

SOUNDS

of

Volume 40 No. 09

February 28, 2010

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O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from thy ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of thy Word, Jesus Christ thy Son; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one

FROM THE RECTOR

Once upon a time, an astute worshipper asked me if Gary and I had set out to depress people deliberately. The question was prompted by the selection of that day's hymns, the four appointed for the First Sunday in Lent. Deliberate depression is not one of our objectives, so we wondered what lay behind the question. To our surprise, we realized that all four hymns were in a minor key, an inadvertent quartet, and to the ear of this worshipper, the effect was depressing.

Whether minor keys induce depression is for consideration by others, but without doubt Lent is a more somber season than any other time for the Christian. It is meant to be that way, but somber does not mean depressing. Lent calls us to important work, as we read in the special liturgy for Ash Wednesday: The observance of a holy Lent includes "self-examination and repentance...prayer, fasting, and self-denial...reading and meditating on God's holy Word." At times, the Church has given greater emphasis to "giving up" something for Lent, but often that degenerates into the trivial, such as not eating chocolate or ice cream. It can also lead us into pharisaical thinking: I knew a man who "gave up" pepperoni on his pizza, only to replace them with anchovies. Somehow I do not think that is what constitutes a proper Lenten discipline. In any case, the pendulum is now on the other side of the arc, with the emphasis on taking on some new discipline – something we probably should be doing all year 'round: Repentance and meditating on God's holy Word come to mind, but they should not be confined only to forty days. At least Lent can give us the impetus to undertake new, healthful disciplines, and so we welcome the encouragement Lent provides, albeit even in a minor key.

Subtle alterations in our worship remind us Lent is in full sway. An obvious one is the avoidance of the wonderful word "alleluia" for the

forty days of the season. The medieval church celebrated this aspect of Lenten discipline in the text of Hymn 122 which we customarily use as the recessional hymn on the last Sunday of Epiphany. This 11th century text celebrates the word (and joy) of "alleluia", and marks the transition into Lent in the line, "Alleluia in our singing, let us for a time give o'er, as our Saviour in his fasting pleasures of the world forbore." So, no alleluias will grace our worship until the sun of resurrection rises. An elaborate processional was sometimes carried out in which the word "alleluia" was literally buried in a small coffin-like box outside the walls of the church, only to appear at Easter. Likewise, the joyful text *Gloria in excelsis* is not used (cf., p406 of the Prayer Book).

Some churches have so-called Lenten array to use on the altar. These unbleached linen hangings stand in contrast to the colorful arrays used to distinguish other seasons and occasions. The purple hangings we employ here put us in mind that during Lent we come nearer the Cross. Purple is a royal color, derived from red and blue. Its use during Lent calls to mind the red of Christ's blood and the blue of the mystery of the Cross. Many churches lay aside the beauty of floral decorations in favor of simple greenery. Consider the splendid symbolism enjoyed here as leafless branches stay in place as their buds grow naturally as we wait for them to blossom at the Lamb's high feast.

By a variety of means both local and catholic, the Church observes "a holy Lent." One way or another, it affords the faithful a time to focus on the things of importance, and to put away the distractions which often divert us. But all of these things together sound the theme of the loving-kindness of God, whose merciful goodness endures for ever on those who fear him, and whose righteousness abides on children's children (Psalm 103).

VESPERS

This year's *Music at Eventide* Lenten liturgy will sharpen our focus on Lent through the words and music of enlightened English writers from the 16th to the 20th centuries. These will be offered in the context of the ancient monastic service of Vespers, given as "An Order of Worship for the Evening" in our present Book of Common Prayer.

It takes place on Sunday evening, **March 7th at 5:30 pm** in the parish church. We will include the chanting of *The Great Litany*, the first of its kind in English as compiled by Thomas Cranmer in 1544. It strikes a relevant and powerful note nearly five centuries on and is worthy of our attention and use to this day, especially in this penitential season.

In addition, the Choir will sing the following:

Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake
attr. John Hilton, the elder (c.1560-1608)

Call to remembrance
Richard Farrant (d.1581)

PSALM 46 *Deus noster refugium*
Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

Magnificat
Philip Moore (b.1943)

Blessed is he that considereth
Michael Wise (1648-1687)

My soul, there is a country
Sir Hubert H. Parry (1848-1918)

The organ voluntaries will be by Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876), the eminent grandson of Charles Wesley.

A reception follows in St Francis Hall (no reservations necessary). Please join us for this annual event in our parish life together.

YOUNG ADULTS' FORUM

You are warmly welcome to the second week of the St. Francis Young Adult Forum where folks in their 20's and early 30's connect, discuss matters of faith relevant to our lives, and enjoy fellowship with our peers. All young adults are welcome. It will begin following the 9 am service in the undercroft.

LOAVES & FISHES

On Saturday, January 30, a fabulous group of volunteers assembled in the St. Francis kitchen to prepare the delicious casserole. Please thank Missy Beall, Grace Rood, Kathy Locke, Fifi Northrop, Roy Day, Barbara Moore, Rosemary MacDonald, Lynn Astrich, Mary Sexton, and Jeff Young. What a great group of volunteers!

Many thanks also to Joan Maroulis and Fred Johnsen, who braved the elements to transport the lunch and serve at St. Stephens. The snowy weather brought many diners to St. Stephens. We were met with a great group of volunteers from DC Cares.

Loaves and Fishes, a food service program based out of St. Stephens and the Incarnation Church in the Mt. Pleasant community of Washington, DC, has been serving a hot meal to some 300 people a day since 1968. Most Washington area food programs serve meals only on weekdays so Loaves and Fishes fills the gap by serving meals on Saturdays, Sundays and federal holidays.

You are warmly invited to join in volunteering with Loaves and Fishes on these upcoming dates: May 29, 30; August 28, 29; and October 30, 31. If you are interested in volunteering on the federal holidays, please contact Laurel Bahar at 301-318-4260 or laurelbahar@gmail.com

COMING UP AT SAINT FRANCIS CHURCH

For more information, please visit our website at www.stfrancispotomac.org

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28

8:00am Holy Eucharist
9:00am Holy Eucharist
Sunday School, Young Adult Forum and
Adult Education Hour
11:15 am Morning Prayer

TUESDAY, MARCH 2

5:30 pm St. Nicholas Training Choir
5:30 pm St. Clare Girl Choir
7:00 pm Centering Prayer—Undercroft

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3

10:00 am Holy Eucharist
11:00 am Rector's Bible Study
5:30 pm Jr. High Bible Study

THURSDAY, MARCH 4

5:00 pm *Sounds* Deadline for 3/14/10
5:30 pm Sr. High Bible Study
7:30 pm St Francis Choir

FRIDAY, MARCH 5

7:00 am Men's Bible Study

SUNDAY, MARCH 7

8:00 am Holy Eucharist
9:00 am Holy Eucharist
Sunday School and Adult Education Hour
11:15 am Holy Eucharist
5:30 Lenten Vespers
Reception to follow in the Library



The Scripture appointed for the Second Sunday in Lent
Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18, Psalm 27. Philippians 3:17-4:1, Luke 13:31-35

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