

The



Rock

St. Peter's Episcopal Church

Established in 1954

November 2023

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear People of God,



I know the Thanksgiving holiday is still weeks away, but maybe now's the best time, before the rush and stress of the holiday season begins, to reflect on the importance of giving thanks. So, a bit prematurely, here's the Gospel reading for the Feast of Thanksgiving (Luke 17:11-19):

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

Jesus is walking along in the region between Samaria and Galilee. He's walking, in other words, in an ill-defined, in-between place, somewhere that isn't quite his homeland, Galilee, the area we might suppose he knows best, but not quite a foreign land either, Samaria. Jews and Samaritans, remember, lived in mutual hostility. They held one another in mutual contempt. And as Jesus walks in this vague region that is neither this nor

that, he's approached by a group who could find acceptance in neither place because they were held in contempt by all. Ten lepers come to Jesus, ten persons who live apart from every respected, accepted, established community. Ten who'd been judged unclean, banished from their homes, separated from loved ones, rejected by all the supposed faithful. They cry for mercy, and Jesus responds. He tells them to go and show themselves to the priests, the ones empowered to certify they are once again "clean," fit for normal human relationships. And as they go, they find their leprosy cured. But then one of them turns around, praising God, returning to Jesus and giving thanks—and he, we're told, was the "double" outcast, leper *and* Samaritan. Jesus says to that one, "your faith has made you well."

So, where are you in this story? And, maybe more important, where do you want to be?

Of course, our call is to put ourselves where Jesus is, in marginal and even challenging places, where we can be not just among those who are outcast and in need but be open to them and of service to them. But I don't think we can really be in that place without considering where we see ourselves in those lepers, and where we see ourselves in terms of this story's great theme of thanksgiving.

Let's imagine one of the lepers who was healed and just went on his way. His prayer was answered. There's no hard evidence for his gratitude, but there's also no claim he was ungrateful.

Maybe he was so eager to get to reap the benefits of the blessing that thankfulness wasn't even on his mind. Or maybe he was

truly grateful on the *inside*, but just never thought to show it and share it.

Are you with him, blessed but not mindful of it? Inwardly but not openly grateful? Is that where you want to be?

Now let's imagine the eleventh leper. I know, there are only ten in the story. But imagine another leper by the side of the road, watching what had taken place. Maybe he was too scared to approach Jesus, afraid he'd be rejected. Yet he watched as ten others came forward and went away healed, while he remained in his place, stricken with his disease and still set apart. Maybe he'd have felt resentment toward the others, or even toward God. "They were healed. Why not me?" Or we might imagine him giving thanks—giving thanks despite his suffering, giving thanks for having witnessed such a miracle, giving thanks for having been shown this sign that he and everyone is very much in God's hands. And maybe just by giving thanks, even amid his troubles, it could be said in some deep and real and powerful way that he, too, had been made well.

Might you be there—struggling privately with your pain, while others bring the whole of who they are to Christ? Or are you there, able to give thanks when feeling sadness or frustration or even grief, grateful for God's loving presence when things don't go the way you want? Where do you want to be?

And then there's that leper who turned around, who didn't just come to Jesus but came back to Jesus, simply to give thanks and praise. Jesus says to him and only him, "your faith has made you well." What does that tell us?

What it does *not* tell us is that healing is determined by the *quantity* of one's faith. Rather, it's about the *quality* of our faith. "Your faith has made you well" doesn't mean because you believed enough so you were cured. It means your gratitude—the gratitude not shown by the others who were healed—is what has truly made you *whole*. In other words, thanksgiving is itself a healing act. It is in giving thanks that the former leper literally comes closer to Christ. Nine people walk away free from leprosy. One walks away utterly *free*.

It's a fair measure of the health of our souls to consider how readily and openly we give thanks to God. After all, as we affirm in our Rite II Eucharist, thanksgiving to God "is a good and joyful thing always and everywhere." Not occasionally. Not just on a holiday called "Thanksgiving." God calls us to be people who live and breathe thanksgiving.

Giving thanks always and everywhere, to God, who is always and everywhere. I hope that's where we all want to be. And I thank God for each and every one of you.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Dan+



Diakonia Musings

The change in seasons is officially here in WNY and we find ourselves getting ready for the winter months that wrap around the holidays. From All Saints Day and Thanksgiving, through Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, our spirits take in the warmth, smells, and colors of the season. As the cold seeps into our bodies, we become very creative with ways to enjoy the snow and cold while at the same time staying toasty warm. The changing of seasons is good because we must do things differently. We never find out what joy is waiting for us unless we encounter something that nudges us to change. May the warmth of God's spirit dwelling in each of us keep us open to change and creativity this coming holiday season.



December 2nd, we will be hosting a racial healing circle at St. Peter's. For us, it is part of our Becoming a Beloved Community work. This is an opportunity to listen to others stories and find our common humanity. It is not a time to discuss racial issues, but rather share our truths about our own lives with another person.

