

MARCH NEWSLETTER NOTES FROM THE RECTOR

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

This quote from the book of Romans (13:8) seems to say that all one needs to do is love and not worry about all of the rules and regulations of the Bible. One of the mistakes many people make when reading the Bible is to not read the whole context of a passage. The rest of the passage (verses 9-10) says this: “For the commandments, ‘you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

What St. Paul is describing here is the Moral Code of the Old Testament. He is saying that one cannot truly love without keeping the Moral Code. That Moral Code is summarized in the Ten Commandments, but is further explained in many other passages related to human behavior (such as the passages related to sexual behavior in Leviticus 18).

When one breaks the Moral Code (or the Moral Law as we might call it) then one has not acted in a loving manner in that situation, no matter how loving he may have felt or how sincere his faith might have been in that action.

In Galatians 5:14-24 St. Paul adds to our understanding of love when he says, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” He goes on to describe many aspects of unloving behavior. All of the things he describes (like adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, etc) are behaviors covered by the Moral Code. When

we participate in these “acts of the flesh” we are, in fact, sinning against the Moral Code of God. Thus, we are not truly loving by practicing these different sinful behaviors and actions, even though we may “feel” loving while doing them.

Why are we not loving when we break the Moral Code? We are not loving because the God of love has declared that love is an action not just a feeling. True love can only be accomplished when it does not contradict the definition of love given by the author of love.

In I Corinthians 13 we find a definition of love. If you look at that definition you will find that the aspects of love can be clearly seen in various parts of the Moral Code.

For example, when St. Paul says that “love is not jealous (or envious)” we see a direct correlation with the tenth commandment “You shall not covet.” There are other parts of the Moral Law that address this issue of jealousy and envy as well. Each principle of love in I Cor. 13 has a direct relationship with the keeping of the Moral Code of the Old Testament.

If we say we love God and yet do not believe in or we seek to change his Moral Code or Law, we are not really loving God no matter how strong our loving feelings may be.

Jesus said, “If you love me you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). If Jesus and the Father are one (John 10:30), and Jesus said, “if you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love (John 15:10), then Jesus’ commandments are the same as the Father’s commandments. Thus, Jesus kept the same commandments we are to keep (the Moral Commandments or Law). We keep those commandments not to save ourselves, but as

a reflection of the salvation we have and as a way of demonstrating true love.

Jesus said, "Love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:12). If Jesus did not truly love without keeping the Moral Law of the Old Testament, how can we truly love without doing the same?

This is why I and most of you at St. Michael's feel so strongly about what is going on in the Episcopal Church today. When we have bishops, priests, deacons and lay persons telling us that it is okay to break the Moral Code, then they are, in fact, telling us not to love, no matter how they may say just the opposite or how they redefine the word love.

"Dear children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and TRUTH." (1 John 3:18 emphases added).

LET US GROW!

Fr. Roger

UNILATERAL ACTION

Many in the liberal wing of the Episcopal Church have been quick to condemn what they perceive to be the unilateral action of President Bush to go to war without the backing of the United Nations. Whether one agrees with this assessment or not, the fact remains that many in this same liberal wing thought nothing of voting to make a major change in the doctrine and practice of the Episcopal Church without the consensus of the rest or even a majority of the Anglican Communion. This occurred with the Convention voted to ordain a practicing homosexual as a bishop and agreed to allow same-sex blessing rites to be carried out.

The Constitution of the Episcopal Church states clearly that we are a part of the Anglican Communion. Our belief system

has its roots in Anglicanism. Our liturgical and religious practices have their roots there as well. We love to say we are Anglicans, but when the leadership of the Episcopal Church wants to change the very foundation of Anglican teaching, then they suddenly decide it is okay to act unilaterally.

One primate of the Anglican Communion put it this way in a letter to the Episcopal leadership:

"In addition, you should know that many of us in the provinces you obviously consider to be of little consequence are also deeply offended at the arrogant, strident and unilateral action ECUSA has taken. This is doubly problematic because you personally have been so critical of your own government's failure to be collaborative in international affairs. Is stridence only a problem when you happen to disagree with the action? Could you not at least have discussed your convictions and underlying principles with your fellow primates before the final steps were taken?"- Name withheld.

WEBSITE HAS NEW SEEKER PAGE

Bob Weekley, our Webmaster, has been working with Fr. Roger to develop a "Seeker Page" on our website which can be found at **www.st-michaels-buffalo.org**.

This seeker page is designed for non-Christians and those who might like to explore the possibility of coming into a new relationship with Jesus Christ.

