

The Keystone December 2016

Advent Message from the Desk of the Pastor

In Advent over the last few years I have found myself going back again and again to a little work by Johannes Tauler; Sermon 1 to be exact. It is a homily on the Triple Birth of Christ we celebrate at Christmas.

The three births are:

the birth of the Word in Eternity before time and all worlds,
the birth of the Son to the Blessed Virgin Mary
the birth of Christ in the ground of every heart that is open and
illuminated by God's loving Spirit.

There is this little section where Tauler is giving some helpful pointers in how to open the heart and let the light of Christ burn away the haze of ignorance, distraction and selfishness. His biggest pointer is thus; there is no better service to the Word, than by interior silence and listening.

Silence and listening, or watching and waiting in the language of the Bible, is the very theme of Advent. For many of us we will need to be intentional about our observance of Advent, especially in the face of the overwhelming pressure of secular Christmas, and the great commercializing of the holiday.

Silence and listening sometimes comes naturally; though for most of us, it requires practice. Tauler encourages a depth of silence and listening that seems quite impossible to an unpracticed person... but it becomes easy to a practiced person, a habit that creates skill.

So let us nourish this deep listening to God by spending some time each day in silent prayer, praying the scriptures, chanting the offices, or walking with the ear of our heart open to the Divine source of all that is. Let us enter into the practice of watching and listening in all we do, so that we might come to know the great birth of Christ in the ground of the heart, as we celebrate his birth in history and before time.

Fr. Justin+

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT SHOP

The Christmas Gift Shop is looking for "Goodies" and baked goods, so when you are baking and making goodies, please make extra for the gift shop. If you have items you would like to donate for the gift shop, please bring them in on Friday, December 9, 2016. If you would like to help on the day of the tea, please contact Lisa Eash at [802-440-6161](tel:802-440-6161) or leash59@mail.com

THE CHRISTMAS TEA

Our annual Christmas Tea is coming up soon. Saturday, December 10 from 3 to 5:30 pm is the day. Come join us for this festive occasion and bring your friends. It's a great way to start the Christmas season. Tickets are \$7.50 each. Children age 6 to 10 are \$4.00. Under 5 years of age are admitted free. Tickets are available from these co-chairs of the tea: Thayer Jolivet 442-9421, Collins Sennett 442-5278, Carole Stair 578-1517 and Emily Kennedy 442-5300. Tickets will be available at the door. Seating will be on a first-come first-serve basis.

CALLING ALL ELVES

In preparation of our 76th annual Christmas Tea, your presence is requested on Thursday, December 8th at

5:30 for our St. Nicholas pot luck supper. This is the evening, each year, when we help "Deck the Hall with Boughs of Holly" (in this case the trees, wreaths and bows). We will be starting at 5:30 so that our choir members will be able to help with the trees before their practice. Our potluck supper will happen at six o'clock. Afterwards we will work to fold napkins, put the bows on wreaths etc. Please note that the more wreaths that you purchase ahead of time, the more beautiful greenery we will be able to display in our hall. In the past St Nicholas has stopped by for a greeting to the children so who knows what this year will bring?

If you have wire cutters, or thin wire please bring them along with a potluck dish to share. Not only is this a time to greet our church family for some social exchanges but as we all know "many hands make labor light". Turning our parish hall into an extraordinary Christmas setting, in part, is up to all of us!

Looking forward to seeing you all on December 8th.

GREEN GUILD

I would like to say a heartfelt "thank you" to all of you who came to help us with some groundwork on October 21st. The weather prediction was for rain but, instead, we were all greeted with sunshine. After coming together for a Garden Prayer, Scott Trafton and Bill Hardy took charge of a couple of the veggie beds on the side of the church, putting fertilizer down, turning the soil over and putting a coating of leaves on top. In the spring, we are hoping to have another work party for the purpose of replacing the boards on those beds to ready them for planting. While that was going on, Mary McGuinness and Liz Luca were cutting down overgrown weeds, cutting the rhubarb back and weeding some of the herb beds that are already in existence in that area. Mary told us that there is a compost area behind the fence that, hopefully, we can restore to use this next year. Meanwhile, in front of St. Peters; Betty Phillips, Doreen Hurley, Emily Kennedy, and Julie Blake had arrived with gardening tools in hand ready to prepare the soil and start putting bulbs in the ground. Hopefully the squirrels were not watching!!!! Soon after everyone left, the heavens opened up, watering and setting our bulbs for their winter rest.

We will be meeting again, after the holidays to discuss a ground cover and what we should plant in our two beds (hopefully one will be used by our Sunday School children). Perhaps we will have some brainstorming on what "low maintenance" flowers we might want to adorn the church after the spring flowers and we will cut back lilies etc. I am hoping that many more of you will join us at that time! Again thank you for helping to make this Guild a reality!

GIVE and WANT BOARD

On the bulletin board you will find a poster labeled "GIVE and WANT". We frequently give items to charity stores and the needy, so why not share with our friends? List the items that you want to dispose of and any items you would like to have. Check the board and if you can fill a need simply call the giver or receiver and arrange the transfer. It's easy, and keeps our "junque" out of the landfill. Any questions: ask Tabbie Aldrich 681-7744

OUR FAVORITE ADVENT "NON-HYMN" (third in a series)

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (Veni Emmanuel) - a Medieval Latin hymn customarily sung on the First Sunday in Advent. Medieval – wrong! Latin – partially wrong! Hymn – wrong! The First Sunday in Advent – most definitely wrong! What, then, is the truth concerning this beloved piece of our preparations for the birth of the Savior?

Medieval – while text and music indeed have their origins in the Middle Ages, the "hymn" as we know and sing it is a product of the mid-19th century. In 1854, Thomas Helmore fashioned a tune by combining fragments of various Gregorian chants, but the result clearly belongs to our current major-minor tonal system rather than the old Gregorian modes.

Latin – here again, the text as we know it dates from the mid-19th century, and is an English paraphrase by the noted translator John Mason Neale of the ancient Latin antiphons (more on them later). Neale's paraphrase was subsequently "back-translated" into Latin, and this "re-translation" has achieved a place of its own.

Hymn – while we currently sing all seven stanzas one after another in hymn fashion, the original antiphons were sung one at a time on successive days.

The First Sunday in Advent – the biggest misconception of all. I have alluded to the "antiphons" in a couple of places. They are the antiphons to the Magnificat at Evening Prayer from December 17 to 23, and salute the coming Savior under his various Scriptural titles: Sapientia (Wisdom), Adonai (Lord), Radix Jesse (Root of Jesse), Clavis David (Key of David), Oriens (Dayspring), Rex gentium (King of the Nations), and Emmanuel. This usage is outlined and suggested in our present Hymnal (hymn 56). An interesting side note – if you take the first letters of the Latin titles in reverse order, they spell the words ERO CRAS – tomorrow I will come.

So rather than a jump-on-the-bandwagon kickoff to Advent, these seven antiphons (hymn-verses) are a glorious conclusion, and we will sing them on the Fourth Sunday (Dec. 18).

A blessed and calmly joyful Advent season to you all.

John

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

The Christmas pageant will be a narration of the gospel on Christmas Eve. Any kids young or old (adults too) please join us. Call Mary Gerisch to be a part of this fun and blessed Christmas event 802-379-6311

CONCERT

The St. Petersburg Men's Ensemble will be singing a program of Russian Sacred Music and Russian Folksongs on Tuesday Dec 20 at 7pm in the Church. This is always an excellent program. Bring your friends to enjoy what has become a holiday tradition at St. Peters.