



The Epistle

April, 2015

Father Bob's message:

As I was preparing for this past Holy Saturday sermon, I came across an article by a professor of Duke Divinity School. The writer provided an insight into Trinitarian theology that I found compelling and timely. He stated that the implication of Trinitarian theology is that for an individual to be fully one's self, the individual must be in relationship with others. Is this not in the role of the community of faith? But what struck me was his point that while we are called to in be relationship with each other, we are at the same time very distinct just as the persons of the Trinity are in a unified relationship with one another yet they are distinct. My take away from this article was that for me to be fully and truly me, I need not only those who are like me but also those who are not like me that hold different opinions and understanding than I. Our culture today, in my opinion, has moved steadily toward what the writer of the article calls an "oppositional identity". By this he means that being

opposed to the position of the other side whether in politics, social issues or religion issues has become the way in which we define who we are. In essence, what he is saying is that in our present culture, we define ourselves by the negative, what we are against not what we are for. Today in a controversy (It seems as if there is no end to controversies) each side sees themselves as the one who has the moral, ethical and religious right, who are good patriot or Christian, and who are holy and righteous in their position. This manifests itself in the church where one side says that they are following Jesus, not so subtly implying the other side is not. I will be honest and say that the idea of believe "my way or the highway" is a bit repugnant to me, whether in politics or in social issues, but especially in the church, where orthodoxy as defined by one side or the other is often taken to the extreme, closing the door to God's on-going revelation of his love and will as well as demonizing those with opposite views.

In the article, the professor suggests that in such an environment, the temptation is to separate, the slipping into isolation from the other is inevitable. I do not believe that it is inevitable. I believe that for me to be fully human...fully the person that God wants me to be, I must be in relationship with those who are different and distinct from me. Indeed, I would suggest, that if the Church is to truly be the Church, then it needs both sides and everyone in between of any controversy within the community, to be in honest and sincere dialogue.

Separation can only weaken the church's witness to the world that needs its witness and certainly does not build up the body of Christ. It resolves nothing, offers no solutions to any controversy

and by separating each side ends up relating only to those who are just like them, while shunning anyone who holds an opposite view or a different view. It may make one feel good but, as I said, it solves nothing. There are very, very few things in life that do not call for compromise. By the way when did “compromise” become such a bad word? If you look at it honestly, you and I compromise every day. Without it there would be chaos. We hear a lot of talk of “rights” today but very little talk about the responsibility that accompanies those rights. The lesson from history is that separation contains the seeds of further separations within each side, until the only relationship is between “I, me, and myself”. It gets pretty lonely speaking to yourself and dangerous when you find out that “I” has some differences with “me”.

Now do not misunderstand me, I am not saying that both sides in a controversy should stay together for the sake of staying together, for the sake of tolerating each other. There are times when the issue is of such deep importance to the individual that separation is indeed inevitable, but one must always be careful and prayerful when determining what these are and where they may lead. No political figure, no ecclesiastical authority, has the right to determine these for you. They are between you and God. It is certainly not helpful when we do not talk about the issue but instead refuse to talk or listen to the other and personally attack those that are opposed to our position.

Our Lord in his last words to his disciples commands us to love one another. This was neither an option nor a choice that those who would follow Jesus have the option to follow or not.

To be a Christian is to live in self-contradiction, yet be one. I am as a Christian, as Luther put it, simultaneously sinful and sanctified. It is only in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit that you and I are healed and made a new creation by God who mediates between us and our own self. You and I do not have the power, wisdom or virtue to do it in our own strength but God does if we have the courage to see and trust.
Fr. Bob

Senior Warden Update

On Sunday April 12th at 4 PM The Johnson String Quartet will be performing at St. Stephen's. They played last year at Christmas and also in the Spring. They are very talented musicians and the experience, within the setting of the church, is one to be remembered. The music will consist of pieces from various composers as well as some hymns. Please invite friends and family to attend the concert. We should be able to fill the church for this free concert. I hope to see everyone there. Don't forget the basket in the church hall for Food Bank items. One can of food, from everyone each time a member does their major food buying, would go a long way in filling the basket. From time to time, everyone accumulates stuff in the food cabinets that we know we will never use. When this happens, remember the Food Bank Basket. Food of all types is good. Doing this supports our Outreach projects by helping those who are hungry and less fortunate. The list of the items needed is posted on the wall above the basket but as Patti Palmer says, put what food, short of fresh food, you want to put in the basket.

We ran out of bulletins on Easter Sunday and the Lily Memorial sheets ran out along with the bulletins. I am listing the memorials again in this month's Epistle.

