Newburgh	Newburgh Girl Power
St. George's Church, Newburgh	Voices of Hope Children's Choir
St. Gregory's Church, Woodstock	Horticultural Therapy Garden for Young People
St. Ignatius Church, Manhattan	Soup Kitchen
St. John's Church, Kingston	Angel Food East
St. John's Church, Monticello	Caring Hands Food Pantry
St. John's Church, Pleasantville	Pleasantville Community Garden
The Church of Sts. John, Paul & Clement, Mt. Vernon	Emergency Food Pantry
The Church of Sts. John, Paul & Clement, Mt. Vernon	Summer Vacation School
The Church of St. Luke in the Fields, Manhattan	The Church: Art and Acceptance for LGBTQ Youth
The Church of St. Luke in the Fields, Manhattan	The GO Project at St. Luke's
The Church of St. Luke in the Fields, Manhattan	The PLWA Project: Food, Friends and Fellowship for People Living with HIV/AIDS
St. Margaret's Church, Bronx	After School Program
St. Margaret's Church, Bronx	Feeding Ministry
St. Margaret's Church, Bronx	Summer Day Camp
St. Mark's Church, Mt. Kisco	Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry
St. Mary's Church, Castelton	Community Meal and Food Pantry
St. Mary's Church, Manhattanville	Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen
St. Mary's Church, Manhattanville	RDJ Memorial Shelter
St. Mary's Church, Mahattanville	Summer Camp
St. Mary's Church, Mohegan Lake	Community Food Pantry
St. Mary's Church, Tuxedo Park	Helping Hands of Rockland County
St. Mary's Church, Tuxedo Park	Sloatsburg Food Pantry
St. Matthew's Church, Bedford	Emergency Shelter Partnership
Church of St. Matthew and St. Timothy, Manhattan	The Angels Basketball Program
Church of St. Matthew and St. Timothy, Manhattan	Sunday Meals Program
St. Michael's Church, Manhattan	Saturday Kitchen and Pilgrim Resource Center
St. Paul's-on-the-Hill, Ossining	Youth Music Program
St. Paul's Church, Poughkeepsie	Food Pantry
St. Peter's Church, Bronx	Cephas Arts Program
St. Peter's Church, Bronx	Love Kitchen and Love Pantry
St. Peter's Church, Chelsea	Food Pantry
St. Peter's Church, Port Chester	Neighborhood Dinner & Mobile Food Pantry
St. Peter's Church, Port Chester	Learning Center
St. Peter's Church, Port Chester	Summer Program
St. Philip's Church, Harlem	Hospitality for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals
St. Thomas Church, Amenia Union	Food of Life/Comida de Vida Pantry
St. Thomas Church, Mamaroneck	Brown Bag Lunch and Food Pantry
Trinity St. Paul's Church, New Rochelle	Brown Bag Lunch
Zion Church, Wappingers Falls	Food Pantry

\$100,000 Bedell Grant to Princess Basma Center for Disabled Children



A St. Matthew's, Bedford Holy Land tour group, led by associate rector the Rev. Susan Wyper, visited Jerusalem in December, 2015. They were welcomed at the Princess Basma Center and with great joy accepted their thanks and the thanks of Archbishop Suheil Dawani on behalf of St. Matthew's Church.

Acting on the recommendation of the Bedell Committee, the Vestry of St. Matthew's Church, Bedford recently approved a \$100,000 grant to the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem (AFEDJ) to renovate the dining room of East Jerusalem's Princess Basma Center for Disabled Children. The Diocese of Jerusalem owns and operates the Center with the goal of providing disabled children and adults with the skills they need in order to lead as normal and productive lives as possible. It treats more than 800 children a year as in-patients, another 300 from the Jerusalem area as outpatients, and 500 from the West Bank and Gaza who come with their mothers for a two to three week intensive residential treatment program that includes training and support for the mother. The Center also runs a school that mainstreams disabled children into a normal school setting and a sheltered workshop for adults. All faiths are welcomed, though the greatest need is from the Palestinian Muslim community.

Recently, it was learned that the Center would be closed unless it brought its kitchen and dining room into compliance with the government building code. To help pay for the needed renovation, AFEDJ submitted an application to the Bedell Committee. (the Bedell charter directs that grants normally be made for capital projects for Region II churches of the Episcopal Diocese of New York—a long way from East Jerusalem; but in extraordinary circumstances, it does permit grants to be given elsewhere.) The Bedell Committee determined that the AFEDJ request was an emergency, and further felt that it was important to reinforce the work of the Diocese of Jerusalem as a beacon of hope and peace in this conflict area of the world.



