

The Good News

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November 16, 2009

Ten Reasons to Attend the Foods'n Fancies Bazaar this Saturday, at 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. (And it is not too late to donate items for the Silent Auction)

1. That ornate hand-carved vase you received as a wedding gift—when you have Crate & Barrel tastes—and donated to the bazaar proves to be worth a lot more than you thought. Isn't it great that Foods'n Fancies derives the benefit? Remember, one person's junk is another's treasure.
2. That original watercolor—unaffordable in a gallery—will make a perfect Christmas gift for your beloved Uncle Jack, if you win it at the Silent Auction. Everybody loves a bargain.
3. It is a great way to spend a Saturday, particularly if it is raining, which it always seems to do during Foods'n Fancies. It is also the time of competing craft shows and holiday bazaars. We think ours is unique—kind of a throwback to an old fashioned street market—and promise you a good time. Bring your extended family and friends.
4. Our renowned baked goods table features beautifully wrapped, delicious items that will complement your Thanksgiving dinner or make great hostess gifts during this busy holiday season.
5. Recycling is politically correct; re-gifting is trendy. So what if you purchased the new, still-in-the-box present for your college-age son off the White Elephant table? Think of it as shopping on EBay in person.
6. The raffles, ah, the raffles. Chances to win gift baskets and cash while supporting the outreach missions of St. Mary's.
7. It is a great way to meet St. Mary's alumnae. They may move on to other places, but so many find their way back each year to Foods'n Fancies.
8. The Vermont cheddar cheese wheel. You can't get cheese this natural or this fresh without driving to Vermont. Leave the driving to us, and spend the gas money you saved at the bazaar.
9. With so many worthy causes and organizations asking for donations at this time of year, it helps to remember that this bazaar is the only fundraiser to support all of St. Mary's outreach activities. What a painless way to support the ministry of the church you love.
10. It's all about the hunt.

Perspectives on Gratitude

Children's Sunday Sermons

This past week, the young adults and children of St. Mary's decided that they would work collectively to preach a sermon with "gratitude" as their theme. Andrew Ramsey is my co-preacher this morning, and I will share the short reflections of three other young adults and some of our younger children's gratitude lists, but our young adults asked me to frame the messages about gratitude that they want to share. That makes my job quite simple this morning because the Old Testament lesson and our Gospel lesson (Mark 12:38-44) do all the work for us.

Both of these texts invite us to take a fresh look at the concept of generosity, a state where we find ourselves deeply appreciative of kindness and other benefits we receive. In Kings, the prophet Elijah goes to stay with a widow in Sidon, an area now known as Lebanon. He asks her for water and bread, and she tells him that she only has a little oil and a little meal, or flour, and that she and her son don't have enough to spare. Nevertheless, when the prophet asks for bread a second time, the widow does give him water and bread, even though she is afraid that she and her son will not have enough to eat.

In the middle of the story, we learn that because she is willing to share what she has, the Lord gives her enough oil and meal to last for many, many days. The widow and her son eat from the same small jug of oil and small jar of flour for many days. In this action, Elijah teaches the widow Gospel math: one of

something, shared, is more than one. Elijah himself experiences gratitude for the widow's gifts because he also eats from the small jar of meal and the small jug of oil; when her son becomes ill and dies, it is the gratitude in Elijah's own heart that fuels his prayer to Gd, and restores the son to the mother.

Kings teaches us that gratitude is an action we take inside our own souls; when we say "yes" to living our lives out of gratitude, our hearts open and our own lives improve not only because of the gifts for which we are grateful, but also because of the gratitude—the thankfulness itself. Gratitude is good for the soul. When we are truly grateful for what we receive, we get an extra gift from the exchange simply because the joy of recognizing our own thankfulness begets still more joy. Leave it to God to come up with a virtue that brings joy, and then begets more joy when we consciously notice the first joy.

If our Old Testament story talks about the gratitude that comes from receiving gifts, our Gospel text talks about the gratitude that inspires us to give gifts. The Markan text known as "the widow's mite" is a story of a poor widow putting two mites—two small Greek coins worth less than a penny—into the treasury. Others preceded her with very large gifts and very large egos to match; she offers her two small coins with no fanfare. Wealth impresses human beings, and we notice the opulence of the scribes and Pharisees who precede the widow, but Jesus sees with the heart; he is impressed by a generous giver. He teaches us a lesson we seem to learn over and over again in life; it isn't the size of the gift but the heart of the giver that matters. What God values in stewardship is the open-ended heart of the giver. God values our ability to live with gratitude, and God admires our willingness to transform our own gratitude into generous actions which will beget gratitude in the people we reach.

