

# *The Good News*

St. Mary's Church, 260 Concord Street, Newton Lower Falls, MA 02462

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January 19, 2010

## **WARRANT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 2010**

The members of the EPISCOPAL SOCIETY OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH IN NEWTON are hereby notified to meet in the Parish Hall of said church in Newton Lower Falls on the 24th day of January, 2010 at 11:15 a.m. for the following purposes:

**FIRST:** If necessary, to choose a moderator;

**SECOND:** To elect by ballot the following Parish Officers:

Senior Warden  
Junior Warden  
Clerk  
Treasurer  
Superintendent of the Churchyard

Also to elect by ballot:

4 members of the Vestry for 3 years  
2 members of the Vestry for 2 years  
1 member of the Vestry for 1 year  
2 delegates to the Diocesan Convention for 1 year  
3 delegates to the Deanery for 1 year  
1 member of the Investment Committee for 3 years

**THIRD:** To hear and act upon reports of Parish Officers and Committees;

**FOURTH:** To act upon any other business that may properly come before the meeting.

Paul Pyzowski, Senior Warden  
Mary Green, Junior Warden

*All are encouraged to attend. Brunch will be served and child care that includes special activities and snacks downstairs will be provided.*

*Special Events on Sunday, January 31*

*Godly Play Adult Forum and Open House at 11:15 a.m.—noon; Evensong with Music of Taizé at 5:00 p.m.*

### ***Godly Play* Adult Forum and Open House**

As many of you know, St. Mary's has re-organized its K-5 Sunday School classrooms and begun a vibrant new Episcopal curriculum called *Godly Play*. *Godly Play* was created by an Episcopal priest and renowned expert in the development of spirituality of children, who co-taught children and youth with his wife for more than 20 years. The program teaches sacred Biblical stories, parables and liturgical actions through storytelling with concrete tactile objects and biblical figures. These durable storytelling materials draw children more deeply into the stories, creating a sacred space in which children are invited to wonder and grow in spiritual relationship to God.

St. Mary's adapted the language of *Godly Play* for our Christmas Pageant on December 20th and again in the Children's Homily on Christmas Eve at the 5:00 p.m. service. Thanks to all our youth who made these events a success!

On January 31st, at Coffee Hour, Isabel Phillips is going to lead a discussion about *Godly Play* for the adults at St. Mary's, including a short video excerpt of a *Godly Play* lesson/story. She will also display some of the *Godly Play* materials donated to St. Mary's thus far and distribute a list of materials that are still on our wish-list. We continue to be most grateful for the *Godly Play* donations we recently received to get us started (a handmade wooden crèche from Haiti, an heirloom quality wooden Noah's Ark, and sturdy wooden story materials to draw the children more deeply into Advent, Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost.) After the Adult Forum we invite all those interested in viewing the range of story materials more closely to come downstairs and visit our classrooms.

### **Evensong with Music of Taizé**

At 5:00 p.m. the Adult Choir will lead a meditative service of Evening Prayer in the tradition of Taizé. We will gather in the candlelit sanctuary for a quiet service of contemplation and music.

The Taizé tradition began many years ago in the ecumenical monastic community in Taizé, France. Brother Roger, Taizé's founder, arrived in the French village in 1940. In the midst of World War II, he dreamed of creating a community where reconciliation was a daily reality. He began by giving shelter to refugees of the war. Brother Roger recognized that the search for reconciliation was within each individual as well as within the community. People from around the world, especially young people, come to Taizé looking for meaning in their lives as they prepare for responsibilities in their own communities.

The liturgy of the Taizé service is meant to "quiet the soul." There is repetition in the words of the music, there is time for silence and prayer. There is no sermon or celebration of the Eucharist. The service provides an opportunity to become more peaceful and centered in the midst of our busy lives.

Please join us for the Evensong service, followed by a soup and bread supper in the Parish Hall.

All are welcome.

## *The Manifestations of Jesus' Belovedness*

*Editor: The following article was adapted from a sermon delivered on January 10, the first Sunday after Epiphany, by The Reverend Ms. Margaret Schwarzer.*

Epiphany—a six-week season between Christmas and Lent where we are invited to tune our hearts to God's arrival among us, began on January 7, when our tradition remembered the arrival of the Magi, and it lasts until Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. The word "epiphany" means *revelation* or *manifestation* and during the six weeks, our scripture gives us glimpses into God's historic revealing of God's self.