EASTER LILIES

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Beverley Anderson | In memory of Betty Branham and Jan Whalen |
| Phyllis and Ken Baldwin | In memory of loved ones |
| Lee and Bob Eldridge | In thanksgiving for our children |
| Amanda and David Ford | In loving memory of my mother Breta House Montrose |
| Donna Guess | In memory of Bill Guess, husband, Wendy Christian, sister and Jan Whalen, mother |
| MJ, Tray and Ashley Lever | In honor of Beverley Anderson, In memory of Steve Lever and Dr. & Mrs. W.G. Morehouse |
| Eleanor Milling | In loving memory of Sara Faucett/ In thanksgiving for my family |
| Anne and Norman Palmer | In memory of Esther Cooper Palmer and Norman Hart Palmer, Sr. |
| JoAnn Palmer | In loving memory of my husband Soux |
| Patti Palmer | In memory of my mother Dot Cole and my husband Bubba Palmer |
| Eleanor and Jim Parrish | In memory of Laura & Bob Thomas, Lollie Thomas Crisp, James & Edna Parrish and Robert Thomas |
| Kathy Piatek | In memory of John & Joy Piatek and |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| | Fredrick Flores |
| Karen and Carter Sielging | In thanksgiving for our children and grandchildren and in memory of our parents and grandparents |
| Paula and Frank Spinale | In honor of our parents |

Episcopal Church Women News!

Women of St. Stephen's !
 All women of St. Stephen's are invited to" break bread together " at Lizards Thicket in Blythewood Wednesday, April 15th at 6:30pm !
 Our dinning out experiences have been enjoyable for all. We have developed friendships through interesting conversation and the ability to know each other outside the realm of the church setting. Please join us if you can. We'd love to see you and enjoy your company!

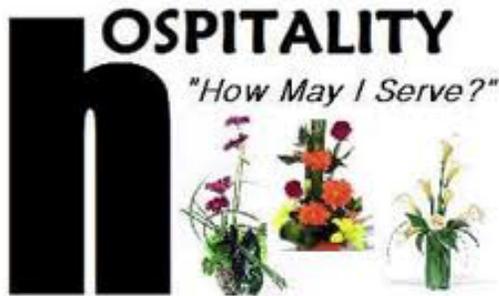
Thank You!

A big thank you for all who participated at St. Stephens on our "Home Alone" bags! We filled 24 bags with all kinds of eatable goodies and many toiletry items too. I know that all who received them felt blessed with God's love during the Easter season!

St. Stephen's outreach ministry for our Home Alone folks is a wonderful way to reach out to those who are elderly and home bound. We do this 3 times a year, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, if you haven't participated before please consider,

St. Stephen's needs you!
 Thank you to those who came back and helped put the bags together also, lots of hands make lite work, and it took us no time at all to fill the 24 bags!
 I'd also like to thank Carter Siegling for giving up his Monday morning to meet the Fairfield Co. Sheriff's Dept. at the church, so the bags could be distributed before Easter! A church outreach ministry.

DID YOU SIGN UP FOR
 HOSPITALITY SOON?



APRIL

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| April 2 | Maundy Thursday |
| April 3 | Good Friday |
| April 4 | Easter Saturday |
| April 5 | Easter Sunday |
| April 12 | Beverley Anderson |
| April 19 | OPEN |
| April 26 | Harwood |

MAY

| | |
|------|--------------|
| 5/03 | Donna Guess |
| 5/10 | MOTHER'S DAY |
| 5/17 | Koenig/Berk |
| 5/24 | OPEN |
| 5/31 | OPEN |

Please wish the following people,
 a Happy Birthday



April

| | |
|------|-------------------|
| 4/2 | Doug Bryant |
| 4/8 | Ann Ellison |
| 4/9 | Gavin Reyes |
| 4/13 | Beverley Anderson |
| 4/17 | Andrew Saless |
| 4/20 | Jarrett Palmer |
| 4/20 | Charlotte Floyd |
| 4/21 | Ava Langdale |
| 4/23 | Tonya Rowe |
| 4/29 | Jennifer Autry |
| 4/29 | Ken Baldwin |

May

| | |
|------|--------------------------|
| 5/01 | Michael Rowe |
| 5/02 | Robert Arndt III |
| 5/03 | Michael Autry |
| 5/07 | Donna Guess |
| 5/12 | Jenna Upchurch |
| 5/15 | Ryan Floyd |
| 5/15 | Greg Koenig |
| 5/17 | Jeremy Maglio |
| 5/18 | Karen Kuehner |
| 5/22 | (Michael) Reese Addison |
| 5/23 | Catherine Beale |
| 5/28 | Derek (& David) Montrose |
| 5/29 | Rebecca Ford |