Stewardship, like love, begins in gratitude and ends in generosity.

As you listen to Andrew, and the words of our young adults and children, some of whom are in first grade or kindergarten, please keep your ear tuned to their deep appreciation; it is likely that something new will be stirring in your heart before the sermon is over.

—The Reverend Ms. Margaret Schwarzer

Good Morning. Thank you for coming today for this Children's Service. I feel privileged to be invited to offer you my reflections on gratitude.

What is gratitude? To me, gratitude is acknowledging the blessings in our lives, being thankful for everything we have. I am so privileged to have a loving family, a warm home, and more than enough food to eat. There are children widespread around the globe, across Africa and in the Middle East, for example, who fear for their lives every day and don't even have the basic necessities to hope for a quality life.

Our society today is so consumer-driven; I too, fall victim to the materialism so pervasive to American culture. My mindset can so easily move from getting an *Ipod Nano*, to "now I **need** the *Ipod Touch*", or better yet, "the crowning glory" of owning the *Iphone*. I guess I should be grateful to my parents for drawing a line in the sand when it came to my relentless and compelling *Iphone* requests. They keep reminding me that there *is* a difference between **need** and **want**.

Thanksgiving is coming soon, and in the spirit of that day and of our gratitude, we can respond by donating a toy, or food, or a warm coat to those less fortunate than ourselves. Many were here at St. Mary's yesterday to donate and sort clothing and toys for the Cradles to Crayons organization.

This past summer, thanks to Maryjane Burgess and Alicia Bowman, I was invited to spend a day serving the children at the B-SAFE program in Boston, and I saw how happy those inner-city children were just to have the food, fun and camaraderie that the B-SAFE brings to them. I learned a lot that day about gratitude.

Expressions of gratitude need not be reserved for any particular season, holiday, or event. In fact, back in the 15th century, Muslim Philosopher Ibn Khaldun wrote in his book, The Muqaddimah, that gratitude is a *process*.

You don't have to give up *everything* to make a difference. The impoverished widow in this morning's Gospel was courageous and able to do just that, but gratitude does not have to be extreme in order to count. It does not require that we relinquish all that we own, joining a convent or monastery for life, especially if that is not where our hearts lie.

In our home, we often practice gratitude prayers: each picking three things that we were most grateful for during the day. That way, if one of us had a bad day, we can shift our focus to "what went right." Mother Theresa once said that if you are feeling like your life is bad, "just make a downward comparison." In other words, we can always find someone whose burdens are far greater than our own to help us regain perspective and a sense of gratitude. So I am beginning to see that gratitude is both a process and a practice. Thank you, St. Mary's!

—Andrew Ramsey

Expressions of Gratitude from the Younger Members of St. Mary's: Jake Lawton is grateful for all the stuff he needs like food and his health. Julia Lawton is grateful for making stories with her mom. Ben Levi is grateful for the food he eats, especially his favorites – hot dogs and grilled cheese on wheat bread. Nick Pyzowski is grateful for his Nintendo, his candy, his hot dogs with mustard. Fletcher Smyth is grateful for the fun he has with Legos. Amelia Tucker is grateful to have a desk at home where she can draw lots of pictures.

Twenty-six children and youth participated in our Children's Service. We wish to thank them for their marvelous contributions and to thank their parents for delivering them to the rehearsals: Cecilia Acuña, Diego Acuña, Lucy Acuña, Camille Bowman, Meredyth Bowman, Rowan de Peyster*, Spencer Bowman, Toby de Peyster, Olivia Gilbert, Colin Kohli, Nora Kohli, John LaViolette*, Kate LaViolette*, Jake Lawton, Julia Lawton, Annie Leonard, Ford Leonard*, May Leonard, Ben Levi, Katie Pyzowski*, Nicholas Pyzowski*, Andrew Ramsey, Fletcher Smyth*, Amelia Tucker, Catherine Williamson and Robert Williamson. (*Junior Choir Members)

Notes on the Diocesan Convention

Margaret Schwarzer and John and Anne Turtle represented St. Mary's at the 225th Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts on Friday (only Margaret) and Saturday (all three), November 6th and 7th. We also celebrated the 15th anniversary of Bishop Shaw's consecration. The convention was held this year at Trinity Church, Copley Square, supplemented by a large tent on the Square which was used for a Friday night barbeque dinner and square dance and on Saturday for lunch and presentations.

