



# *The Epistle*

## *September, 2016*

### **Father Bob's message**

In preparing for a recent sermon, one commentator asked what does the cross mean to you?

The question was asked because of Jesus' comment that "Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." I wrote down some of my answers to this question. As I went over these answers I was struck by the fact that they were so very safe. They were not wrong but they were so "churchy". They were so correct, a confessional answer if you will, right out of the BCP and which would have pleased my professors in my first year of theology school. I realized that my answers were essentially shaped and formed in shadow of the Passion and the theology and traditions that have grown up around the cross, the suffering and sacrifice and death of our Lord.

But as I studied the section, it struck me that this passage occurs prior to the Passion. The author of Luke in putting this verse where he put it must have been seeking to give meaning to "carry the cross" from the context of the surrounding verses. Here then the carrying of the cross can only be seen as meaning the carrying of the burdens of others as Jesus did. It means the carrying of the ministry of Jesus forward by

seeing those whom the world overlooks, marginalized and ignored.

This section has often been called the "cost of discipleship." But there are further questions that I feel must be raised as to its cost. Is it really a cost? Or is this a choice? When it is about what you give up. What you sacrifice. What you deny. When faith is cast as cost, we become rather ignorant of the very fact that life itself is costly, not just faith. Life is full of choices, of counting costs, weighing the costs. To carry your cross is to carry the choices and burdens and realities of a life that has made a certain commitment to a way of life that is committed to living out in real time the Kingdom of God here and now. Certainly this is what it meant for Jesus.

Maybe it is time for the Christian community to move beyond the fixation on the cross as death but as a way of choosing life. To be sure Jesus' death matters. Of course it matters, but we must push beyond to how and why it matters. How is the cross, especially for Luke, flying in the face of empire? A promise that God's seeing us does not end in our death and burial? A certainty that release of the captives is a past, present, and future reality, but that that future depends indeed on our choice to carry the cross of Jesus?

Carrying your cross is a choice and a choice for life and not death. But there is a challenge here for both you and me. We tend to say that the cross is a choice for life because it leads to resurrection. Yes. And no. Yes this is what God has done. God has indeed conquered death for the sake of life forever. But no, if that reality has no bearing on your present. If that reality does not work a change in how we are in relationship with God, with others, with creation and with ourselves.

Thanks for letting me ramble on. Someday I pray that I will see clearly what I now see only dimly like through a darkened glass.  
God Bless, Fr. Bob

## **Senior Warden Update**

As everyone knows we celebrated Home Coming on August 7<sup>th</sup>. The turnout was very inspiring and the banquet was one of the best I have ever seen. I feel it is safe to say everyone had a great time evidenced by the fact that many stayed on and on. If I remember correctly, it was slightly after 2PM before we closed up the hall. A huge thank you, to Beverley who coordinated, MJ who decorated, and especially to all the chefs who did such a super job of feeding the flock.

The end of the year is upon us and before we know it, 2017 will be here. The annual corporate meeting will be held on Sunday November 13<sup>th</sup> after the service. We will be presenting the 2017 budget, electing two new Mission Committee members, two delegates, and two alternates to the 2017 Diocesan Convention. We will be posting a signup list on the bulletin board the first Sunday in October to allow plenty of time to volunteer to help. Please mark your calendars for this important event in the life of St. Stephen's.

I hope everyone has had a great summer and now as we move back into Fall we will be working on planning the improvements that need to be made to the buildings. A lot has been done this year and there are still some more things that will need to be done before the end of the year. If anyone sees something they would like to suggest please feel free to communicate your thoughts to David Ford or me and I will pass them on to David.

### **AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE YOUR PLACE...**

Q.: Who are the ministers of the Church?

A.: The ministers of the Church are *lay persons*, bishops, priests and deacons.

Q.: What is the ministry of the laity?

The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, **worship**, and governance of the Church. (*The Catechism, BCP, page 855*)

Additional lectors and Eucharistic ministers are needed. Short training sessions for both lay ministries will be provided. If you are interested in one or both opportunities, please contact JoAnn Palmer (803-337-3394 or [jldp@truvista.net](mailto:jldp@truvista.net)).

### **PROVIDING FLOWERS AND GREENS FOR THE ALTAR**

Flowers on the altar and greens during Advent and Lent are the norm. We even expect to see them elsewhere in the church on special occasions. *Are you aware that it wasn't until the late 1800's that flowers "on or above the Table" were considered acceptable in the Church of England and the Episcopal Church?* In fact, we have become so accustomed to seeing them that their absence is noted. *Are you aware that the only rubric (written directions for the conduct of worship) in the Book of Common Prayer that mentions flowers is found in the service for the Dedication and Consecration of a Church?*

Altar flowers and greens represent a gift of life and love *presented to God*, not to the congregation. No matter your skill as a floral arranger, everyone can create and give an acceptable offering to the glory of God. The only standard for church arrangements is that flowers and greens blend into the background of the liturgy and increase its beauty.

Things to know when providing altar flowers and greens at St. Stephen's:

1. An Altar Flowers/Greens Schedule is posted on the bulletin board. You can sign up for one date, or more if you like.

2. Any natural materials can be used – flowers (from the garden, greenhouse, field, or woods – and yes, even the blossoms of what people consider to be weeds), leaves, branches, greens, grasses, nuts, berries, vegetables, fruits, pods and tassels. Dried and potted plants are acceptable if they fit the occasion (e.g., sheaves of wheat; memorial lilies and poinsettias). *Artificial flowers and greens are not used for altar arrangements, or anywhere else in the church.*

3. Arrangements placed in the brass vases or other containers should not be taller than the altar cross. The black line to the left of the kitchen sink represents the top of the cross.

4. Specific details about providing flowers and greens for the altar are available on the church website Bulletin Board ([www.ststephenssc.org](http://www.ststephenssc.org)). This information is helpful when you use a florist who may not be familiar with our requirements.

5. In general, the brass vases do not leave the church. If you must take the vases to a florist inform the Altar Guild Director or the Altar Guild member scheduled to serve that you are taking them *and how long they will be gone.*

7. Altar arrangements are always given to the Glory of God. They also may be given in memory or honor of or in thanksgiving for someone or some event. The notice in the bulletin will read, “The flowers (or greens) are given to the glory of God by [your name(s)] \_\_\_\_\_ in memory/honor/thanksgiving \_\_\_\_\_ of/for [name(s) \_\_\_\_\_]. When you are giving flowers or greens for a purpose be sure to write the reason(s) and the name(s) on the Altar Flower/Greens schedule.

There are still dates available for you to present your gift(s) of life and love to God. The next time you are in the church or the

parish hall stop by the Altar Flower/Greens Schedule and sign up.

## DID YOU SIGN UP FOR HOSPITALITY SOON?



### SEPTEMBER

9/4	OPEN
9/11	OPEN
9/18	Donna Guess
9/25	Paula & Frank Spinale

### OCTOBER

10/2	Brenda & Jim McGrew
10/9	OPEN
10/16	David & Amanda Ford
10/23	OPEN
10/30	OPEN



*Please wish the following people  
Happy Birthday*

---

## SEPTEMBER

9/15	George C Langdale
9/15	Samantha Robinson
9/15	Peter Saless
9/26	Gaye Milling
9/30	Berk Palmer

10/1	Don Babb
10/3	Jason Branham
10/15	Sieglinde Thomas
10/23	Kayla Branham
10/23	Bob Moore
10/24	John Davis
10/26	David Ford