Invite your unbelieving or skeptical friends to our website and have them click on the button marked "Seeker page".

ASK THE RECTOR

Should I go see Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*?

This is an individual decision to be made by each person or family. Let me share with you my perspective.

Most of what we heard about this movie prior to its opening was speculation and conjecture. Mel Gibson admits that this movie is the way he sees the last twelve hours of Christ taking place, based on his research and the research of others. In order to make the movie compelling, he felt he must not hold back on any of the violence and brutality that was normally associated with crucifixion (especially with Jesus' crucifixion). As a result, Gibson wanted to portray an account of Jesus' suffering that would affect the hearts of moviegoers that have long since become anesthetized to movie violence and gore. Gibson's attempt to do this results in a movie that is bloody, graphic, violent, and shocking. In so doing, he gives his viewers a glimpse into the death of Jesus that breaks many stereotypes and mental images that we have. This makes the moviegoer a participant in the event rather than just a passive observer.

Gibson's whole point in making the movie was not that the Jews or Romans alone were responsible for the death of Jesus – it was all of us. We human beings (past, present, and future) put Jesus to death because of our sins, which he sought to redeem by dying for those sins in our place.

The Passion of the Christ is designed to shake the foundations of our complacency with the life of Jesus, and to bring us into a new appreciation of the pain, suffering and sacrifice of Christ, and a revitalized "passion" for serving him and bringing others into a new relationship with the Savior.

I would not recommend that parents take children below 15 or 16 to see this

movie (the movie is rated R, so parents need to use discretion in allowing those below 18 to attend). Youngsters might not be able to process the images and the disturbing brutality of *the Passion of the Christ*. Otherwise, I would urge all Christians to go see this movie and bring with you a person you think needs to encounter Jesus Christ.

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

This week, millions will go see Mel Gibson's new movie, *The Passion of The Christ* but how many of those Christians can answer these crucial questions?

Why did Jesus Christ have to die?

Why was Jesus Christ the only sufficient sacrifice?

What evidence is there that Jesus was God?

What evidence is there that Jesus Christ rose from the dead?

What does it mean to repent of your sins?

Why can't a good person earn his or her way to heaven?

Why did God create man if he knew he was going to sin and rebel?

What about the person that has never heard of Jesus Christ?

Will God really allow the nice little lady down the street to go to hell?

If you had trouble answering these questions or if you have young people in college or approaching that age, you might consider attending the "Worldview Weekend" in Rochester, April 30 and May 1. For information regarding this weekend visit www.worldviewweekend.com or contact Fr. Roger.

NEWS SOURCES

Those who want to keep up with what is happening in this rapidly changing Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion are urged to visit the following websites:

www.virtuosityonline.org and

www.americananglican.org. These sites will give you news you won't hear via the mainstream media or Episcopal News sources. You can visit the Episcopal Church website to get their perspective by following the link on our website – www.st-michaels-buffalo.org.

FEBRUARY VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

+The Brotherhood of St. Michael's donated \$1700 to the General Fund allowing our income to be slightly more than our expenses.

+Christine Clerc did a presentation on the Seder Meal being planned by the Worship Team for Maundy Thursday.

+ Bob DuVall reported that we gave \$200 each to Friends of Night People, Canaan House and \$100 to School 61.

+Planned for an upcoming visit by Advest Funds representative to seek higher return on our Rector's housing fund and other investments held by the church.

+Gary Kadow reported, as liaison of the parish to the AAC, information related to the AAC and other information gathered.

MID-WEEK PRAYER AND PRAISE

Those looking for a more intimate time of prayer and praise are encouraged to come together in the church's conference room each Thursday night at 7 p.m. We sing, pray, study Scripture, and share with one another.

On the third Thursday of each month we share communion together. Make plans to join us some Thursday.

TOWARD A GROWING MARRIAGE CONFERENCE

Does your marriage need a spark? Are you having struggles in your relationship? Make plans to attend the "Toward a Growing Marriage Conference" on March 6.

This seminar is not a formal, dry, marriage conference. It's a time of fun and discovery to help you build the love relationship of your dreams. This seminar is also good for those planning to be married.

It features one of the premier speakers in the area of marriage, Dr. Gary Chapman.

If you want more information about this Buffalo conference see Fr. Roger, go to www.MoodyConferences.com, or call 1-888-824-8246. Fr. Roger has a CD with information on this conference.

NEW STUDY OF REVELATION CONTINUES

Many are enjoying our Sunday morning Bible study, led by Fr. Roger, of the Book of Revelation. You are welcome no matter what your level of Bible knowledge. BYOB (bring your own Bible). The class is held in the basement (undercroft). You may join in the class at any time. The class begins at 9:15 a.m.

