E-Portion – March 2008

From the Rector

We are an Easter people. We sometimes forget that fact and we don't always live out of that reality. But since Christ is raised from the dead, death is defeated and we are freed to "get busy living." That is good news that we are called to share with the world. This Holy Week and Easter will be my eleventh as your rector of St. Francis Church, which is another way of saying that we have officially embarked on our eleventh year together as God's people at the corner of Highland Street and Phillips Road. As I hope you all know by now we'll take some time to celebrate these past ten years on Saturday, March 29 at the 5 o'clock service.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to step back this spring and reflect not only on the past decade at St. Francis, but my past two decades as an ordained person. Among other things I'll do some reading. Usually I share my summer reading list in this column but since I will be away then I thought I'd share my sabbatical reading list with you now. I am certain that I'll read some poetry and fiction that are not listed below, but I'm not yet sure what I'll read in those areas. For "work" (even in a time of rest!), I want to read some books that explore the challenges the Church faces in our time and place. Toward that end I look forward to reading the following:

- *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith*, by Diana Butler Bass, Harper Collins, 2006.
- *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope*, by Brian D. McLaren, Thomas Nelson, 2007.
- *In it for the Long Haul: Building Effective Long-Term Pastorates*, by Glenn E. Ludwig, Alban Books, 2002.
- *Re-Thinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective*, by Craig A. Carter, Brazos Press, 2006.
- *Head and Heart: American Christianities*, by Garry Wills, Penguin Press, 2007.
- *Pillars of Flame: Power, Priesthood, and Spiritual Maturity*, by Maggie Ross, Seabury Books, 1988/2007.
- *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*, by Robert Wuthnow, Princeton University Press, 2007.

I also want to explore some interfaith connections, especially with Islam. One of the more formalized events I'll attend during my time away from all of you will be a conference at Georgetown University for imams and Christian clergy on Christian-Muslim dialogue. I also want to do some reading in Buddhism as well. And so I plan to read:

- *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*, by Thich Nhat Hanh, Beacon Press, 1975.
- *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*, by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Harper Collins, 2002.
- T*he Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, Edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Cambridge University Press, 2006
- *The Voice, The Word, The Books: The Sacred Scripture of the Jews, Christians and Muslims*, by F. E. Peters, Princeton University Press, 2007.

Please know that in the midst of all this reading I will be praying for all of you, and I ask for your prayers during this time as well. The wardens can be reached for property, financial or management concerns and Jill Williams will be covering liturgical and pastoral matters. I trust that all shall be well.

Faithfully,
Rich

Triduum Sacram:

(from the Latin, 'the sacred three days.')

The three concluding days of Holy Week, commemorating the Last Supper, Passion, and Death of Christ, i.e., Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday (from *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*).

As we continue to move through the season of Lent, these "three holy days" will soon enfold us yet again. You are invited to fully participate in these mysteries of the Church's life in Christ—that the fifty days of Easter might lead you to new life and new possibilities for growth and renewal.

Really, the three days are one liturgical drama told in three acts. We gather with Jesus in the Upper Room to recall the last night of his earthly ministry. We call that celebration "Maundy Thursday" because as John tells the story a new commandment (*maundatum novum*) is given to the disciples to love one another. We gather both ecumenically and to follow the prayer book's "Good Friday Liturgy" as the story culminates with the death of Jesus. And we enter into a period of "Saturday waiting" that culminates in the first Eucharist of Easter and the Easter Vigil as we sing our alleluias again.

Lent Continues

- **Refreshment Sunday Breakfast** ~ March 2nd at 9:00 a.m. Join us for this mid-Lent breakfast. Sign up in the narthex.
- **Lenten Soup Suppers** ~ Wednesday, March 5th & 12th 6:00 p.m. Please sign up in the narthex. If you would be willing to provide soup for one of the evenings please sign up for that as well.
- **Holy Eucharist ~** Every Wednesday in Lent at 7:00 p.m.
- **Lenten Quiet Day** ~ Saturday, March 8th from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at St. Clare House. Meditations will be led by the Rector followed by lunch. Please sign up in the narthex.
- **Fridays in Lent** ~ 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. *The Way of the Cross* (Stations) The church will be open for personal prayers on Fridays in Lent. Stop in and, using a booklet, pray the *Way of the Cross*.

