

NOTES FROM THE RECTOR

“We must obey God rather than men.”

These words from the first reading on the Second Sunday after Easter, taken from the book of Acts (5:12-29), reminds us that there comes a time when we are faced with having to make a similar decision.

In this case, the first century Church was endeavoring to take the “gospel truth” to the whole world in obedience to the command of Jesus in Matthew 28. Part of that world included the religious Jews who had long since decided that they needed to reinterpret Scripture, adding to it many things that were never intended when the Scriptures were written. They were upset when the Apostles tried to preach to the people the truths given to them by Jesus and contained in Him (which we find in the New Testament).

Jesus himself faced this as we read about in Matthew 15 as he faced some Jewish leaders who had elevated the ritual hand washing tradition of the elders (that which was culturally accepted) above keeping the moral commandments.

Jesus replied to them, *“And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.”*

Jesus describes what commandments he is talking about in Matthew 5. He says, *“Do not think I have come to abolish the Law (moral code) and the prophets: I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will*

be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (5:17-19).

While we recognize from the rest of the gospel message that Jesus was trying to tell people they could not enter the kingdom of heaven by their own righteousness, at the same time, he affirmed that the Moral Code (moral commandments) was still in effect as a standard for righteous behavior. We know Jesus was speaking of the Moral Code and not the ceremonial, ritual, or dietary laws because the rest of Chapter 5 describes aspects of the Moral Code of the Old Testament.

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were perverting the Word of God and nullifying the commandments of God by their own twisted interpretations.

The same thing is happening today from our bishop to many clergy and lay people. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and are seeking to teach others to do likewise, and are endangering the souls of their hearers.

They are being cheered on by secular society which has become so deceived that they often call evil good and good evil. Rather than leading society into truth and righteousness, many in the Episcopal Church are allowing society to lead them into unbiblical beliefs and practices.

This brings me back to the beginning. We are being asked to accept and go along with things that the Church has never accepted and which the Bible clearly condemns. Do we obey leadership that evidently has no problems breaking the Moral Code and teaching others to do likewise, or do we obey God?

When the apostles, led by Peter, were faced with a choice of obeying corrupt religious leaders who were perverting the Word of God or obeying God, they chose to obey God. This led to their being

persecuted, thrown out of places, ridiculed, and imprisoned. We should not be surprised when similar things happen to us for standing for the truth of Scripture and against false and unbiblical teaching. Choose today whom you will obey.

Let us grow!

Fr. Roger

ASK THE RECTOR

St. Michael's has redirected funds from the Diocese of Western New York to other ministries. Why?

First, this was not done to punish the diocese or the Bishop. The Vestry felt that in good conscience we would not be good stewards of your money by contributing to a diocese and national church under the leadership of those who are clearly denying some of the long-held truths related to the Word of God. We did, however, not make this a unilateral decision. We allowed the congregation to decide how much of their giving they wished to go to the diocese and national church.

Some chose to direct the Vestry to contribute a portion of their giving to the diocese and national church. Most wanted to redirect it.

St. Michael's was not the only church that did not pledge the full fair share asking by the diocese. Five churches officially redirected money from the fair share with each church making a much smaller pledge to the diocese. This accounted for (according to diocesan statistics) forty percent of the almost \$300,000 projected shortfall that the diocese faces. This means that sixty percent of the projected deficit in the diocese's fair share asking is in the hands of churches who are not officially protesting. This reflects not just a weak economy, but also no small unrest in many

congregations over the direction the Episcopal Church is headed. This, it appears, is reflected in a decreased giving in many "progressive" or "liberal" parishes. This, we believe, has caused many to not be able to pledge the full fair share asking by the diocese.

St. Michael's has done what parishes have done all over the United States. We long for the day in which we can again give the full fair share to the diocese. This can happen as the Bishop and Diocesan Council decide to embrace orthodox biblical teaching and morality.

APRIL VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

+Vestry heard a report from our financial advisor with Advest.

+Ushers are to be asked to oversee the storing of the offering after each service.

+Estimates for lawn care are being gathered.

+Employees of the church are to have the Rector or Wardens sign off on any purchases to be made beforehand.

+June 6- Luncheon honoring Marge Lang

+June 20- Parish Picnic on the church grounds.

+Kitchen and Coffee hour supplies to be purchased by the Gardiniers. A "shopping" list will be put up in the kitchen to list any needed items.

+Open plate offering for 4/18 to go to former deacon James Williams who will be visiting from his mission in Africa.