NEW WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Each Wednesday a service of Holy Communion and Healing is held in the Undercroft at 9:30 a.m. Following this service (about 10 a.m.) we have a verse by verse Bible study. Beginning March 3 we will begin a new study of the Book of Romans. All are welcome whether you have been to the class before or not.

TELLING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Headmaster, Cambridge School John Seel, in "the Politics of Spirituality," (quoted in *Critique*, 2003, Issue 9, pages 14-16). Used with permission.

"Affirmations of objective truth are frequently perceived as a personal affront by contemporary seekers today. To question someone's view of reality is to question the person. It's hard for modern seekers to disconnect their identity from their ideas. And yet this is a constructive challenge for those who hold to biblical orthodoxy and unpopular categories of absolute truth. For such beliefs must be communicated in love, in the context of caring relationship or else one quickly finds that one has communicated neither truth nor love."

It is wise for us to appropriate the declaration of the Council of Constantinople:

"They who separate themselves from communion with their bishop on account of any heresy condemned by the Holy Synods of the Fathers, while he evidently proclaims the heresy publicly, and teaches it with brave front in Church - such persons, in excluding themselves from communion with their so-called bishop before Synodical cognizance, not only shall not be subject to canonical censure, but shall be deemed worthy, by the Orthodox, of becoming honor; for they condemn as teachers, not bishops but pseudo-bishops; and they do not cut up the unity of the Church by schism, but hasten to deliver her from schisms and divisions."

And many centuries later, Richard Hooker wrote, [capitalizations are Hooker's]

"Laws touching Matter of Order are changeable, but the Power of the Church; Articles concerning Doctrine not so. We read often in the Writings of Catholic and Holy men touching matters of Doctrine.

This we believe, this we hold, this the Prophets and Evangelists have declared. This the Apostles have delivered. This the Martyrs have sealed with their blood, and confessed in their Torments, to this We cleave as to the Anchor of our Souls; against this, though an Angel from Heaven should preach unto us, we would not believe. But, did we ever in any of them read touching Matters of mere Comeliness, Order and Decency, neither Commanded nor Prohibited by a Prophet, any Evangelist, and Apostle. Although the church wherein we live do ordain them to be kept, although they be never so general observed, though all the Churches in the World Command them, tough Angels from Heaven should require our Subjection thereunto, I would hold him accursed that doth obey?"

WE ARE NOT ALONE

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I just have to share with you some wonderful news. We and our sister churches, who have taken a stand against the recent decisions of the General Convention related to homosexuality and have stood up for following God's directives as outlined in Holy Scripture, were the prayer focus of the week recently at the Love Joy Gospel Church in Lancaster. Isn't it great to know that others even outside of our denomination are praying for us? Such a great blessing and encouragement!

— Carol Teschemacher

GUARDIAN ANGEL GIFT SHOP

We wish to thank everyone for the support you give us by purchasing items from the Shop! This helps us to continue the outreach programs we have. Come and see the sun catchers and chimes we now have on display – thanks to Mike Rickard. An Easter Basket Raffle will be coming up soon. More details later.

ST. MICHAEL'S TO CELEBRATE PASSOVER SEDER DURING HOLY WEEK

Passover is the oldest and most important of Jewish religious festivals. Passover is based on the rituals of ancient Israel preserved primarily in Exodus 12-14, where which Israelites celebrated their deliverance by God from slavery in Egypt. The festival celebrates the entire sequence of events that led to the Israelites' freedom from slavery. While thoroughly based in those historical events, the celebration encompasses much more as it becomes a vehicle to celebrate the very nature of God and His gracious work in the world. It is in this larger dimension that Jesus adopted the Passover service as a sacramental remembrance of God's new work of deliverance in the Christ, and allows Christians to celebrate this ancient festival.

The Passover meal is known as the Seder, which means "order," because the meal and service are done in a prescribed sequence. This sequence is presented in the Haggadah, "the Telling" (pronounced ha – GAD – dah) which outlines the steps of the meal as well as readings and songs for the participants. The basic elements and order have remained unchanged for centuries.

This blend of tradition and innovation conforms to the purpose of the celebration: to tell the story of God's actions in history in a way that brings it out of the past and makes it a present reality for everyone in the community as if they personally are part of the story. The Passover appeals to all of the senses and involves everyone to tell the story of God. It represents the very best of communal liturgy.

