
On Eagles' Wings

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A Communication From

The Church of Saint John the Evangelist

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A Message from Fr. Matthew

I can't tell all of you how excited I am for how things are going at our parish. Fall is here. Our choir sounds great. I'm seeing new faces in church. I'm getting to know all of you a little better. We have made several bagged lunches for Elijah's Promise. Sunday school is in gear, and everyone is happy with our new teachers and program. We've just had a great time with Mass on the Grass. And, I continue to see great acts of kindness in this parish family.

Administratively, things are going well too. Our Stewardship Committee has put together a fantastic program for later this fall. I am really impressed with the research, thought, and hard work Dick, Godrim and Joyce have put into it. I have just set up two more committees to work on fundraising and long-term visioning, and I can't wait to get those processes started. All of these things excite me and make me so glad to be here.

In all this it is easy to be excited and happy about things. What's not to like? Everything is going great. There are times when, however, it is not always easy to see the good in what is happening. Sometimes it is hard to recognize God's grace. I know some of you have had illnesses in your families, and some of you are struggling with the economic difficulties. I

continue to hold all of you in my prayers for these things.

These things are a real part of life, and not the most pleasant parts. But, God is among us in these difficult times. *The Diary of a Country Priest* is a novel written by Georges Bernanos and published originally in French in 1936. It was adapted into a movie in 1951. The book itself, like much of French literature, deals with struggles of life. At the end of the novel the main character is dying of stomach cancer and his last words, the last words of the book, were simply, "Grace is everywhere." I read this book many years ago, and I remember not particularly enjoying all of its dark tone. However, that last line always sticks with me. In the midst of difficulty, grace is everywhere.

In these good times, let us rejoice in God's bounty. Let us see all the good that God is doing for us, and give thanks at all times. For those going through difficulties, continue to see God's grace. God continues to guide us at all times and gives us so much grace at all times. Sometimes it is simply easier to recognize than others. Let us give thanks at all times, because "Grace is everywhere".

Blessings and Peace,
Fr. Matthew+

Thoughts on Stewardship

Have you ever thought of how many times in the New Testament Jesus talks about a person's relationship to their material possessions? It seems like Jesus knew that many people throughout the ages would wrestle with the topic of "Things".

The question is: How are we to use what God has given us, everything from our pocketbooks... to our time... to our lives themselves? Stewardship and giving teaches us the happy virtue of gratitude. We may tend to think of ourselves as "self-made" but we forget that all we have we received from HIM. True stewardship of the "possessions" He has "loaned us" changes our attitude for stewardship and is an acknowledgement that "it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves." The person who gives to the Lord is saying "Thank you" to God for health, food, family, love and life. Stewardship teaches that the love of God is the creative factor in every person's life. Remember God blesses and showers us with an abundance of good gifts from above, not just to make us thankful, but to make us useful! St. Paul suggested what spirit we all should have when he said that Christians ought not to give reluctantly or under compulsion, but we should be cheerful givers.

Considering stewardship, we must consider three facts. First, stewardship is not a matter of tipping God. We should be expected to give the *first fruits* of the harvest, not the leftovers.

Second, stewardship is not a matter of paying bills, though they come in all year long. It should not be an obligatory thing we do only when we go to church; there are needs in the church and offering to respond to these needs only furthers God's work, which should be our ultimate goal.

Most important, the standard of Christian giving is Jesus Christ. We should imitate Him, seeking to give our very selves, as He did. God wants us to give openly, freely, in thanksgiving to Him who first gave to us, and without whose gifts we would be nothing at all.

Dick Engle

More Blessed to Give

As we pray in preparation for our upcoming fall Stewardship Drive, it is important to remind ourselves that stewardship should be a daily habit, rather than a once-a-year obligation to meet and then forget. The Bible teaches us to "...recall the words of the Lord Jesus himself, who said, "There is more happiness in giving than receiving." (Acts 20:35) Giving of our money, time and talent should consist of activities that we undergo thoughtfully, selflessly and with trust in the Lord's mercy each day of our lives.

