

SOUNDS

of

Volume 39 No. 45

December 6, 2009

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Music at Eventide

5:30 Advent Festival of Lessons and Music

Sunday, 6 December 2009

The Combined Choirs of Potomac Parish



Seasonal Readings, Hymns and Choral Music

Reception Following in Saint Francis Hall

Childcare Provided

LISTEN UP!

Last issue I considered the first of two recent comments that have nettled me. The first, as you may recall, pegged me as “truly old-fashioned,” to which I readily laid claim if, among other things, it means embracing the best of our inheritance, using one’s brain, and observing Sunday as the first day of the week on which Christians attend church!

So now.... *The second comment:*

Unfortunately, this one I’ve heard in several places since I was young. But I did not expect to hear it from within our own dedicated ranks at St Francis Church. It was in reaction to an anthem that briefly flew away. A contributing party was overheard to say, “Oh well, it’s *just a church choir.*”

Pregnant pause. Widening of eyes.

Flaring of nostrils. Long, slow breath in.

Voice in head: “Thou shalt do no murder!”

Breathe out slowly. Walk away quietly.

Suffice it to say, I was aghast and perturbed. I’d like to think it was but a careless utterance propelled by guilt. Otherwise, by extension, that implies it’s *just church* and that all we do to bring our best before God is of little or no consequence whether things go well or not. Now that’s *just not acceptable!*

In our predominately secular and popular contemporary culture where so much is a crafty manipulated sound bite and the slouching posture of image outweighs any substance, why should we be surprised at such a comment? We are enthralled and so inundated by the quick-and-easy perfection of modern production that we often are deflated by our own limitations, deaf to substance, and become dismissive of what truly matters.

Rest assured, I don’t believe most of us are

JOY AND CONCERN

Please join us in prayer for John Willey who died November 24th.

naïve enough to think everything’s going to go perfectly all the time. It rarely does in “real life,” if ever! We know that. Even the most august of places have their little foibles. On my most recent visit to England a few years back, I attended a great number of splendid cathedral services in which a chorister may have made an early entrance or the organist slipped a note or the lector stumbled on a passage or the Choirmaster’s cotta was a bit mussed, all in spite of meticulous preparations. So what? The overall effort was still one of proper intention filled with great beauty offered on behalf of all of us who had gathered for those services. I came away consistently moved and inspired despite the unintended minor glitches. This was not a state achieved by sentimental means but by disciplined and centuries-old tried and true ritual well executed – perhaps more evidence of my truly old-fashioned nature. Furthermore, while music played a prominent role in those liturgies – indeed, it drew many of us more readily to them – that was not what was being served. God was being served. And it was only by the grace of God that we were privileged to receive “glimpses of [his] beauty” through that venerable art adorning those articulated moments.

Sadly, I’m afraid that’s the essence of what was lost on this poor glib soul. While we do not possess a cathedral’s soaring acoustic, magnificent organ, or rigorous rehearsal schedule, we do attempt every time we gather for worship, our very *raison d’être*, to “get it right.” My hope is we will all join in that effort and fulfill better our high calling. Nothing else is as important; it’s *just that simple!*

Stay tuned.... Gary Davison, O-C

NOTICE

We ask two acts of kindness in the parish family. The first is to return pledge cards for 2010 after you have indicated a prayerful response of gratitude. The second is that you make certain your 2009 pledge is current and will be completed by year's end. Our ability to operate with fiscal responsibility depends on your kindness.

- WMS

UPCOMING EVENTS

**12/9— ST NICOLAS STORYTIME & POTTERY PAINTING
WEDNESDAY, 4:30— 6PM ST. FRANCIS HALL**

St. Nicolas will come and tell the children about himself. Then they can paint pottery pieces to give as Christmas gifts. There is no charge to come see St. Nicolas, but pottery will be charged per piece. (You can pick it up at the church after it has been fired.)

RSVP required by December 5th so there will be enough pottery and paint for all. Please contact 301-365-2055 or ctetrault@stfrancispotomac.org.

In the spirit of St. Nicolas, please bring non-perishable food for a food drive.

**12/13—HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS OPEN HOUSE
SUNDAY AFTERNOON FROM 3PM TO 6 PM**

Trina and Gary Bachman will host this event at their home. There will be two "exchanges" - one for your favorite family recipes and the other for Homemade Cookies. Just bring your cookies or recipes if you'd like to swap.