This year, St. Michael's will be holding a Seder dinner on Maundy Thursday, Thursday, April 8. The dinner will be in

conjunction with Holy Eucharist and will conclude with the stripping of the altar, as is traditional on Maundy Thursday. Vestry members, as leaders of the church, will act as table hosts for the dinner. Each participant/ participating family will be asked to bring a dish chosen from a variety of authentic Jewish recipes (recipes available) that are typically prepared for the Seder, and may be asked to bring other items. Meat (Lamb and perhaps one other meat for those that do not like lamb) will be provided by St. Michael's for a nominal fee (or free will offering?).

To participate in the Seder, you will need to:

- 1. Sign up no later than Sunday, March 21, indicating how many of your family and friends will be attending dinner. Sign up sheets are in the Narthex or downstairs bulletin boards. You may also sign up by filling out a blue card or calling the church office.**
- 2. Wait for communication from your table host as to what to bring to complete the Seder meal for your table**
- 3. Prepare your dish and come to the meal**

Those of you who have participated in the Christian Seder before know that it is a poignant way to remember the Passion of our Lord by sharing in the ceremony of what was His last meal. We hope that you will attend.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Fr. Roger at the church, or Christine Clerc at 893-3813.

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES ANNOUNCED

Our Holy Week and Easter services for 2004 bring to a conclusion our 40-day observance of Lent. Holy Week is a commemoration of the passion of Jesus as he suffered and died for our sins. It culminates on Easter Sunday with the festival celebration of the Resurrection of the Christ.

Some of you have already seen the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. Come join us as we relive those events leading up to and including the death, burial, and resurrection of the Pascal Lamb.

Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday, April 4 with a procession of the Palms through the church at the 8 and 10:30 services.

Tenebrae, a service of lights and shadows, will be held on Wednesday, April 7 and a later time than normal (7:30 p.m.).

Maundy Thursday, April 8, features a special Christian Seder meal at 6 p.m.(see related article in this edition) followed by the Maundy Thursday service and concluding with the powerful stripping of the Altar and beginning of our all-night Prayer Vigil.

Good Friday, April 9, features two services at Noon and 7 p.m. This year we will receive communion from the reserved Sacrament along with the traditional Good Friday Liturgy and Stations of the Cross.

Easter Sunday, April 11, features two services at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. These services will be designed to touch our visitors and guests with the power of the Resurrection of Jesus. The choir will be singing at both services. An Easter Egg hunt for the children will be held after the 10:30 a.m. service.

ALL-NIGHT "PRAY-ERS" SOUGHT FOR MAUNDY THURSDAY

At the conclusion of the Maundy Thursday service an all-night Prayer Vigil will be held. The purpose of this Vigil is to respond to Christ's words in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Could you not watch with me one hour?"

We are asking that singles and couples sign up for a one hour time slot between 9 p.m. Maundy Thursday and Noon Good Friday. During your time of prayer we ask that you pray for St. Michael's and our various prayer concerns and for any other needs for which you may want to pray. This year any number of people may sign up to pray during a given hour at the side "Altar of Repose." We are asking men or couples sign up during the "wee hours of the morning" for security and protection purposes. Signup sheets are available in the Narthex of the Church.

PRAYER LIST

Did you know that St. Michael's has two prayer lists? One prayer list contains the names only of our members who are in need of prayer. This is found in the bulletin on Sunday mornings. Names can be added to that list by calling the church office.

The second list we have is maintained by our Prayer Chain. This list contains members and non-members who have been placed on the list to receive prayer for specific needs. Names can be added to this list by contacting Eve David (836-8466).

If you or any other person on the prayer list has received an answer to our prayers and can be removed from the list, please notify the appropriate Prayer list contact person.

THURSDAY NIGHT SOUP SUPPERS AND “BEYOND BELIEF” PROGRAM

St. Michael's will hold one of the most important teaching opportunities for the Parish as we gather together for a Lenten Soup Supper followed by a DVD series entitled “Beyond Belief.”

We gather for Soup and Bread at 6 p.m. in the parish hall. About 6:45 p.m. we will watch author and apologist Josh McDowell discuss one of the most relevant issues related to our situation as a church and in our society.

This eye-opening series will excite you and bolster your faith like nothing you have seen before. This series is especially relevant for parents with children in helping to learn how to equip our youth to know what they believe and why. Whether you are a single or family this series will touch you and equip you to face the challenges of the secular society and Episcopal Church.

The evening concludes after a period of questions and discussion at 8 p.m.