Over 100 Participate in Diocesan Treble Choir Festival

The Cathedral Choristers hosted a Diocesan Treble Choir Festival on Saturday January, 30th that attracted over 100 singers from the tri-state area. In addition to rehearsing and singing, the day was filled with workshops and a tour of the cathedral. The festival concluded with a festival evensong in the Great Choir.



Clergy processing up the steps of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine for the Service of Collegiality and the Blessing of the Chrism on Holy Tuesday. At the service, priests, deacons and bishops renewed their ordination vows, and Bishop Dietsche blessed the holy oil, which was distributed afterwards to those who attended. Photo: Nicholas Richardson.

Absalom Jones Celebration

The annual celebration of Blessed Absalom Jones (1746-1818), the first African American ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church, was held at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on Saturday, February 13. Bishop Dietsche celebrated, and the sermon was preached by the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers. The celebration was presented, as usual, by the New York Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians and the Anti-Racism Committee of the diocese.



Drummers from Drumming in Harmony, based at St. Paul's, Spring Valley. Photo: Roberta Todd.

“Women Rectors: Leadership for the 21st Century”

A panel and roundtable discussion organized by the Church Club of New York

By *Barbara Hayward*



Flanked by portraits of former Ascension rectors, from left, Women Rectors program panelists the Revs. Mary Foulke, Carol Gadsden, Brenda Husson, Elizabeth Maxwell, Yejide Peters, and program moderator Margaret Rose. Photo: Jeanne Person.

On March 1, the first day of Women’s History Month, nearly half of the diocese’s female rectors gathered at Manhattan’s Church of the Ascension for a sold-out panel and roundtable discussion organized by the Church Club of New York. With dozens of other women priests, seminarians, Education for Ministry students, Church Club members, and members of the general public in attendance, the program began with celebration of the Eucharist by Ascension’s rector, the Rev. Elizabeth G. Maxwell, who then provided a brief history of her church for the 70-plus attendees.

Both the panelists’ remarks and the roundtable discussions were compelling for their frankness, with conversation circling around two key points: Gender equality has not yet been achieved—sexism persists; and, equally regrettable, racial prejudice also persists. Progress to date was celebrated, but there was an honest acknowledgement that a complex and multifaceted journey still lies ahead. How can we build on the progress that has been made? One way, certainly, is by continuing to have open discussions to support and to encourage one another for the next generation of leadership for the 21st century.

THE RECTORS

Panelists: The Revs. Dr. Mary L. Foulke (St. Mary’s, Manhattanville); Carol D. Gadsden (St. Thomas, Mamaroneck); Brenda G. Husson (St. James’, Manhattan); Elizabeth G. Maxwell, (Ascension, Manhattan); and Yejide S. Peters (All Saints’, Briarcliff Manor).

Roundtable discussion facilitators: The Revs. Susan Copley (Christ Church/San Marcos, Tarrytown); L. Kathleen Liles (Christ & Saint Stephen’s, Manhattan); Erika K. Meyer (Good Shepherd, Manhattan); Alison Quin (Christ the King, Stone Ridge); Megan E. Sanders, (Saint Paul’s, Pleasant Valley); and Claire A. Woodley (St. Mary’s, Mohegan Lake). (The Rev. Katharine Grace Flexer (St. Michael’s, Manhattan) was scheduled to participate; unexpectedly, she was unable to attend.)

“Women Rectors: Leadership for the 21st Century” would never have been possible or as successful as it was without the generosity of time and thoughtful participation of the rectors, for which the Church Club is greatly appreciative.

The author is a member of St. James’ Church in Manhattan and serves as executive director of the Church Club of New York. www.churchclubny.org

Women Clergy and Rectors: Some Background

The worldwide Anglican Communion, of which the Episcopal Church is part, has 44 member churches and provinces with an estimated 85 million people in over 165 countries, making it one of the largest Christian faith communities. While its history dates back centuries, ordaining women only became official, in parts of the Communion in the last half of the 20th century.

The first woman ordained to priesthood in the Anglican Communion was Florence Li Tim-Oi (1907-1992), of the Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong and Macao, in 1944. This was so controversial, that after one year she resigned her license. It was not until almost thirty years later, in 1971, that two other women, Jane Hwang and Joyce Mary Bennett, were ordained, also in Hong Kong. Only then, finally, did that diocese officially recognize Florence Li Tim-Oi as a priest.

In America, in 1974, eleven women deacons were ordained to the priesthood in Philadelphia, PA, becoming “The Philadelphia Eleven.” In 1975, four more were ordained in Washington, DC, becoming “The Washington Four.” In both cases, the ordaining bishops were retired or resigned. Immediately following the 1975 ordinations, the House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church censured all bishops who ordained women.