Dick Engle, our Treasurer, has asked that excerpts from a pamphlet produced by the Office of Stewardship of the Episcopal Church called, "Finding Hope in Hard Times – Seven Spiritual Practices: A Faithful Steward's Guide" be printed in this and future issues of our newsletter to help us learn how to become better stewards. The first of these excerpts is found below.

Count Your Blessings

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? (Matthew 6:25-27)

We are living in anxious times. What began as an economic slowdown has turned into a deep recession, the likes of which we have not known since the Great Depression. Many have lost

jobs or fear their jobs are on the line. Many have lost homes or have seen the value of their home plummet. Years' worth of conscientious savings have evaporated. At the same time, our culture lulls us into believing that what we wear, what car we drive, what neighborhood we live in defines us. It is easy to lose sight of our true value, of our inherent blessedness as beloved children of God.

It is easy to focus on what we want and what we fear rather than on what we have. Sometimes the lines between what we want and what we need become so blurred it is difficult to discern the difference.

However hard life seems, we have things we can be grateful for.

► **Action:** *Write down the things you are thankful for. Share your gratitude list with someone you know. Set aside time each day to give thanks for all the ways God blesses you.*

|| **Pause for Reflection:** *As well as being thankful, we need to acknowledge our anxieties. What money worries do you have? Write them down. Share them with someone you trust. Share them with the Lord in prayer.*

You may find the following prayer helpful:

Lord God, we live in disturbing days: across the world, prices rise, debts increase, banks collapse, jobs are taken away, and fragile security is under threat. Loving God, meet us in our fear and hear our prayer: be a tower of strength amidst the shifting sands, and a light in the darkness; help us to receive your gift of peace, and fix our hearts where true joys are to be found, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Christian Education

St. John's fall Sunday school program began on Sunday, September 13th. **Stacie Kelly** opened the class by serving an enthusiastically-received snack to her five students – Antonio Vaquez, Wynmyria Roberts, Cassandra Vaz, Eliana Holerca, and Christa Beckley. She then led the children in a brief prayer and introduced them to a Bible lesson. As the culmination of the class, Stacie showed her young students how much fun it is to make stained glass-like crosses that each could take home to display in a special place for prayer, such as his or her bedroom.

Beginning October 4th, Sunday school will be held in the Alitta Logan Memorial Chapel in St. Mary's Hall (the building located behind the church) following the 9:30 AM service. If you have a pre-school or older child you would like to have participate in Sunday school, or if you feel called to volunteer your time and talents to help **Stacie Kelly** and her assistant, **Vanessa Bacorn**, with the program, please speak with Stacie or Fr. Matthew.

Lunches, with Love

For four months, we have enjoyed preparing bagged lunches for the community food program at Elijah's Promise on the 4th Sunday of each month and we plan to continue doing so indefinitely. These lunches are handed out to the working indigent, individuals who are fortunate enough to have secured employment, but who do not yet have the financial means to prepare noon time meals for themselves or, in some cases, for their children. We provide sandwiches, fruit, a healthy snack and a juice box or bottle of water in every lunch.

There is a sign-up sheet available in the parish hall for anyone who would like to contribute food or packaging products, and his/her enthusiastic assistance with this great project. Our next Lunches with Love Sunday is scheduled for the fourth Sunday in October

(10/25). You are welcome to help us meet our current goal of contributing 50 lunches each month to Elijah's Promise.

Roll up your Sleeves

St. John's will be hosting a *blood drive* for New Jersey Blood Services on Tuesday, October 6th between 2 – 7:00 PM in St. Joseph's Hall.

You and your friends and neighbors are strongly encouraged to make donations. Blood supplies are now critically low, as is always the case in the summer, but demand for blood remains high.

Rh-negative blood types are especially sought, though nearly everyone between the ages of 17 and 75, weighing a minimum of 110 pounds and in good health, can donate blood. Donors over age 75 who are healthy and meet all other donor requirements simply require a doctor's written permission note to donate.