+Fr. Roger attending Continuing Ed weekend- "Worldview Weekend." 4/29-May 1"

+Executive Committee formed to develop a long-range plan for St. Michael's.

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.

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. Before each class an opportunity is given to ask any questions regarding the Bible or the Church.

ROMANS BIBLE STUDY CONTINUES

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. We are continuing a study begun in March of the Book of Romans. Before each class an opportunity is given to ask any questions regarding the Bible or the Church.

All are welcome whether you have been to the class before or not.

ST. MICHAEL'S HAS SUCCESSFUL PASSOVER SEDER DURING HOLY WEEK

In April, on Maundy Thursday, St. Michael's held, for the first time, a hands-on recreation of the Passover Seder celebrated by our Lord before His Passion.

Christine Clerc organized the Vestry into teams to lead us through this event that

can be traced back to the Exodus. Charles David, Norma Fox, Virginia Bradley, Bobby Gardinier and others helped prepare a delicious lamb dinner to provide the meal portion of our Seder.

Various elements of the Seder were on each of the seven tables seating the 56 attendees. Each person had the opportunity to participate in each aspect of the Seder while the meaning of each portion of the ritual was described. This description included an explanation of the symbolism of the Messiah Jesus seen in the various aspects of the Seder.

Many thanks to all who helped make this event truly memorable.

WEBSITE HAS LINKS

Did you know that St. Michael's website (www.st-michaels-buffalo.org) has many links to interesting and helpful websites? You may link to David Virtue's cutting edge news and commentary on the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion, or the American Anglican Council. Other links include a website dedicated to C.S. Lewis, a church locator website (for when you are traveling to another city), a "Christian headlines" website, and many more. Check it out!

GAY MARRIAGE?

Last month a link to a website was listed that had a helpful article on the subject of gay marriages. Another article is available, written by a Jewish rabbi that gives the orthodox Jewish perspective on this issue. You may access the article by going to the following website: www.towardtradition.org/article_Gay_Friends_1.htm. A hard copy can be obtained by contacting Fr. Roger

THANK YOU

A personal thank you to Alexandra Grist for her help during Holy Week with the bulletins. She is such a joy to work with and made the week much easier. *Madeline*

Also, thank you to Georgia Peden and Virginia Bradley for their very generous donations for Office Supplies.

Thank you to all who donated to the Guild's Easter Basket Raffles. We realized a profit of \$84.00 for our Outreach Fund.

OOOPS!

ADDITIONS TO EASTER MEMORIALS:
In Memory of John & Marie Bidell & John & Marie Butch by the John Bidell Family.
Also: All Loved Ones by Virginia Bradley; Kenneth & Mae Fox, Constance & William Guppy, Ethel Dascomb by Norma & Cliff Fox; Barbara W. Howard, Ernest & Margaret Howard, Lora & Jessie Ring by Robert Howard. Our apologies for not including them Easter Day.

MAY BIRTHDAYS

1 Michelle Rickard 9 Mark Bidell
1 Jodi McHugh 9 Tim Meyers
2 Ethel Doze 16 Julie VanLente
3 Diane Meacham 21 Evelyn Miller
5 Jack Slattery 21 Elizabeth Grist
7 Linda DuVall 25 John Bidell
8 Katherine DuVall 26 Norman Miranda

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

5 – Carol & Leon Shatzel
18 – Christine & Robert Clerc
22 – Marjorie & Norm Lange
31 – Barbara & Gary Kadow

FLY YOUR FLAG

Armed Forces Day is the 15th followed by Memorial Day on the 31st. Let us show our support for Veterans and all our loved ones who are serving to maintain freedom for all.

DINNER IN ITALY & EVENING ON BROADWAY

Saturday, May 1 at 6:00 p.m. This will be a five-course dinner with wine, followed by a musical evening starring Randy Kramer, executive Director of MusicalFare Theatre Company and Debbie Pappas, who recently starred in Andrew Lloyd Weber's "Song & Dance." Remember the wonderful Oktoberfest we had last year and join us for this Spring party. Tickets are \$15.00 and may be purchased from Gary Kadow, Bob DuVall and Mark Bidell before April 25th.

"NEIGHBORHOOD" PARISH PICNIC SET FOR JUNE 20

St. Michael's Vestry is boldly going where few Vestrys have gone before. They have decided to move our annual Parish Picnic to the parish grounds. It is hoped that the street will be blocked off and that many of our neighbors will join us as we reach out to them while having fun ourselves. Highlights for this year's picnic planning include a "Bouncy House" and Dunk tank for the kids, a Tent under which we can eat, games and prizes for the kids, and, of course, the usual hot dogs, hamburgers, etc. We even hope to have ice cream this year.