Also in 1975, though, the Anglican Church of Canada became the first member of the Communion officially to approve the ordination of women. It was in the next year, 1976, that The Episcopal Church (USA), at its General Convention, officially approved women’s ordinations. By the end of the following year, 1977, there were one hundred women priests.

As of February 2016, there were 145 parishes in the Diocese of New York with a clergy person currently in charge, of which 51 were women and 94 men. Of the 145 parishes with a clergy person currently in charge, 62 were led by elected rectors—fewer than half. Of the 62 elected rectors, 38 were men (61%) and 24 were women (39%).

Who Took Part?

The panelists and roundtable discussion facilitators represented a varied range of congregations within the Diocese of New York, from Manhattan, Westchester, Dutchess, and Ulster counties. The number of years each has served as a rector varied, too; from less than a year to almost twenty. Their parishes’ annual operating budgets and numbers of regular parishioners ranged from small (\$140,000 with about 125 parishioners and average Sunday attendance of 55) to large (\$4,400,000 with 1,900 parishioners and average Sunday attendance of between 460 and 800). Most of the rectors supervise mostly male clergy and lay staff; and mostly, they have more male, than female, vestry members. These particular congregations’ demographics are also interesting: predominantly white and economically diverse; although one was a mix of fifty percent white and fifty percent people of color.



Four transitional deacons were ordained on March 5, 2016 in the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine by the Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin, Bishop suffragan. Photo: Alito Orsini.

Four Transitional Deacons Ordained March 5

The Rev. Tami Louise Burks was sponsored for ordination by Christ's Church, Rye. She received her Master of Arts in Religion degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary, and will receive her diploma in Anglican Studies from the General Theological Seminary.

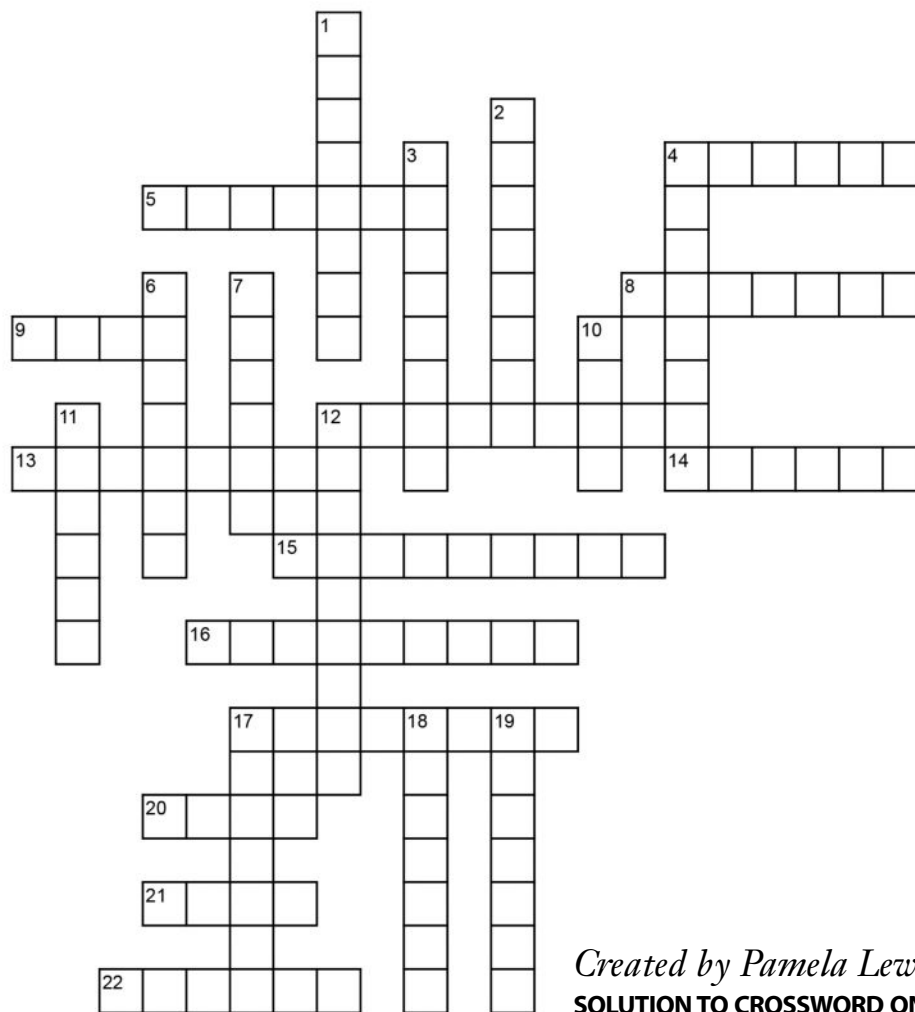
The Rev. Elise Ashley Hanley was sponsored for ordination by St. Bartholomew's Church, Manhattan. She will receive her Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary.