We need volunteers to serve juice and cookies to the donors. If you can spare a couple of hours to help out at the canteen, please let Fr. Matthew know. NJ Blood Services will do the rest!

Mass on the Grass

Our outdoor celebration of the Eucharist (or "Mass on the Grass") on Sunday, September 20th, was a supremely beautiful service. Seventy church members, their families and friends gathered at Johnson Park on a crisply cool and sunny, nearly-autumn day to worship under a canopy of majestic trees. St. John's *choral scholars* sounded especially glorious singing in that setting!

After the service we picnicked on hamburgers and hotdogs, grilled by *Bob and Joyce Szabo*, and an assortment of salads and desserts contributed by our many parish cooks and bakers.

Fr. Matthew, having a Mass on the Grass was a wonderful idea. Thank you! *Marge Koleser*, you did a superb job of organizing the event and *Nancy Cole*, we appreciate your having arrived at the site early in the morning to reserve it for our use. *Susan Huslage*, we enjoyed singing to your accordion accompaniment and *Gene Pillar* you were generous to help load chairs into *George Koleser's* truck at the end of the picnic. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this happy event!

Let's have another Mass on the Grass in 2010!

Margie Jo Williamson Bidwell

Margie Jo Williamson was very pleased to receive the good wishes and gifts from her friends at St. John's on the occasion of her August 29th wedding in Kentucky. *Susan Huslage* was at the wedding – as a member in Margie Jo's bridal party - and reports that the new *Mrs. Stephen Bidwell* is an entirely happy bride! Ask Susan to show you her pictures from the ceremony and reception and be prepared to smile at former army medic Margie Jo's wedding dress/combat boot combo!

Christ Church Food Pantry

Don't forget to bring a non-perishable food item with you each Sunday to donate to the Food Pantry at Christ Church. You can drop your donation off in the basket at the narthex. Let's do our part to make sure no one in New Brunswick ever has to go to bed hungry.

St. John's Website

Please visit stjohnepiscopalnb.org to see the beautiful website *Godrim Beckley* has engineered for St. John's. The site contains a history of the church, service times, driving directions and a *new* and nifty monthly calendar of events!

December 2009 Newsletter Deadline

Please provide Michele Bacorn with submissions for the December 2009 newsletter by **Sunday, November 15th**. Your contributions are always welcome. You may leave stories, articles, news of upcoming events, and other communications in the "Newsletter" mailbox in the parish hall, hand your material to Michele during coffee hour, or via email to stjohns9@verizon.net.

Upcoming Events

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| Oct. 6 | Blood Drive 2-7:30 PM |
| Oct. 7 | Guild of St. Mary & Martha @ 7:30 PM |
| Oct. 17 | Family Game Night & Hot Dogs @ 5:30 PM |
| Oct. 25 | Fr. Matthew's Installation Service / Bishop Councill's Visit @ 3 PM |
| Nov. 22 | Lunches for Elijah's Promise |
| Dec. 13 | Service of Lessons & Carols |
| Dec. 20 | Christmas Pageant |
| Dec. 27 | Lunches for Elijah's Promise |
| Jan. 24 | Renewal of Wedding Vows - Fr. Matthew and Kristin |

Committees and Chairpersons

- Worship – Fr. Matthew Buterbaugh
- Music – Susan Huslage
- Finance – Dick Engle
- Renewal (Outreach) - Martha Godfrey
- Parish Life – Marge Koleser
- Christian Ed – Stacie Kelly
- Property – George Koleser

- Marge Koleser, Sr. Warden
- Martha Godfrey, Jr. Warden
- Michele Bacorn
- Christof Beckley
- Victor Beckley
- Nancy Cole, Clerk
- Dick Engle, Treasurer
- Susan Huslage
- George Koleser, Sr.
- Lynn Pilanen
- Eugene Pillar, Jr.

St. John's Vestry