Wine and appetizers will be served and a suggested donation of \$5 per person would be greatly appreciated.

LOAVES AND FISHES

In 1968 St. Stephen's started the Loaves and Fishes hot meal program to serve the needs of the Mt. Pleasant community. 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. The program is supported by area churches and volunteer organizations from around the metropolitan DC area.

St. Francis is committed to prepare and serve food in the months with a fifth Sunday. The 2010 dates are: January 30, 31; May 29, 30; August 28, 29; and October 30, 31.

Additionally, Loaves and Fishes is interested in volunteers who can commit to the Monday federal holidays for food preparation and service on site. These dates are: Martin Luther King Day, January 18; Washington's Birthday, February 15; Memorial Day, May 31; Independence Day, Monday July 5; Labor Day, September 6; and Columbus Day, October 11. Please contact Laurel Bahar at 301-299-5067 or laurelbahar@gmail.com if you are interested in helping.

Thank you to the November volunteers, Roy Day, Lynne Astrich, Mary Sexton, Nancy Hoke, Chris LeClair, and Stefan Day who prepared the special Loaves and Fishes casseroles on Saturday, November 28. Thank you also to the other group of volunteers who met at St. Francis



Loaves
and Fishes

to transport the food and supplies to St. Stephen's for service. They are Jane Lincoln, Alan Van Egmond, Marjorie Van Egmond, George Stosur, and Carol Thedford,

FROM THE RECTOR

Advent Message by the Rt. Rev. Mark J. Lawrence, Bishop of South Carolina

It's a lot like bringing the boxes of Christmas decorations out of the attic or wherever you have them stored. Like pulling the Christmas sweaters from the wardrobe closet—that to my mind is the way the Church, each Advent, drags him out of the liturgical mothballs. His given name is John bar Zechariah. You know him as John the Baptist. He is completely out of step with what I have dubbed the Shopmas season. That is a word I coined some years ago to describe the season that begins the day after Thanksgiving and lasts until December 31. It is celebrated with lights, glitter, cards, parties, presents, and most of all shopping accompanied by holiday music. It is enchanting how puissant such songs as "Winter Wonderland" or "White Christmas" can be for the shopkeeper's business. Some preachers complain about this festive celebration. I kind of like it.

My problem is with the lectionary. Just when I'm in the mood for the nostalgia of Shopmas the Church drags John the Baptizer out of the pages of the Bible and plops him smack dab in the middle of my life and I have to deal with him again. And not just for one Sunday but for two! I can see him there in the barren desert that borders the Jordan River near where it flows into the Dead Sea. The lowest place on earth and the last place most of us want to be during Shopmas. He's out there preaching. He's dressed austere in skins and camel's hair; living on a sparse diet of locust and wild honey. His voice raging like a furnace; his message burning like a wild fire in the chaparral, uncontained and uncontainable—"Repent," he cries, "repent."

There are those people, few and far between, who come into our lives with an austerity, even a harshness that causes us to grow. They are tough on us, and yet for some reason do not offend us. Or if they do, we get over it and go on. Maybe it's a teacher, a coach, or even a boss who gets the best out of us. They push us to be-

come more than we thought we were able to be. John the Baptist is like that. This is one of the reasons the Church drags him out each Advent. He can cry, "Repent—change your life, you're out of control and making a mess of things in your life and in the lives of others," and instead of getting all in a huff, as if your husband, wife or best friend had just told you about some irritating quirk in your personality, you say, "Yeah, I've been thinking about that, too."

John the Baptist's message each Advent, right in the middle of the Shopmas season, is "Reconsider your lifestyle." He prompts us to ask really important questions: Is the way you're living truly satisfying? Does it have meaning and purpose? And most importantly, is it pleasing to God? If not, it is time to reconsider—to repent, to turn in a Godward direction. Then we are enabled to recognize the One to whom John points—Jesus, the Lamb of God. He takes away the sin of the world; He brings forgiveness for the past and power to change our lives today for a more grace-filled tomorrow. John's ministry helps us get ready: to prepare a way for the Lord: to make straight in the desert of life's barrenness a highway for God. You can do this now, wherever you are reading this. You can quiet your heart and talk to Christ. Tell him you are willing to turn from whatever it is that keeps you from experiencing the fullness of his life and presence. The words of Werefried van Straaten are still true, "Jesus comes back into the world when we offer him a dwelling place in our hearts." Shopmas (which begins this Friday, right after Thanksgiving) may be for festivities, but Advent is, among other things, for preparing for that feast of God's love, which is Christmas, when the Prince of Peace opens the doors of many hearts. May one of them be yours, even if it is more like a stable than a palace and needs more than a little straightening up.