During the Friday afternoon session, the Reverend Canon Mally Lloyd reviewed the diocese's 10-year "Inviting, Forming, Sending, Serving" mission strategy, now in its sixth year. She presented a plan to combine the original eight goals into three interdependent focus areas: vital and viable congregations; youth and young adults; and urban, ethnic and multicultural ministries. Money from the sale of closed church properties presents an opportunity to try some new approaches in terms of congregational development. Over the past three years, seven churches have been closed.

Saturday began with an 8:00 a.m. Morning Prayer service based on the liturgy and music in use 225 years ago. Discussion and the adoption of two resolutions followed the morning service. The first resolution responded to last summer's General Convention Resolution CCO56 allowing for "generous pastoral response" in states such as Massachusetts where same-gender marriage is legal. The Diocesan resolution expresses the convention's hope that Bishop Shaw's interpretation of that allowance will permit Diocesan clergy "to sign marriage licenses and pronounce marriages for any couple that is legally eligible for marriage in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

The second resolution adopted by the convention continues efforts aimed at coming to terms with the Episcopal Church's local complicity in the institution of slavery. Last year's convention called on parishes to study and report on their complicity in and economic benefits from the slave trade; this year's measure establishes a task force to assist parishes in that work.

The 2010 diocesan budget of \$6.4 million is \$531,000 less than the 2009 budget. Income from trusts and endowments is expected to be down \$281,000 and income from Diocesan assessments (\$4.98 million) is expected to be down \$276,000. A new formula for calculating Diocesan assessments was implemented in the 2010 budget. The new formula is based on church parish data from the 2007 parochial report. Based on the new formula, St. Mary's, 2010 assessment is \$41,867, an increase of \$2,500 over last year's assessment.

The convention's lighter moments included a chat between Bishop Shaw and the children who were in child care during the meeting. When asked "Who is the most important person in the church?" the children responded suggesting Jesus, God, or the Holy Spirit; however, Bishop Shaw turned to them saying, "No, you are the most important people in the church!"

In honor of the 15th anniversary of Bishop Shaw's consecration and in keeping with church efforts to "go green," a tub of earth worms was presented to the Bishop. Over the summer he enjoyed time at Emery House, a retreat house in West Newbury; some of the surrounding land has been restored to farmland from woods. Successful gardening took place with the produce going to food pantries.

Choirs from several churches presented gospel music as part of the worship services. St. Mary's former choir director, Louise Munding, directed the Convention Children's Chorus, composed of members of Diocesan Parish Choirs and alumni of the Diocesan Choir Camp.

Note: This commentary was written with input from the Diocesan convention report available on the www.diomass.com website.

—Anne Turtle

Upcoming Events

Foods'n Fancies on Saturday, November 21 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Foods'n Fancies is the only fundraiser St. Mary's has for outreach. The number of organizations which benefit from this event is extensive. Everyone's help is much needed and appreciated. This includes men and women, young and old, new members and old members. Parishioners are asked to contribute homemade foods. Volunteers to help set up and work at Foods'n Fancies are needed. The sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board. This is a great event at which to purchase gifts and food for the holidays, Have lunch and shop while your children are involved in arts and crafts activities. We hope to see everyone on the 21st.

Advent Wreath Making, Sunday, November 22, 11:00a.m.-12:00p.m. for St. Mary's Youth

Acolyte Training Session, Sunday, November 22, 12:00 p.m.-1:30p.m. All acolytes are invited to attend a meeting of instruction. Many of our youth will already be in the parish hall making advent wreaths. We plan to break for pizza and be finished by 1:30 PM. Please let us know as soon as possible whether you will be able to attend. We realize that you have busy schedules at this hectic time of year, but we strongly encourage all acolytes to participate in what we hope will be a very worthwhile session. Please contact Tim Green at TDMDGreen@verizon.net or 781-237-9973 with any questions or comments.

The Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church to Speak at MIT on "The Social Responsibility of the Scientist" on Thursday, December 3, 7:00 p.m.-9:00p.m.

The Most Reverend Katherine Jefferts Schori will participate on a panel with two physicians as part of The Technology and Culture Forum at MIT. The event will be held in Room W11-007, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge. Bishop Schori also holds a Ph.D. in oceanography. The program is free and open to the public; no registration is required. If you have any questions, visit the MIT website (web.mit.edu/tac) or call 617-253-0108.

The "Ask It" Basket

Q: What is the meaning of the word *acolyte*?

A: The word *acolyte* derives from the Greek word *akolouthos* or *follower*. In the Latin Church, the duties of acolytes were to light the altar candles, carry candles in procession, prepare the wine and water for the Eucharist, and to assist the celebrant. Acolytes were minor level clergy. In modern practice, these duties are very frequently performed by lay persons.

Editor: Tim Green