

## E-Portion for October

September 27, 2006

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### Rector's Column

The various "quests for the historical Jesus" that have been undertaken since the nineteenth century have sometimes been compared by detractors as looking deep into a well and seeing one's own reflection. The point may be overstated, but it is meant to suggest that we cannot know with any certainty what the Jesus who lived in first-century Roman-occupied Palestine as a practicing Jew was like; because no matter how much history we learn that is still not our own context. Even more importantly is the awareness that the gospel writers were not historians attempting to write *biographies* of Jesus as we understand that but were, rather, *storytellers* who spoke from their own theological contexts and perspectives. Moreover, they were, themselves, already a generation removed from the Jesus of history.

And so we are apt to project onto Jesus the concerns of our own time and place: to see in him what we want or need to see. We look deep into the well of history and lo and behold we see not only Jesus but ourselves reflected back. Discernment and the journey of faith is about sorting through which is which.

Importantly, however, our faith in Jesus is not confined to the distant past—and this is crucial. We proclaim that Christ has died, Christ *is* risen and Christ will come again. Because of the resurrection we can say with full confidence that Christ is alive today—in *this* time and place. We can say that Jesus is still with us, continuing to make all things new. If we believe that, it suggests that our goal isn't to gaze into a distant past but to enter into a relationship with the living Christ today—here and now.

Similar challenges arise for the great saints of the Church, including St. Francis, but the solution is somewhat more complex. Trying to understand why Francis of Assisi (whose feast day is celebrated on October 4) was important in his own time and place is difficult enough. It is hard to separate out the man from the legend. But here, too, we try to ask the question of what this means for us today. How is the life of a man born more than eight hundred years ago in Umbria relevant to us?

Part of the problem is that here, too, we are prone to look into a deep well and see ourselves. I think of Franco Zeffirelli's 1972 film about Francis, *Brother Sun/Sister Moon*, where Francis is portrayed almost as "flower child" of the 1970s. That is what I mean about looking into the well of history and seeing ourselves.

The problem for us is that it is no easier to get to the historical Francesco of Assisi than it is to get to the historical Jesus. If we are animal lovers we are wont to see Francis as a kind of Dr. Doolittle who talks with the animals and walks with the animals. If we are environmentalists we are prone to imagine Francis inviting us to face the inconvenient truths about our planet, and to respond as faithful stewards of all God's good gifts. If we are feeling particularly rebellious against our parents it

is fun to remember Francis embarrassing his father in the public square by stripping off his clothes and telling the old man that from that day forward only God would be his Father. If our passion is social justice, it is Francis' commitment to the poor and the lepers of his day that we emphasize. All of these, of course, provide hints and insights into the man. And yet in some ways he still remains ever elusive to us. All of them are right and yet none of these caricatures contains the whole truth.

It is helpful, I think, to remember that we do not *worship* Francis (or Clare, or any of the saints) but rather look to them to see how they were lights to their generation—and to pray that we might be lights to our time and place. That means at least in part that the goal is not to try to be just like Francis so much as it is to see how Francis was faithful to Jesus in his own day and then, inspired by his witness and example, to try in our own time and place to be uniquely whom God has called us to be. We cannot plop St. Francis from Assisi into Holden but we can pay attention to his life and in so doing find the courage and will to more closely follow Jesus in our own day.

Francis prayed in the broken-down church of San Damiano to know God's will for his life. The words he heard in his meditations are, I believe, words every generation must discover anew. "Re-build my church." The speaker, of course, is our crucified and risen Lord. It is Christ that we worship; Christ who binds together the Church across time and space. It is Christ who is the Church's one foundation.

Moreover, the Church in every age is "under repair" and must be re-built. The goal isn't a restoration process—to make the Church what it was in some supposed golden-age. (Not first-century Palestine, nor thirteenth-century Umbria, nor sixteenth-century England, nor the mid-twentieth century America.) *The goal is to re-build the Church in ways that serve Christ today—that equip the saints in our time to be lights in our own generation. It is to find courage and strength that comes to us from across the ages, for the living of these days.*

How, then, is God calling each of us to share in the work of re-building the Church in ways that serve the world and spread the gospel in this time and place? As we begin to answer that question together, I believe we will be not only honoring St. Francis, but serving Christ.

-Rich-

**The next Little Portion deadline** is Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Save the date.....**

Sunday, October 1, 2006 at 3:00 p.m.

Blessing of the Animals at St. Francis

*Please note the change in time.*

**Newcomers Committee** ~ will meet on Sunday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, in the library after the 10:00 am service.

**Acolyte Meeting** ~ is scheduled for Sunday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, in the sanctuary after the 10 a.m. for all acolytes, new and old to get reacquainted with everyone and to go over the steps with the new people.

**Daylight Savings** begins on Sunday, October 29th. Don't forget to set your clocks back before you go to bed on the 28th.

## **Adult Education Offering ~ Coming in Advent.....**

### **Outrageous Women in the Bible, Part 1 ~ An Exploration of Matthew 1**

Tuesdays, November 28, December 5, 12, 19—7:30 pm at St. Clare House.

- A. Tamar (Matthew 1:2) - Genesis 38
- B. Rahab (Matthew 1:5a) - Joshua 2:1-21, 6:22-25
- C. Ruth (Matthew 1:5b) - Ruth 2-4
- D. "The Wife of Uriah" (Matthew 1:6) - 2 Samuel 11-12, 1 Kings 15:5

### **Altar Guild ~**

The Altar Guild is having their annual "THANK YOU" dinner on Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at the church. Members will attend the Eucharist at 7:00 pm, and share a meal in Fellowship hall immediately after the service. This is a social gathering of fun and food. Please plan on joining us. Anyone that may have an interest in joining the Altar Guild, or exploring this satisfying ministry is encouraged to come. This is an excellent time to meet the members and find out about this service. Throughout the year we work in teams, but this gives us an opportunity to meet others and socialize. Please RSVP to Donna Lasher (508-829-9638) or Roz Glanville (508-886-4903).