Circles are as old as time and have always represented wholeness and community, no matter what they are used for. Some cultures use them for discussion, some for solving conflicts, some for spiritual activities, but the thing they have in common is that as one person tells their story or contributes to the discussion, another listens without judgement.

The healing circle we are hosting is being funded by the Kellogg Foundation in response to the Tops shooting. The Partnership's Commission to Dismantle Racism and Discrimination, that Tom and I are part of, wrote the grant. The cost of the food is covered and the church will receive a stipend for "renting " the space.

We are looking for a diverse group of 12 to 20 people that are willing to participate in this circle from 9:45 (grab your coffee) with the official starting time of 10:00. We will end the circle around 12:15 pm and share a lunch together. Other circles are being held around the diocese and people have responded to the experience with words like: inspiring, uplifted, empathy, enlightening, joyful, community.

If you are interested in attending, please sign the sheet in the undercroft. You can invite friends or relatives if you'd like. And remember that diversity comes in many flavors including cultural, ethnic, economic, educational, sexual identification and religious affiliation. Hope to see you there.

Deacon Diana



Loving God Through Creation

At this writing, our Creation Season has just ended. However, I thought I would call on my cyber friend, Richard Rohr, to treat us all to a summary of its importance:

Jewish and Christian traditions of creation spirituality have their origins in Hebrew scriptures such as Psalms 104 and 148. (check them out). God was known and praised in the natural world.

It is spirituality rooted in nature, experience, and in the world as is. This spirituality formed the mind, heart, and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Religion never began in written tablets or books. It began by observing "what is" in one's surrounding environment.

We know God through the things that God has made. The first foundation of any true "religious seeing is learning how to see and love what is"

We need to look for **vestigia Dei**- the fingerprints and footprints of God. Perhaps once we can see God in plants and animals, we might learn to see God in our neighbors. Then we might learn to love the world. And finally, we might be capable of loving Jesus. Our souls would be prepared.

Deacon Tom



The Blessing Box

Save the date and watch for more information on an enjoyable fundraiser to be held on **Thursday, November 16th at Friday's restaurant.**

Flyers will be distributed and when you bring them to Fridays the Blessing Box fund will receive a percentage of the check total. We thank you for all the continued support.

We now have three collection areas for supplies. The large cart in the narthex of the church, on the front pew as you enter from the parking lot and outside the storage room in the undercroft. Thanks for your flexibility.

Our November requests are **soup or canned pasta like raviolis** and for the pets, **gallon size freezer bags, and cat or dog treats.**

Coordinator Gary Donhauser
Tori Paradise, Alison Mohr, Lois Tripp

The value of consistent prayer is not that He will hear us, but that we will hear him. William McGill



Linen Pantry Update

For the month of October, the Linen Pantry assisted 9 families from 6 agencies. We also received two very large donation in October which we had to store in the shed. We have 2 clients with large families who, for various reasons, have not picked up their household items. We manage to sort half of the items from first large donation.

We are looking for Christmas mugs, hats, mittens and scarves. We have noticed an increase in the number of clients that have no stoves in their new apartments. We also need hot plates, electric frying pans, toaster ovens and crockpots all gently used..

A special thank you to those who have made donations. Your efforts are appreciated by our clients.

Parish Pictures

October 1, 2023 Carlene was accepted into the Episcopal Church at St. Paul's, Harris Hill.



Seminary Bound

Rachel Pinti began attending Yale Divinity School this fall. Here she is with a cut out of Yale's mascot Handsome Dan at orientation



The matriculation ceremony for new students with the Dean, The Rev. Andrew McGowan

Pet Blessing – October 15th

There were 7 dogs that received a Blessing that day. All were well behaved. Deacon Tom had dog treats for the pets.





Prayers of the People

Long Term: Jim G, Kristie P, Ron B, Gino L, Lee & Jessica M, Judy E, Joanne U, Beth, Sue & Dave S, Ron W, Lynda C, Dominic, Lindsey V, Jason, Bill, Finnegan M, Nicole, Sue H, Joyce J, Emma B, Kelly, Marilyn S, Kathy and family, Billy F, Rickie P, Becky P, Giada F, Jordyn S. and Bray S, Olive P, John D.

Short Term: Maria and Dick W, Carolyn B, Joey, Paul L, Jean, Emily, Madilyn, Sharon H, Michael Curry, Florence, Jeff W, Jan & Walter W, Kenny S, Scott, Bill B, Kristy G, Rachel, Mike K, Carma M

Military: Ben M, Brandon G, Richie, Quincy and John



11/08 Jesica Lewis
11/08 Lois Carter
11/20 Conroy Clarke
11/30 Kathy Bates



11/24 Lee and Fran McElhinny
11/25 Robert and Dawn Rezabek



FALL BACK
SET YOUR CLOCKS BACK AN HOUR