The Rev. Robert Morgan Pennoyer II was sponsored for ordination by the Church of the Heavenly Rest, Manhattan. He will receive his Master of Divinity degree from the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale.

The Rev. Anne Bowie Snodgrass was sponsored for ordination by the Cathedral Congregation of St. Saviour at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, Manhattan. She received her Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary, and will receive her Master of Sacred Theology degree from the General Theological Seminary.

Was Jesus Here?

Cities and Towns Named in the New Testament



Created by Pamela Lewis
SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD ON PAGE 29

Across

- 4 Birthplace of the Apostle Paul
- 5 A village on western shore of Sea of Galilee, visited by Jesus.
- 8 Where Jesus restored sight to Bartimaeus.
- 9 Capital of the Roman Empire, where Paul was tried and executed.
- 12 Village on the Sea of Galilee; native place of Peter, Andrew, and Philip
- 13 Celebrated city on eastern shore of Sicily, where Paul stopped on way to Rome.

Down

- 1 A city of Mysia; site of one of Asia's seven churches (hint: see Rev. 2:12)
- 2 Place of Saul's conversion and where he became Paul.
- 3 Town where Jesus grew up.
- 4 City on western shore of Sea of Galilee, visited by Jesus (hint: almost rhymes with name of Roman emperor)
- 6 Near Jerusalem; on slope of the Mount of Olives; home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.
- 7 Place to which the two disciples were walking when they were joined by Jesus.

Changes on the Bishop's Staff



Hughes

In addition to the arrival this April of Assistant Bishop the Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool (see page 23), two further changes have taken place or been announced since the publication of the last edition of the *Episcopal New Yorker*.

New Chief of Finance & Operations: In mid-January, **Esslie Hughes**, previously Chief Administrative Officer at St. Bartholomew's Church in Manhattan. More at dioceseny.org/hughes-appt.



Parnell

Departing Archdeacon for Mission: **The Ven. William C. Parnell**, Archdeacon for Mission in the diocese since 2010, will be leaving to take up the post of Canon to the Ordinary to the Bishop of Massachusetts, it was announced April 14. More at dioceseny.org/parnell-dep.

WANT TO PLACE AN AD IN THE EPISCOPAL NEW YORKER?

As the official publication of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, *The Episcopal New Yorker* reaches more than 31,000 households representing every congregation in the diocese. Reaching laypersons and clergy, this newspaper informs, inspires, teaches and promotes understanding among the diverse constituencies in the diocese.

Advertisements can be purchased for a single edition or in groups at a discounted rate.

Non-profit display rates (figures are per insertion)

Ad size 1 ad2 ads

Full Page \$1250\$1125/insert

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1/4 Page (5" x 5")\$400\$360/insert

1/8 Page (5" x 2.5") \$195\$175/insert

For-profit display rates (figure are per insertion)

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1/4 Page (5" x 5")\$485\$435/insert

1/8 Page (5" x 2.5") \$300\$270/insert

Sheet and envelope insertions available for an additional fee.

2016 ad deadlines:

February 15 for Spring issue; May 31 for Summer issue; August 31 for Autumn issue;

November 30 for Winter issue.

To submit an ad or to receive more information, contact the editor of *The Episcopal New Yorker* at:

1047 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10025 Tel: 212-316-7520 e-mail:

ads@episcopalnewyorker.com.

BISHOPS' VISITATION SCHEDULE

APRIL 24 (5 EASTER)

Bishop Dietsche: St. Andrew's, Brewster

Bishop Shin:

St. James the Less, Scarsdale

Bishop Sauls: Christ Church, Sparkill

APRIL 30 (SATURDAY)

Bishop Dietsche: St. John's, Monticello

MAY 1 (6 EASTER)

Bishop Dietsche:

Holy Communion, Mahopac

Bishop Shin: St. Andrew's, Hartsdale

Bishop Glasspool:

Heavenly Rest, Manhattan

Bishop Sauls: Grace Church, City Island

MAY 5 (ASCENSION DAY)

Bishop Dietsche: Ascension, Manhattan

MAY 8 (7 EASTER)

Bishop Dietsche:

Ascension, Mount Vernon

Bishop Shin: Grace Church, Nyack

Bishop Glasspool, Messiah, Rhinebeck

MAY 15 (PENTECOST)

