

NOTES FROM THE RECTOR

I am constantly amazed that faithful Episcopalians will believe some of the nonsense that is passed off as “modern thinking.” This is especially true when it comes to how we view Easter. Some Episcopalians have been persuaded by some claiming to be “scholars” that Jesus really didn’t physically rise from the dead. People will go to extraordinary lengths to try to do damage to the amazing amount of historical evidence we have for the resurrection.

Not only that, but St. Paul reminds us that if Christ did not rise from the dead, then our faith is in vain AND you are still in your sins (1 Cor. 15:17).

Is there any credible evidence for the resurrection of Jesus? Indeed there is! Author Hank Hanegraaff lists four evidences for the resurrection which he has worked into the acronym F.E.A.T.

Fatal Torment – the fatal suffering of Jesus is one of the most well-established facts of ancient history. Even in today’s modern age of science and technology, there is a virtual consensus among New Testament scholars, both conservative and liberal, that Jesus died on the cross, that He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and that His death drove His disciples to despair. The best medical minds of ancient and modern times have demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ’s physical trauma was fatal.

Empty Tomb – There many factors which lead us to the realization the tomb of Jesus was empty that Easter morning. First, women were the first to discover the empty tomb, an unlikely scenario if this story were made up because legally their testimonies were invalid. Second, the earliest Jewish response to the resurrection presupposes the empty tomb. Instead of denying the empty tomb the antagonists of Jesus claimed the disciples stole the body. The enemies of Christ could have put an

end to the charade by producing the body of Jesus.

Appearances – Luke writes that Jesus gave the disciples many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a forty day period (Acts 1:3). Paul, Peter and the other apostles claimed that Christ appeared to hundreds of people who were still alive and available for cross-examination (1 Cor. 15:6). No one has come up with a credible explanation for the post-resurrection appearances. They can’t be hallucinations because of the number appearances and the personality types of those to whom He appeared.

Transformation – What happened as a result of the resurrection is unprecedented in all of history. In the span of 300 years, a small following of seemingly insignificant believers succeeded in turning an entire empire upside down and conquering it. The apostles and others were turned from cowardly, fearful men to bold proclaimers of the reality of Jesus’ resurrection. All willing to die for what they knew to be true. If they made up the resurrection story surely some of them would have recanted before being put to death for something they knew to be a lie.

This article has just scratched the surface of the evidence for the resurrection. It is meant to encourage further study into the facts. When you go out to your friends, neighbors and relatives, you can be prepared to share with them the FEAT that testifies to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

LET US GROW!

Fr. Roger

PRAYER AND PRAISE

Our Thursday night Prayer and Praise gathering will continue each Thursday (except Maundy Thursday) at 7 p.m. in the conference room. Come for contemporary music, prayer and Bible study. Join us as we seek the Lord and His will for St. Michael’s.

ASK THE RECTOR

This month I will continue to answer questions asked by our Sunday School students.

Where is Jesus' grave?

The Bible tells us that Jesus was buried in a grave owned by a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea. The grave was carved out of the side of a hill (as were most graves in Jesus' day). When Jesus' body was put in the grave a big stone was rolled in front of the door. The grave or tomb was near the place where he was crucified on the cross. This was probably somewhere outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

Beyond that we know very little about the grave of Jesus. I believe this is intentional on the part of God. Because Jesus body came alive and arose from the dead his body was no longer in the grave (Luke 24:5-6). Even the Romans and Jews acknowledged that the tomb was empty.

When we think about burying a loved one in a grave at a cemetery we know where they are buried and can visit their graves. The importance of Jesus' resurrection from the dead is not in the location of the tomb, but in the testimony of his friends and others who saw him alive after his resurrection.

You can go and visit the graves of all of the great founders of all of the world's major religions. It is only Jesus' grave that is empty and thus, not the focus of our attention.

Certain Christians and the tourist industry of Israel have attempted to point to one or two graves as possibly being Jesus' grave. There is no proof for this, nor is it important to know exactly where the grave is. The important thing to remember is that there is much evidence for Jesus being dead and then rising from the dead and appearing to over 500 people (1 Cor.15:3-8) before he ascended or went back to heaven. Because Jesus conquered death, we as Christians don't need to fear

death. As Paul quotes Isaiah 25 and Hosea 13 "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" The empty tomb bears witness to this victory.

ST. MICHAEL'S RECEIVES GIFT FROM CARPENTER ESTATE

Edward Carpenter was a long-time active member of St. Michael's before his death in 2001. He served on the Vestry and as Sr. Warden.

Edward loved this church and wanted to continue to help St. Michael's grow even after his death. To that end Edward had the foresight to remember St. Michael's in his will.

As a result, St. Michael's received a check in the amount of \$19,000. The Vestry voted to divide this money as follows:

- \$7,000 for the new Vision for Growth and Renewal ministry initiatives.
- \$1300 to purchase a new snow blower to replace the one we purchased in the '60s. Purchased a new sound system for the basement-\$550.
- \$139.50 to purchase VCR/DVD combo to replace our VCR in the basement.
- \$10,000 to be used as seed money for our new Endowment Fund.

Hopefully we all can see the benefit of remembering St. Michael's in our wills. Your gift keeps on giving even when you can't. Have you done or updated your will yet?

SOUP SUPPERS

The final two Soup Suppers will be held April 2 and 9 at 6 p.m. The video series "Becoming a Contagious Christian" will follow each supper.