On the first Sunday of Epiphany, the revelation started with Jesus' baptism in the Jordan; Jesus' first public manifestation as God's only Son. The story is ripe with meaningful words and actions: John the Baptizer prepares us for a Messiah when he announces that he, John, the crowd's favorite prophet is to be regarded as nothing compared to the one who is coming after him. And then Jesus arrives, is baptized, prays, and when he emerges out of the water, "The heavens open," and scriptures says, "The Spirit descended on him like a dove, and a voice proclaimed, 'This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

It is obvious that God is revealing himself here; for 2,000 years, this story has marked the public debut of Jesus' ministry. In Epiphany, we let go of the sweetness and vulnerability of the manger, and begin to contend with the wisdom, insights and actions of the adult Jesus. What is less obvious in this story, but well worth considering, is why a baptism would mark the start of Jesus' ministry. If Jesus is God's beloved, what beloved qualities is he revealing in his baptism, and what are we to make of them?

In our Anglican catechism, one of the lessons we learn is that Jesus was both 100 percent human and 100 percent divine, but he did not sin. That is, he was fully enfleshed, fully incarnated, but he never fell to the sinful weaknesses of our flesh. Our first clue about Jesus' identity is that he chose to be baptized for forgiveness of sin and repentance, even though he himself was sinless. That is to say, at the start of his ministry, at the age of about 30, Jesus willingly wades into the watery equivalent of the crucifixion which is waiting for him at the end of his ministry. This baptism, like the cross he will die on, is a public witness he takes to support others, not an act he takes to assuage his own guilt or cleanse his own soul. Others confess sin before their baptisms, but Jesus, having nothing to repent, "Was simply baptized and was praying."

**This act of selfless solidarity is one of the first aspects of Jesus that makes him God's "beloved." The divine compassion runs deep in Jesus.**

A second aspect of Jesus' belovedness which is revealed in this story is Jesus' genuine humility. Jesus does not proclaim his divinity himself at his baptism, nor does he encourage people to worship him. Jesus is baptized in the midst of the people, just like the rest of the people, and he seems to recognize his interdependence with all other people. Unlike a military leader or a political leader, who lead by standing at the head and barking orders, Jesus is ready to lead by standing in the midst of us. Jesus leads by being intimately present to us, by standing with us and going where we must go. Into the Jordan River water, or into hell, he will join us. He also seems to trust us more than we even trust ourselves. He trusts John to lift him up out of the water, and he trusts us, in our own day, to carry him into the world. He sees our capacity for goodness faster than we see it ourselves. The beloved Son, in his humility, recognizes our own capacity for being God's beloved.

Finally, in this baptismal passage from Luke, we learn the quintessential Christian action: Prayer. Interestingly enough, in his public debut as the Son of God, we do not have a direct quotation from Jesus. Only John's and God's words are recorded. But what we do know is that Jesus *prayed* directly after his baptism. Before anything else, before speaking out for justice or kindness, or mercy; before any act of compassion or equality; before any of his own undertaking; Jesus prays.

In his choice, he teaches us that all good works and all good thoughts need spiritual grounding. Outward and visible signs of any real magnitude come about through the inward and spiritual grace of prayer. Jesus is patient enough to pray his way into his own destiny, and later in his ministry he will teach us the words we need to be spiritually grounded in our own lives: "Our Father, who art in heaven..." Jesus is the beloved because he allows prayer to shape him. Jesus hollows out a portion of his own heart which only God the creator can fill.

Jesus' compassion, Jesus' humility and Jesus' capacity for prayer are three manifestations of his belovedness. The core of Jesus' divine nature is revealed in these three qualities. However, it is also true that this passage of scripture is one of the first places where we engage the three aspects of God which make up the core identity of Godself: Creator, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. These three names of God's identity, which we call the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, tells us that there is only one God but that there are three manifestations of God which God shares with us: God the Father, our Creator; God the Son, our historical Jesus, who will die to become the risen Christ; and God the Holy Spirit, or Holy Comforter, who will return to us after Christ's death to guide us and offer manifestations of Godself to us. It is striking to realize that this complex identity of God is being revealed in this baptismal story for the first time. It is the totality of Godself, and not just Jesus' identity, which is being revealed in Luke's Gospel.

After this story, people who come to follow Christ will come to know God in this Trinitarian Way. The monotheism of Judaism will give way to a monotheism of one substance, but with three distance actions or aspects.

It will take the Church more than 300 years to articulate this truth, but we first glimpse this Trinitarian formula at Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. Another aspect of Jesus' belovedness is that his birth cracks open the possibility for all human beings to find salvation and joy in being the ones who recognize The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. We know God as a being who acts in history, who has revealed himself in history and who will come again, in both intimacy and glory to judge the earth.

Luke tells us that after Jesus was baptized, "The heavens opened up." Is it any wonder? The writer of the Gospel means this literally in his story, the heavens open because the spirit descends like a dove, but it is also true theologically: the divide between God and humanity was broken on the day of Jesus' baptism. He stands with us and follows us into the water, and a path between heaven and earth becomes possible. The heavens open. The sin that bounds us will be quenched; the distance between God and people will dwindle, and we will discover a new face of God and a new way to be in communion with God. Jesus is the Creator's beloved, and we are his.

*Editor: Tim Green*