Bishop Dietsche: Trinity Wall Street

Bishop Shin: St. Thomas, Manhattan

Bishop Glasspool:

St. James', Manhattan

Bishop Sauls:

Christ the Redeemer, Pelham

MAY 22 (TRINITY SUNDAY)

Bishop Shin: Holy Trinity, Inwood

Bishop Glasspool:

Grace Church, Manhattan

Bishop Sauls:

St. Bartholomew's, Manhattan

MAY 29 (2 PENTECOST)

Bishop Shin: St. David's, Bronx

Bishop Glasspool: St. Joseph's, Bronx

JUNE 5 (3 PENTECOST)

Bishop Shin: Christ Church, Tarrytown

Bishop Glasspool:

Holy Cross/Santa Cruz, Kingston

Bishop Donovan:

Trinity St. Paul's, Tivoli

JUNE 12 (4 PENTECOST)

Bishop Dietsche:

Christ Church, Bronxville

Bishop Shin:

St. Ann's for the Deaf, Manhattan

Bishop Glasspool:

St. Matthew's, Bedford

Bishop Sisk: Christ's Church, Rye

JUNE 19 (5 PENTECOST)

Bishop Dietsche: St. John's, Larchmont (a.m.); St. Peter's, Port Chester (p.m.)

Bishop Shin:

Good Shepherd, Granite Springs

Bishop Glasspool:

St. John's, Pleasantville

JUNE 26 (6 PENTECOST)

Bishop Dietsche: St. Ann's, Bronx

Bishop Shin: Trinity, Garnerville

Bishop Glasspool:

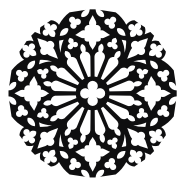
St. Martin's, Manhattan

CLERGY CHANGES

	FROM	TO	DATE
The Rev. Jacob W. Dell	Priest Assistant, St. Bartholomew's, Manhattan	Vicar, Holy Trinity (Inwood), Manhattan	December 1, 2015
The Rev. Dr. Kristina D. Lewis-Theerman	Rector, Trinity Church, Seymour, CT	Priest-in-Charge, St. Luke's, Katonah	December 1, 2015
The Rev. Canon Vincent Abisi Ackaah	Priest-in-Charge, St. Simeon's, Bronx	Supply	December 31, 2015
The Rev. Kristin C. Kopren	Priest-in-Charge, St. John's (Tuckahoe), Yonkers	Supply	December 31, 2015
The Rev. John Warfel	Rector, Grace Church, Middletown	Retirement	December 31, 2015
The Rev. Canon Herbert Draesel, Jr.		Priest-in-Charge, St. Martin's & St. Luke's, Harlem	January 1, 2016
The Rev. Benjamin Nnaji	Supply, St. Edmund's, Bronx	Priest-in-Charge, St. Edmund's, Bronx	January 1, 2016
The Rev. Robert F. Solon Jr.	Supply	Interim Pastor, St. Andrew, Staten Island	January 1, 2016
The Rev. Dustin Trowbridge	Priest-in-Charge, St. George's, Newburgh	Rector, St. George's, Newburgh	January 1, 2016
The Rev. Canon Bruce W. Woodcock	Vicar, St. Matthew's, Paramus, NJ	Interim Pastor, St. Mary's, Tuxedo Park	January 3, 2016
The Rev. Luis Barrios, Ph.D.	Supply	Interim Associate Priest, Grace / La Gracia, White Plains	January 10, 2016
The Rev. Joanne Izzo	Assistant to the Rector, Christ Church & San Marcos, Tarrytown	Supply / Interim, Diocese of New York	February 7, 2016
The Rt. Rev. Andrew St. John	Rector, Transfiguration, Manhattan	Retirement	February 7, 2016
The Rev. Gladys Diaz	Associate Priest, Grace Church / La Gracia, White Plains	Interim Pastor, Holyrood, Manhattan	February 15, 2016
The Rev. Dr. Ronald M. Noone	Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, Australia	Interim Pastor, Transfiguration, Manhattan	February 15, 2016
The Rev. Ruth Anne Garcia	Priest-in-Charge, Grace, City Island	Interim Pastor, Grace, Middletown	March 1, 2016
The Rev. Michelle M. Meech	Missioner, Diocese of Michigan	Rector, St. John's, Kingston	March 13, 2016
The Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool	Bishop Suffragan, Diocese of Los Angeles	Assistant Bishop, Diocese of New York	April 1, 2016
The Rev. Stephen C. Holton	Priest-in-Residence, St. James', North Salem	Interim Pastor, St. James', North Salem	April 1, 2016
The Rev. Victoria R. Sirota	Canon Pastor & Vicar, Cathedral Congr. of St. Saviour, Manhattan	Priest-in-Charge, St. John's (Getty Square), Yonkers	June 1, 2016

Cathedral Calendar

APRIL-JUNE 2016



The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine

1047 Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street
New York, NY 10025 (212) 316-7540

For details of ongoing programs, tours and workshops at
the Cathedral please visit www.stjohndivine.org.