This could be an excellent way to bond with our neighbors in hopes of introducing them to our Church.

Make plans to join us right after the last service as we kick off the summer in style.

MOTHER'S DAY

The Gift Shop has many delightful gifts for Mother and when you purchase from them you are supporting their Outreach Ministry.

YOUNG WOMEN AND OTHERS OF ST. MICHAEL'S

Many of the women of our church are unable to come to the monthly Guild meetings and, as a result, may feel like you can't contribute much to the work of the women of St. Michael's.

On two Saturdays, May 15 and 22, all women described above are invited to come to a work party to help "minister" to the kitchen. The kitchen has not had a good cleaning in a while and is in desperate need of your help.

Would you devote an hour or two on these Saturdays to help? We will begin around 10 a.m. and conclude by noon. Come for all or part of the clean up! Coffee will be provided.

LUNCHEON HONORING MARGE LANG

Make plans now to join us as we honor Marge Lang for over 50 years as organist for St. Michael's and, before that at St. James's. We will be having a luncheon on June 6th after the 10:30 a.m. service. Sign-up sheets will be up soon.

SPECIAL MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND/PENTECOST SERVICE

St. Michael's will be celebrating the Day of Pentecost and Memorial Day in a special service at 9 a.m. on Sunday, May 30. This service will take the place of our regular services, and will feature Morning Prayer as our liturgy of the Word and Eucharist as usual.

We will be inviting servicemen to come join us that day as we honor those who are serving as well as those who have given their lives in service of this country.

Balloons will be a part of our Pentecost celebration of the gifts of the Spirit. The Celtic Spirit Pipe band will also be a part of

this special service. This is a great time to invite an unchurched friend, neighbor, or relative.

COFFEE HOUR HELP NEEDED

For many months now Nancy Grist has been taking on the formidable task of providing the "Coffee Hour" after the 10:30 a.m. service.

Nancy is seeking others who might be willing to provide the Coffee Hour once a month. She will provide the training and will even assist you as you do your first Coffee Hour. If you would be willing to help, would you see Nancy at late service or call her at 834-1564. Funds are available to help offset any costs you might incur. Thanks.

WOMEN'S GUILD

We will meet May 5th for a pot-luck luncheon at noon following the usual Wednesday morning Holy Eucharist, Healing Service and Bible Study. Please join us that morning and bring your brown bag lunch. Dessert and beverage will be provided.

Please note we have changed the date for our Roast Beef Luncheon. It will be June 2nd at noon.

This will give us time to gather together all the beautiful items you women of the Parish no longer have room for in your homes. Remember the proceeds from this auction go toward the Garden Fund to help beautify the grounds. This is a Parish Project for All Women! Tickets should be purchased from Eve David or Georgia Peden in the Gift Shop or members of the Guild. The cost will be \$5.00 the same as last year and the deadline for reservations is May 27th. We hope you will come and enjoy the fellowship. Last year over 40 women attended. *V. Bradley, President*

**WOMEN OF FAITH –
“IRRESPRESSIBLE HOPE
CONFERENCE 2004”**

The Women of Faith Conference will be held in Buffalo on Friday, August 13th from 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m. and Saturday August 14th from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at HSBC Arena.

Women of Faith Conferences were started in the mid 1990's specifically to encourage women and have become the largest women's gathering in North America. You will hear some of North America's best-loved Christian speakers and musicians who have overcome adversities to bring a unique message of hope. They share inspiring messages full of humor and insight. We are invited to join them to hear God's message of grace.

The cost for Friday night and Saturday is \$69.00 if you register at least 8 weeks before the conference and \$79.00 if you register later. A box lunch costing \$8.00 is also available when you register. If you are interested in attending, please contact Shirley Szen or Joan Webster.

UTO INGATHERING

This, as usual, is on May 9th, Mother's Day, at both services. What a wonderful day to express our thanks to God for all his many blessings. I hope you have been using your boxes for daily prayers of thanksgiving and that you will present them at this time. The blue envelopes can be found in the narthex or in the pews prior to the May 9th date. Thank you. *Virginia Bradley, Chair*

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

“Let Freedom Ring, The freedom to gather, the freedom to worship, the freedom to pray” is the theme for this year's National Day of Prayer. We will have a special service Thursday, May 6th at 7:00 p.m. Please join us in praying for peace throughout the world.