**Commissioning of Confirmands and Mentors** will be Wednesday, October 4, at 7:00 p. m. followed by a Class Meeting with Mentors and Confirmands in the library.

**Youth Group** We've started the new year with a bang! Everyone should have a schedule by now, if not, let me know and I'll get one out to you. Remember, all teens are always welcome (friends too!) and can come anytime.

October will be a busy month for us. Mark your calendars! We will have regular meetings Oct. 1, 15, 22 and 29, with the next Parents' Meeting on October 1 at 5:30p. Special events this month include the Juvenile Diabetes walk on October 8 (9am Worcester State College), Crop Walk on October 15 (1p Immanuel Lutheran Church), and the Church Mouse Cafe on Oct. 21 (Seniors only, 8-2p). Our fun activity of the month is a trip to the MegaMaze at Davis' Farmland in Sterling on October 21, leaving St. Francis at 2:30 (cost is \$10). Both groups are invited. Please feel free to come and join the fun activity even if you don't regularly attend Youth Group.

As always, let me know if you have questions or want more information about Youth Group. Thanks!

Peace,  
Lori Churchill  
Youth Minister

### **Mission Matters**

**UTO Ingathering – September 30/October 1** – The United Thank Offering is a way to expand the circle of thankful people. If you have missed the collection date, there is still time to make your donation. Checks made payable to St. Francis Church (with UTO in the memo) may be placed in the offering plate. Many thanks to Beverly Giarusso for coordinating this mission.

**Don't forget...Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup> is the Holden CROPWalk** – The Youth Groups, with the help of Sue Delorme, have been organizing this event. Join with more than 2000 communities across the U.S. who walk to alleviate hunger. Through Church World Service's CROPWalk you can help neighbors around the world meet their own immediate needs and gain self-sufficiency.

**October 21 is the Church Mouse Fair** – Money raised will feed the hungry at the Mustard Seed, 93 Piedmont St., Worcester

### **October Disbursements**

\$300 was sent to our Diocese for their Alleluia Fund for mission work in Liberia.

The Mission Team voted to support the following missions this fall:

Abbey House, Dismas House, Worcester County Food Bank, Salvation Army and three diocesan sponsored missionaries – Sonja Hoekstra-Foss in Jerusalem, the Culvers in China, and Jane Torrey in South Korea.

More information will appear in future Little Portions.

**Prayer Shawl Ministry** – Did you know that newly designed labels have been added to each prayer shawl....and that new cards are included with the shawls, informing the receiver that the shawls have been made with our prayers and our belief that God is with them? As the shawl encircles and holds them, we hope it offers peace and grace and His all encompassing healing love. Special thanks to Beryl Turner and Karen Heath for putting this together.

Please join us for some fellowship and knitting on the third Monday of each month at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Call Beryl Turner (508-829-3223) or Barbara Beck (508-829-3045) for more information.

Submitted by Jeanne Schutte for the Mission Team.

Bunny Huddleston, Chairperson 508-886-4969 – [darrellandbunny@msn.com](mailto:darrellandbunny@msn.com)

### **Tidbits from the Church Mouse**

The Church Mouse Fair is this month!! Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Please include this very special day on your calendar. It's fun for all!!

*“Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us every day.” S. Koch*  
The Church Mouse Fair is your opportunity to help others. As in previous years, proceeds from the fair have been designated for “Feeding the Hungry” in Worcester County and beyond ~ including monthly meals at the “Mustard Seed.”

Please consider contributing new and used items for THE ATTIC TREASURES ROOM, THE BOOKS AND CHILDREN'S ROOMS: [Small household items, electrical appliances (in good working condition), baby items (must meet current safety codes), bedding, curtains, cooking supplies, housewares, paperback books, cookbooks, CD's, DVD's, video games. Please note: We cannot accept tires, bikes, television sets, computers, encyclopedias, textbooks, subscription magazines or any hard-covered books, because of recycling regulations.] Thank you. Please bring your items to the church from Monday to Friday, during the week of October 15<sup>th</sup> ....the earlier, the better!

Also needed: Your baking talents [please bring baked items on Friday afternoon or evening]....Live plants and/or dried flowers, herbs, arrangements....donations of new or used jewelry....your crafting talents if you are an “at-home” crafter....your volunteering to help set up tables on Friday, October 20<sup>th</sup> and taking them down again after the Fair....for working at various tables the day of the Fair or Substituting for a short time at a table.

....Your presence at the fair and your support for the “Mouse Café”, staffed by our wonderful young people and their advisors. And, finally, your help in the “miracle” that takes place after the fair when everything is “packed up” and “cleaned up” ~ vacuumed and furniture returned. All in time for the 5:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist!

### **Diocesan Convention** October 27 & 28

Audrey Cronin will be ordained to the Diaconate at the Saturday morning service of Holy Eucharist which begins at 8:30 a.m. in the Cathedral. (Please note this has been changed from Friday night.)

**Audrey Cronin's Ordination**

By the Grace of God and with the consent of the people

The Right Reverend Gordon P. Scruton

Bishop of Western Massachusetts

will ordain

Audrey Ann Cronin

to the Sacred Order of Deacons

Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at 8:30 in the morning

Christ Church Cathedral

37 Chestnut Street

Springfield, Massachusetts

Your prayers and presence are requested

A reception will be held at St. Francis church, Holden, Massachusetts on Sunday, November 12, 2006  
after the 10:00 a.m. service in the Parish Hall

*Audrey will serve as our deacon at the 10:00 a.m. liturgy on that day.*