SUNDAY SERVICES

8 a.m. Morning Prayer & Holy Eucharist
9 a.m. Holy Eucharist
11 a.m. Choral Eucharist
4 p.m. Choral Evensong

DAILY SERVICES

Monday–Saturday
8 a.m. Morning Prayer
8:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
(Tuesday & Thursday only)
12:15 p.m. Holy Eucharist
5 p.m. Evening Prayer

TICKETS AND RESERVATIONS

Please check for ticket prices and reservations at www.stjohndivine.org. Tickets for all performances other than free or “suggested contribution” events may be purchased directly from the Cathedral’s website, stjohndivine.org, or by calling (866) 811-4111.

ONGOING PROGRAMS, TOURS, WORKSHOPS

The Great Organ: Midday Monday

Cathedral organists provide a 30-minute break for mind, body and spirit at 1:00 pm with an entertaining and informative demonstration of the Cathedral’s unparalleled Great Organ.

The Great Organ: It’s Sunday

The Great Organ: It’s Sunday invites established and emerging organists from across the U.S. and around the world to take their turn at the Great Organ and present a free 5:15 pm concert.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND VISITOR SERVICES

TOURS AND CHILDREN’S WORKSHOPS

Public Education & Visitor Services offers Cathedral Highlights, Vertical, and Spotlight Tours. All tours meet for registration at the Visitor Center inside the Cathedral entrance, at 112th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. Highlights Tours: \$12 per person, \$10 per student/senior. Vertical Tours: \$20 per person, \$18 per student/senior. Spotlight Tours: \$15 per person, \$12 per student/senior. For more information about Highlights Tours, Vertical Tours, Spotlight Tours and Medieval Birthday Parties visit www.stjohndivine.org.

ADULTS AND CHILDREN IN TRUST (A.C.T.)

To learn about the many nurturing year-round programs for young people offered by A.C.T., please call (212) 316-7530 or visit www.actprograms.org.

CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY CARES (CCC)

Please visit www.stjohndivine.org for more information on CCC programs, which include health screenings at the Nutrition, Health and Clothing Center, the Clothing Closet, Sunday Soup Kitchen, SNAP/Food Stamps Program, and Walking Club.

SELECTED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

APRIL

THE BLESSING OF THE BICYCLES Saturday, April 30, 9:30 AM

A Cathedral tradition, this special blessing ceremony, open to all, celebrates the lives of bike riders and cycling in its many forms. For more information, visit stjohndivine.org or theblessingofthebikes.com.

MAY

THE CATHEDRAL IN CONTEXT: SPOTLIGHT ON MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS Saturday, May 1, 1 pm

The Cathedral spurred the growth of Morningside Heights into one of Manhattan’s most unique neighborhoods. Go back in time on an illustrated walking tour of the neighborhood and its historic architecture and institutions, and learn about its development into the “Acropolis of Manhattan.” The tour begins at the Cathedral and ends at Riverside Church. Led by Cathedral Guide Bill Schneberger. \$25 per person, \$20 per student/senior. All participants must be 12 years of age or older and reservations are recommended. This tour requires extensive outdoor walking and use of stairs.

THE 108TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE LAYMEN’S CLUB Saturday, May 1, 1 pm

Join club members and enjoy a reception and fellowship lunch in Cathedral House, followed by the annual meeting with election of new officers. Special guest speaker: The Rev. Canon Victoria Sirota. Open to non-members for a small fee, which can be applied toward club membership for those who join up at the meeting. For more info and to RSVP, visit thelaymensclub.org.

CREATING AND CONSTRUCTING CHILDREN’S WORKSHOP Saturday, May 7, 10 am

Think like an architect in the world’s largest cathedral! Consider the roles of structure, utility, and beauty as you explore arches, symbols, and stained glass windows. Use the tools of the trade to sketch model elevations, rose windows, and build your own model to take home. Recommended for children ages 4 – 8 years old. \$10 per child, with accompanying adult. Check in at Visitor Center upon arrival.