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday Weekend ~ March 15/16
5:00 p.m. Saturday and 8:00 & 10:00 a.m. Sunday
Liturgy of the Palms and Holy Eucharist

Maundy Thursday ~ March 20th
5:30 p.m. ~ Holy Eucharist and Foot washing ☺
6:15 p.m. ~ Potluck Supper
7:30 p.m. ~ Holy Eucharist, Foot washing, Stripping the Altar♫
(followed by Gethsemane Watch in the church)

Good Friday ~ March 21st 8:00 a.m. ~ Morning Prayer (Gethsemane Watch concludes)
12:00 - 3:00 p.m. ~ Ecumenical Service begins at Gazebo
12:30 p.m. ~ First Congregational Church
1:30 p.m. ~ First Baptist Church
2:30 p.m. ~ St. Francis Episcopal Church
5:00 p.m. ~ Stations of the Cross
7:30 p.m. ~ Good Friday Liturgy♫

Holy Saturday/Easter Vigil ~ March 22
7:30 p.m. ~ The Great Vigil of Easter♫

Easter Sunday ~ March 23 (two identical services with choir)
8:00 a.m. ~ Festival Eucharist ♫☺
10:00 a.m. ~ Festival Eucharist* ♫☺

*Nursery care available ☺Service especially appropriate for children ♫Service with Music

Here's What's Happening in Church School!

Lent: February 10 – March 9: During the season of Lent, we learned about Nicodemus and what it means to be "born from above." We learned that it is okay to ask questions of God and bring our concerns to God. The younger children read a beautiful story called, "You Are Special" by Max Lucado. All classes used various activities such as baking and puppet shows to learn about Nicodemus' nighttime visit with Jesus. ("Nic at Nite!") We focused on learning John 3:16 and understanding that "God so loved the world."

Eucharist Instruction: March 9th – May 18th: This program is appropriate for children who have not yet received communion as well as for those who have received but who are ready for more formal instruction. We will use a home program designed for children ages 8-10. Please sign up in the narthex and take an information sheet with program dates.

March 30 – June 1st: For the remainder of the year we will be preparing a pageant called, "The Rich Man, The Builder and The Feast" during the Sunday AM Church School time. Our lessons on Saturday nights will also focus on these Bible stories. Volunteers are needed to teach the Saturday night rotations (3/30-4/13, 4/20-5/4, and 5/11 to 6/1).

Palm Saturday

Our seventh annual Palm Saturday program will be held
Saturday, March 15th from 9:00—12:30.

Children (age 3 through grade 6) will have a variety of Lent/Easter activities to choose from such as planting, painting, cooking, dyeing eggs, and other crafts. Small groups will also take turns in a "prayer walk" which will help them to experience Holy Week in a dramatic way (e.g., walking into Jerusalem with palms, sharing bread and "wine," participating in a Tenebrae service and crawling into the tomb.) Activities could get messy and the "tomb" (St. Clare basement) will be cold, so please dress in warm play clothes! Children should bring a lunch. Drinks and cookies will be provided.

A sign up sheet is on the table in the narthex.

Wanted: Alleluia Fund Representative

The Alleluia Fund provides venture capital for new mission work supported by the Diocese of Western Ma. Episcopalians from around the diocese make offerings of thanksgiving which support new mission work in the diocese and overseas. Alleluia Fund offerings support our new church in Southwick, MA (which is committed to being self-supporting by 2010), support mission work in Liberia and our new partnership in Ghana.

We are looking for a member of the St. Francis congregation who is able to communicate to the parish the mission and needs of the Alleluia Fund and its recipients. If you are interested in being our representative or would like more information, please contact Dawn Rooke 508-829-7124 or Dtsar39@aol.com. There will be a training session in the Worcester area on March 26 (place and time to be announced) for Alleluia Fund representatives.

Mission Matters

We have an invitation from the Greater Worcester Habitat for Humanity to join them on Saturday, April 5, 2008, for a special Episcopalian build day (I'm guessing that the invitation is to build a house, not an Episcopalian). Actually, it is an interesting idea: they are appealing to Episcopal churches in the area to help them with their new affordable housing project at 2 Stowell Avenue in Worcester. Active Habitat volunteer, Donna Alarie, tells me that the need will most likely be for painting, rather than building by then.

There is a sign-up sheet in the church narthex. Not everyone will rush out to take up the challenge. For example, I paint only under duress and build not at all. However, if you have some time on April 5 and have the necessary skill and desire, it is a great opportunity to use them in the service of affordable housing right here in Worcester; that is Good News.

On Sunday March 2, St. Francis was presented its 6th Ark Award from Heifer International. Kate Sheehan, Heifer's Regional Director of Public Information was at the 10 AM Eucharist to thank the Living Gift Fair workers and the parish for your good work. That is more Good News.