SEVEN DEADLY WAYS TO IMPEDE MINISTRY

1. To allow the clergy and people to think that the clergy are “the ministers” and the people are the consumers – **ALL THE BAPTIZED ARE MINISTERS.**
2. To allow people to think that they are volunteers – **We have covenanted with God to minister to His world wherever we may be, workplace, family, church, or community.**
3. To allow someone to think that “their” ministry is the most important – **There is one ministry, the ministry of Jesus Christ. All of our ministries are in service to Jesus’ ministry.**
4. To think that any individual can fill any position – **Each person is endowed with unique gifts. The faith community and the individual together must discern what those gifts are.**
5. To ask a person with discerned gifts to enter a ministry without detailing the expectations, providing training or the resources needed to accomplish the ministry. To offer an opportunity to minister, to support, and then not carry through.
6. To allow the faith community to think that “church activity” is the only arena of ministry or that it is more important than being Christ’s representative wherever you are in the world.
7. To allow the ministries in the workplace, family, church and community to go unnoticed and unappreciated.

Pray for the people in your faith community; tell them that you do, and that you are thankful for the

ministry they carry out as representatives of Jesus.-

©1996. The Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity, Lansdale, PA 19446. Used with permission.

“The Church is not a stained glass self-help center, but a place of Divine intervention.”- Sum Wun

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We welcome to the St. Michael’s family Tim, Julie, Erin and Peter Van Lente. They are long time Episcopalians transferring to our church. Please welcome them with the love of the Lord!

HAVE YOU VISITED OUR WEBSITE LATELY?

Bob Weekley, our Webmaster, has been working hard to refine and improve our website which can be found at www.st-michaels-buffalo.org.

You will find current news and events, a calendar section, and each month’s newsletter highlights. A “Virtual Tour” gives visitors to the sight the opportunity to see pictures of St. Michael’s and some of our members in action.

There are links to some helpful websites and other interesting items. Check it out.

ALTAR GUILD MEETING

The Altar Guild is invited to meet on Wednesday, April 2 to prepare for Holy Week services. The meeting will be after the 9:30 a.m. service. Anyone wanting to join the Altar Guild is invited to come as well. If you would like to join but can’t make this meeting, please call Norma Fox at 824-5884.

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES

Holy Week is an exciting time of preparation for Easter. It is a time in which we have many and varied services each meant to remind us of an event in the last week of our Lord's earthly life. Many testify that the enjoyment of Easter is magnified because of "walking the way of the Cross" during Holy Week.

The following is a listing of our services from April 13-20:

Palm Sunday (April 13) — Services at **8 & 10:30 a.m.** featuring the Procession of the Palms and dramatic reading of the Passion Gospel, along with communion.

Tenebrae (Wed., April 16) — This moving service of shadows and lights features a number of Psalms, Lessons, Antiphonal responses, and Responsory verses. Fifteen candles are lighted and slowly extinguished during the course of the service until a surprise ending concludes this **7 p.m.** event.

Maundy Thursday (April 17) — The word Maundy comes from the Latin word meaning "mandate" or commandment. We begin our evening with a delicious Lamb dinner downstairs in the Parish Hall at **6 p.m.** After the dinner various members of the church will be describing the symbolism of the Last Supper and how it relates to Jesus Christ as the Sacrificial Lamb of God.

After supper we will adjourn to the church for a service that commemorates our Lord's Last Supper in which he gave the commandments to serve one another and to continue to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. This **7:30 p.m.** service features the opportunity for those who wish, to have their feet washed by the priest. After Eucharist the Sanctuary will be dramatically emptied to symbolize the emptiness of the world when Christ died.

An all-night prayer vigil begins in the Chapel immediately following the service.

Good Friday (April 18) — We call this day "Good" because of what Christ accomplished for us by his death on the Cross. There will be two services (**Noon and 7 p.m.**) which will feature the Good Friday Liturgy, the Stations of the Cross, and the reading of the Passion Gospel.

Easter (Resurrection Sunday) April 29

We will celebrate this glorious day beginning with a **Sunrise Easter Vigil service at 6 a.m.** This powerful kickoff to Easter will feature a modified vigil service with the lighting of the first light of Easter (Pascal Candle), the singing of the Exultet, and the Holy Eucharist.

Our **Festival celebrations of Easter** are at **8 & 10:30 a.m.** featuring a choral Eucharist and special Easter message by Fr. Roger.

All services during Holy Week and Easter show the Episcopal Church at its best. There is perhaps no better time to invite your unchurched friends, neighbors, and relatives to experience God presence and beauty through our services.

FISH FRIES CONTINUE

As Lent winds down don't forget to come to the last two Fish Fries of 2003. Help make this year the most successful in Fish Fry history by inviting anyone who enjoys fish to come. The last two FF dinners will be April 4 and 11 from 4-7 p.m. Take outs are still available by calling 836-0220.

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 1- National Day of Prayer

May 29- Ascension Day Potluck and Service.

June 22- St. Michael's Day at Akron Falls Park

**USHERS, LAY READERS,
ACOLYTES NEEDED**

Would you be interested in helping with our Sunday services as an Usher, Lay Reader, or Acolyte? We provide the training and you will only be asked to serve one Sunday a month.

Ushers help pass out bulletins, assist with seating the congregation, take up the offering, and assist guests.

Lay Readers lead the Psalm, read the Lessons, lead the Prayers of the People, assist with the distribution of the chalice.

Acolytes help lead the processions in the church, assist with the offering, assist the priest in preparing for communion, and lead worship by example. Adults and High School Youth may be acolytes at St. Michael's.

If you are interested in any of these ministries, contact Fr. Roger at 836-0220 or by e-mail at rgristmill2@aol.com.