WITHIN THE WALLS: EXPLORING HIDDEN SPACES Saturday, May 7, 10:30 am and 1 pm

This extended vertical tour features “behind-the-scenes” climbs in both the eastern and western ends of the Cathedral. In the east, descend into the unfinished crypt and then ascend Rafael Guastavino’s beautiful spiral staircase to incredible views high above the altar. The western climb presents an amazing view down the entire length of the Nave. Participants are responsible for carrying all belongings throughout the tour. Photography is welcome, though tripod use during the tour is prohibited. If you have concerns regarding claustrophobia, vertigo, or a medical

condition, please call (212) 932-7347 before purchasing tickets. Must be 12 years of age or older. Flashlight and bottle of water recommended. \$25 per person, \$20 per student/senior.

SECRETS OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE: SPOTLIGHT ON HIDDEN IMAGES Saturday, May 7, 2:30 pm

What are a stripper and the signs of the zodiac doing in our stained glass windows? Find out on this tour that puts the spotlight on surprising images in glass and stone. Led by Senior Cathedral Guide Tom Fedorek.

ENTER THE CONVERSATION: THE DAWNING MOON OF THE MIND Tuesday, May 10, 7 pm

The Very Rev. Dr. James A. Kowalski welcomes Professor Robert Thurman, an authority on world religions and Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, and author Susan Brind Morrow, for an in-depth exploration of Morrow’s radical new translation of one of the world’s earliest and most complex body of writing, the 4,000-year-old Pyramid Texts. For more information and to RSVP, visit stjohndivine.org.

DIOCESAN CONFIRMATIONS Saturday, May 14, 10:30 am

Visit dioceseny.org for information.

GATEWAY TO THE NEW JERUSALEM: SPOTLIGHT ON THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE WEST FRONT Saturday, May 14, 10:30 am

The west front is the architectural equivalent of an overture, an exposition of the themes developed within the main body of the Cathedral. The tour introduces the interplay of modern and medieval motifs in the sculpture of John Angel and Simon Verity. Led by Senior Cathedral Guide Tom Fedorek.

NIGHTWATCH CROSSROADS: CHRISTIAN Friday, May 20, 6 pm

This Christian-oriented evening and overnight program for teens and their chaperones will focus primarily on the wisdom teachings of Jesus. Tickets are \$85.00 per person. Maximum capacity for this program is 100. Ask about our discounts for groups of 15 or more! For more information call (212) 316-7518 or email nightwatch@stjohndivine.org.

MEDIEVAL ARTS CHILDREN’S WORKSHOP Saturday, May 21, 10 am

In this signature workshop, children carve a block of limestone, create medieval illuminated letters, design gargoyles, weave, and more! Recommended for children ages 4 – 8 years old. \$8 per child, with accompanying adult. Check in at Visitor Center upon arrival.

THE 35TH ANNUAL SPIRIT OF THE CITY GALA

Monday, May 23, 6:30 pm

The Cathedral is proud to honor the distinguished award-winning Broadway, film, and television performer Patti LuPone with the 2016 Spirit of the City Award. For information about attending, please contact Priscilla Bayley, Director of Individual Giving, at 212.316.7570 or pbayley@stjohndivine.org or spiritofthecity@stjohndivine.org.

THE CATHEDRAL IN CONTEXT: SPOTLIGHT ON MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS

Sunday, May 29, 1 pm

Please see details for May 1.

MEMORIAL DAY CONCERT

Monday, May 30, 8 pm

The New York Philharmonic presents the first in their series of free summer concerts at the Cathedral. Conducted by Alan Gilbert, the program will include Sibelius’ Symphony No. 7 and Brahms’ Symphony No. 2. Tickets for seating are provided on a first-come, first-served basis on the day of the performance. The audio of the performance will also be broadcast onto the adjacent Pulpit Green, weather permitting.

JUNE

GLOWING GLASS CHILDREN’S WORKSHOP

Saturday, June 4, 10 am

Children and their families explore the shapes, colors, patterns, and stories in the Cathedral’s beautiful stained glass, then design their own windows with shapes and colors, create picture stories, and mix paint to create the colors of their own rose window. Recommended for children ages 4–8 years old. \$10 per child, with accompanying adult.

NIGHTWATCH CROSSROADS: CHRISTIAN Friday, June 10, 6:30 pm

Please see details for May 20.

21ST ANNUAL SUMMER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION

Saturday, June 18, 4:30 am

Join Cathedral Artist in Residence Paul Winter for an epic sunrise concert as musicians and audience will share the experience of the journey from total darkness into the dawn of this longest day of the year. The full glory of sight and sound will come alive with the light of this first sunrise of the summer.