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ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FOOD BOX COLLECTION

An Advent outreach tradition at St. Francis, the Christmas Food Box collection supplies all the fixings for a holiday meal to local families or individuals in need. The Parish Outreach Committee partners with Interfaith Works' *Holiday Giving Project*, which coordinates distribution to referred Montgomery County recipients.

SHOPPING LIST BASICS:

5 lbs.	Potatoes	2	15 oz.	Cans green beans or peas
1 lb.	Carrots	2	15 oz.	Cans cranberry sauce
2 lbs.	Onions	1	64 oz.	Non-refrigerated juice
1 ea.	1 lb. bag or box of stuffing	3	lbs.	Apples or oranges
2 ea.	Cans or envelopes gravy mix	2	15 oz.	Cans corn
6 ea.	Sweet potatoes or 1 large can yams	1	ea.	Pie: pumpkin, apple, etc.
1 dz.	Dinner rolls or biscuit/cornbread mix			(check the Sell By dates)

AND

1 \$20 gift card to Giant or Safeway for a turkey, ham or roast (taped visibly inside the box or its lid)

WELCOME ADDITIONS INCLUDE:

- Staples like pasta, rice, peanut butter, tuna, cereal, soup, nuts, snacks
- Disposable roasting or baking pans, pot holders
- Holiday tablecloth or napkins, candles, candies or cookies, brownie or other dessert mix, stocking stuffers

NOTES:

- Be sure the box has a sturdy **lid**. Do not tape it shut, since the Outreach Committee may have extras to add.
- A new laundry basket or storage bin may usefully replace a box.
- **Involve your children: decorate** your box with wrapping paper or last year's Christmas cards, and add an item or two nightly after lighting the Advent wreath. Include a Christmas card or ornament.

THE DROP-OFF TIMES ARE NOT CONFIRMED, BUT WE ANTICIPATE IT WILL BE IN THE UNDERCROFT ON:

Friday, December 18, 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 19, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

If shopping is difficult for you, send \$50 in Giant or Safeway gift cards to the church office in \$10 or \$20 increments, noting "Christmas Food Boxes" on the envelope. Please do not send a check payable to St. Francis. GIFT CARDS ONLY.

Questions? Contact Susan Dolan (301-279-9129, sldolan@comcast.net) or Andy Jordan (301-299-3162, marionaj@aol.com) or the office at 301-365-2055.

Thanks and warm wishes for a blessed Advent, the Parish Outreach Committee.

COMING UP AT ST FRANCIS

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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

8:00am Holy Eucharist
9:00am Holy Eucharist
Adult Education Hour
11:15 am Holy Eucharist
5:30 Advent Festival of Lessons and Music
Reception follows in St. Francis Hall

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

10:30 am Grounds Committee - Workroom
5:30 pm St. Nicholas Training & St. Clare Choirs
7:00 pm Centering Prayer—Undercroft
7:30 pm Communications Committee

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9

10:00 am Holy Eucharist
11:00 am Rector's Bible Study
4:30—6 pm - St Nicolas Story time
& Pottery Painting
5:30 pm Jr. High Bible Study

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10

8:30 am Parish Life Committee
5:00 pm *Sounds* Deadline for 12/20
5:30 pm Sr. High Bible Study
7:30 pm St. Francis Choir

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11

7:00 am Men's Bible Study

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

8:00 am Holy Eucharist
9:00 am Holy Eucharist
Adult Education Hour
11:15 am Morning Prayer
3—6 pm *Home for the Holidays* Open House
at the home of Trina & Gary Bachman



The Scripture appointed for the Second Sunday of Advent:

Baruch 5:1-9 or Malachi 3:1-4, Canticle 4 or 16, Philippians 1:3-11, Luke 3:1-6

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