The dates for the “Beyond Belief” Soup Suppers are March 4, 11, 18, 25, and April 1. The soup and bread is offered without charge with a free-will offering basket available.

NEW BROTHERHOOD OF ST. MICHAEL'S OFF TO ROUSING START

On February 21 the Brotherhood of St. Michael's Men's ministry got off to a rousing start with some 27 men gathered for breakfast and fellowship.

The meeting featured a talk by Fr. Roger on the need for men to take on a new and more visible leadership role in the parish. He shared ways in which men could grow as Christians and leaders.

Following the talk by Fr. Roger the officers of the Brotherhood were announced. Gary Kadow will serve as president, Bob DuVall – Vice-President, Mark Bidell – Treasurer, and John Bidell as Secretary. Elections will be held each year to encourage others to take over these positions.

A number of upcoming events were announced including an Italian Dinner night and the second annual Oktoberfest. Ideas were entertained for other events to be done with the BSM.

Gary emphasized that the purpose of this reorganized group was “to promote social and spiritual growth through fellowship, unity, and prayer, while living, sharing and defending the Word of God.” It will not be a work party or a maintenance group, though there may be occasions when some men will be asked to help with a special project.

Dues for the BSM are \$10 a year and with paid dues one receives an official “membership card.” All men of St. Michael's are considered to be a part of the Brotherhood and are encouraged to attend meetings and events whether you are a “card carrying member” or not.

Stay tuned for the next get together. For more information, call Gary at 832-5469 or Bob at 743-1507.

THANK YOU

Many thanks for donation of stamps for mailings. Also, thank you for the 2 packs of letter sized paper and to the Robinson's for stamps and paper for the bulletins. As you know, office supplies are expensive and every donation really helps the Church.

CALVARY CHURCH CONCERT

The Parish Choir of Calvary Church, 20 Milton St., Williamsville is presenting an Evensong on Sunday, March 7th at 5:00 p.m. They will perform the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis by Herbert Howells and A Motet for Five Voices “Jesu, Meine Freude” by Johann Sebastian Bach.

7:30 A.M. SUNDAY MORNINGS

Who in their right mind would want to get up and be at church at that awful hour? I'll tell you who – a dedicated group of men and women who are committed to the ministry of praying for Fr. Roger (or substitute) prior to the early service each Sunday. This group ministers in pairs, on a rotating schedule, each about once a month. It currently includes Ronna Bulera, Janet Casagrande, April and Charles Infantino, Dave Noonan, John Neubert, Mark Dascomb, Mike Rickard, and Bob Weekley.

You might ask why do we do this and what do we pray for? We do this because we are committed to support our rector, and one way we can do that is to pray for him. Certainly, we could pray for him without traveling to church, especially in light of some of the recent weather we've experienced on Sundays. But then he would not really know if we were praying or just sleeping in that day. Meeting to pray at church not only reinforces our commitment to this ministry, but gives us additional opportunities to personally ask him if there is anything troubling him that he would especially like us to pray for. It also allows us to lay hands on him and pray for healing if needed.

Another reason we do this, is that it starts the day with a spiritual activity. Instead of sitting with a cup of coffee watching the terrible things that are normally shown on the news, we assume an attitude of prayer and try to listen to what God is calling us to pray for. Although we may not be led to pray for anything special on a given Sunday, we pray for Fr. Roger and his family – for their health and safety. We pray for the congregation and any visitors that may be present. And we pray for the vestry and leadership of St. Michael's and our diocese, and for the

Episcopal and world-wide Anglican Church and the resolution of differences.

On any given Sunday there may be other things to pray for as well, but you get the idea. This ministry was started over 10 years ago to support the rector and, thanks to all those committed intercessors listed above, plus numerous others, is still going strong. Please feel free to join in this ministry. If you wish to be a regular part of this ministry, please contact Bob Weekley at 897-3722, otherwise feel free to stop in on Sunday morning and participate with our scheduled team at 7:30 AM in the Conference Room.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

In the past we have asked for names and phone numbers of who you would like us to contact in the event you become ill. Some have responded with this information, PLEASE, especially if you live alone, let the office know this information. It is kept in a file available only to those with access to the office. It will not be published otherwise.

WOMEN'S GUILD

St. Michael's Women's Guild will meet on Wednesday, March 3rd following a brown bag luncheon at noon. Dessert will be provided.

Several of our women join in the Holy Eucharist, Healing Service and Bible Study preceding our meeting.

We hope you will join us for a time of fellowship and service. It would be helpful for our commitment to Canaan House if members remembered to bring in a donation of personal items, cleaning supplies or paper goods. See you there!!