SING FOR HOPE PIANOS

Thursday, June 9 – Sunday, June 19

Sing for Hope Pianos places artist-designed pianos throughout NYC’s parks and communities, an open festival of art for all. The Cathedral’s piano will be placed next to the Peace Fountain for anyone and everyone to play.

TARANTATA: SPIDER DANCE

Wednesday, June 29, 8 pm

Cathedral Artist in Residence Alessandra Belloni returns with her company I Giullari Di Piazza with “Tarantata: Spider Dance,” a sensual and mystical show about the healing power of the Tarantella trance dance. Visit stjohndivine.org for more information.

ADULTS AND CHILDREN IN TRUST SUMMER CAMP: SESSION 1

Monday, June 27 – Friday, July 29

Adults and Children in Trust’s 45th day camp season! Programs are available for toddlers through teenagers. Come and explore the outdoor magic and fun offered under the shadow of the world’s largest gothic Cathedral. For more information, visit actprograms.org.

Turning with Jesus

By the Rev. Victor Lee Austin

Saint Paul, of course, was not there when Jesus told his disciples that he was sending them out as *sheep in the midst of wolves*, that they would be dragged before governors on his account and would have to testify about him before people who would have power to destroy them. This state of affairs exists because of Jesus: his arrival amongst us was the arrival of the true king of the universe, who inevitably poses a threat to all standing governments. Herod understood this. When the Wise Men of the East came to him looking for the king who had been recently born, Herod knew the threat at once, and took the necessary bloody action. He knew what he was up against.

Saint Paul was not there, because God gave him the role of living through both sides of the story. At first, as a zealous religious man, he sought out the followers of Jesus to persecute them. “When they were put to death I cast my vote against them,” he said, later, in his testimony in court—the authority to punish by death being, of course, an extension of the authority of the earthly powers. But one day he met the risen Christ, who appeared to him as a blinding light all around, and said “why do you persecute me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks (the goads).” That encounter turned Paul around. Instead of being a persecutor of the followers of Jesus, Paul began energetically seeking to make *more* followers of Jesus. He stopped kicking against the goads, and what Jesus told his disciples before he died came true for him a few decades later: He was dragged before the rulers, and had to give testimony about Jesus, the one who is the true ruler of all.

We say that Saint Paul underwent “conversion”—a word that contains within it the word “verse.” A verse of a psalm is the archetypal verse: It has, right in its middle, a point of inflection, where it turns from its first part to its second. A verse, that is to say, is a turn.

“Conversion,” then, is “to turn” with the prefix “con-,” meaning “with”—that is, to turn with someone, rather than continuing in a different or opposing direction. Saint Paul heard Jesus tell him it hurt for him to kick against the goads. He was running against Jesus; then, in his conversion, he *turned* to run *with* Jesus.

I have been involved in ecumenical activities for most of my ordained life. In this time I’ve learned that the ecumenical movement is about our integrity



The Conversion on the Way to Damascus—Caravaggio (c. 1601), Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome

as witnesses to Jesus. *Prima facie*, it is an argument against Christianity that the churches are divided, and it is an argument against our integrity if we are indifferent to those divisions.

Of course, from the earliest times, Christians have disagreed with each other about this or that point of theology, or about this or that implication of the gospel. Sometimes, indeed, those disagreements were seen as so grave that a sundering of fellowship was necessary.

But while we may acknowledge these disagreements as unfortunate facts, we have always felt uneasiness about any state of division, and prayed that divisions be overcome. If, indeed, we were rather at ease with the current state of the churches in the world, then any reasonable observer would be justified to wonder about how strongly we are committed to Christ.

So let us speak about other Christians with charity, and when describing how their views differ from ours, do so in terms that are fair and honest. We should not be saying (for instance) that the pope tells Roman Catholics what to think, or that liberal Protestants don’t care about the Bible, or that Pentecostals have no appreciation of church history, or that evangelicals don’t care about the actual lives of the poor. These are not ways that our brothers

and sisters would speak of themselves. And they are ways of speaking that entrench the idea that the important divisions are within the Christian family.

But they are not the most important divisions, for the most important, the most tragic, the most consequential division in the human race is the division between those who would persecute Jesus and those who would follow him.

Remembering that “conversion” means “turning with,” let us not say of someone who has left one church to join another that she has “converted”; let us not speak, for instance, of “Anglican converts” from some other church. It is fine, it seems to me, in this world as it is, for some people from time to time to come into the Episcopal Church from another church. I did it myself, and I’m glad I did! But I was not, in doing that, a convert. Let us use the word “conversion” most properly, of someone who ceases to kick against the goads and who turns to be with Jesus. Thank God Saint Paul was converted! And may we all be converted!

The author is theologian-in-residence at St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.