With hopes for a meaningful Lent and a Happy Easter!

PRAYER SHAWLS 4 FALLEN SOLDIERS' FAMILIES REQUEST

Today I am suggesting an additional "mission." Sadly the list of fallen soldiers now contains 4,000 (plus) soldiers' names. If you would like to join me in this venture, please contact me at Nannaberyl@aol.com or I can be reached on my cell phone (508) 572-3113.

Contacts are in every state, listed by towns. Massachusetts, so far, has contributed 21 Prayer Shawls. I do, however, note that there are names in Worcester.

I, personally, have taken on the task of supplying shawls, with the St. Francis label, to a few families here in Florida.

Amazing! This "Fallen Soldiers" Mission has already provided 379 shawls in a mere 4 months! Aren't We Unbelievable!

I'd love to hear from you and thank you in advance for your compassion and service! Your work is deeply appreciated. I have the official website, which I will gladly share with you.

Beryl Turner Nannaberyl@aol.com Cell: (508)572-3113

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Next Prayer Shawl meeting is scheduled for
Monday, March 17th at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Youth Confirmation Class

The next Confirmation Class will be on
Sunday, March 30th at 11:30 a.m. in the Library.

Don't forget to plan to attend Palm Sunday and Holy Week
services with your Mentor, and then discuss your reactions with each other.

The Bishop Is Coming
Confirmation—Saturday, April 26th,
at the 5:00 p.m. service

We will celebrate with all who are being
confirmed or received on that day, and their families.

We hope you will plan to join us for this celebration as we welcome Bishop Scruton.

The EFM class will hold an Open House on Sunday, March 2nd from 4:00—6:30 pm. Anyone wishing to find out more about EFM or interested in joining an EFM class is welcome to join us during this time. Please speak to Robin Carlo or Cynthia McIntyre if you are interested.

Thank you……

My family and I wish to thank you all sincerely for your beautiful cards, with words of sympathy, lovely poems, loving sentiments, prayers and personal notes. They were "balm for the soul."

God Bless you for your kindness.

Helen Wisner

The Giarusso and Schmidt families would like to thank the St. Francis Community for their prayers and messages of sympathy on the recent death of our Dad, Richard Jones.

Sincerely,
Bev and Carolyn

Missing

The paper cutter from the church office has been missing for a few weeks.

It does get used often by the Church Administrator as well as the Church School Director and others.

If anyone knows where it might be, please let us know by calling the church office at 508-829-3344 or emailing stfran@verizon.net.

Thanks, Karen Heath, Administrator

The deadline for the April Little Portion is Thursday, March 20th
Please have all information to the office by this date. You can leave it in the Office mailbox or email it to stfran@verizon.net. The Little Portion will be mailed on Thursday, March 27th.

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism
will be celebrated at the Easter Vigil,
Saturday, March 22,
and, if necessary, on Sunday, March 30 as well.

Please speak to Rich or call the church office if you are interested in Baptism.

<u>TO OUR ENTIRE ST. FRANCIS COMMUNITY</u>

COME ONE! COME ALL! COME
CELEBRATE THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR
MINISTRY TOGETHER WITH RICH SIMPSON AS OUR RECTOR.

DATE: SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2008

TIME: 5:00 P.M.

EUCHARIST FOLLOWED BY FOOD, FELLOWSHIP, AND FUN FOR ALL AGES.

EASTER ALTAR FLOWERS

During Easter services this year, you may wish to have a loved one remembered, or to express special thanks to God for His blessings in your life.

To do so, please complete this form and return it, with your donation, to the Church office by **Sunday, March 16th**. The money for these memorials is used for flowers and music, given to God's glory as we celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord.

Exact wording of memorial will be:

Easter gifts for flowers and music are given to the Glory of God...

[If this gift is in memory of one who has died, choose from the following wording...]

☐*in Loving Memory of*

_____

(Name of your loved one or ones)

[If this gift is a thanksgiving for a blessing or a person who is living, choose the following wording...]

☐ *in Thanksgiving for the Blessing of*

_____

(Name of person or blessing)

given by:

_____

(Your name(s)--please use the exact wording you would like to have published. You may, for example, say something like "by his family" or "by her husband" followed by your name. Or you may simply use your name(s).)

Please return this information sheet, along with your offering (no donation is too small), to the church office or drop it in the offering plate by **Sunday, March 16th**. Please make checks payable to St. Francis Church with the notation "Easter Memorials" on the memo line.

Do you know someone who would appreciate Easter flowers from the church?
Please write their name and address here so that the Altar Guild can arrange to bring them flowers:

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