

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.

Bulletin Bites

April 2, 2017
Fifth Sunday in Lent
John 11:1-45

Option 1

“Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may *believe*.”

When Jesus first learned that Lazarus was ill he said, “This illness will not end in death, but is for the glory of God.” The disciples were still learning about Jesus, and from him. They did not understand all that he did and said. But they **believed** in him. When Jesus announced he was going to Lazarus, the disciples knew he would have to pass near Jerusalem where the Jewish leaders were plotting to kill him. Thomas says, “Let us also go die with him.” He **believed** in Jesus **before** he fully understood him. When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Martha came out to greet him and lamented that he had not come sooner to save her brother. Before Jesus went to call Lazarus forth from the tomb, he asked Martha, “Do you **believe** in me?” She said, “Yes Lord, I **have come to believe** that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is to come into the world.” She **believed** in Jesus **before** he fulfilled her desire. Do we **believe** in Jesus before we fully understand him, before he fulfills our desire? How do we demonstrate that **belief**?

Option 2

“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

When Jesus arrived at Bethany, a small village approximately four miles southeast of Jerusalem, he received that greeting from both Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus. Their greetings reveal both faith and doubt; faith that Jesus could have prevented the death of Lazarus and doubt that he could now do anything about it. Jesus understood. Jesus taught Martha and Mary what he would later teach Thomas, “Do not persist in your unbelief, but believe”(John 21:27). If we do not occasionally doubt our faith, we may not have a faith to doubt. Jesus uses this whole episode to teach all of us that we must be good stewards of our faith. When we have doubts, do we let them linger and fester, or do we try to resolve them by seeking the counsel of our clergy, studying the teachings of our Church, or discussing them with a spiritual director or someone we can trust? If not, we may sink deeper into our doubt and jeopardize our faith.

April 9, 2017
Palm Sunday
Matthew 26:14 - 27:66

Option 1

“Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?”

Passover is a solemn memorial of the Angel of Death “passing over” the first born males of the Jews in Egypt. While sharing Passover with his disciples Jesus declares that one of them will betray him. We learn Judas has made a bargain to hand Jesus over to the Jewish leaders. The name Judas has since been synonymous with “traitor” and there are many theories about his motive. Did Jesus fail to live up to his expectations? Did he misjudge the intentions of the Jewish leaders to eliminate Jesus? Was he trying to push Jesus to become a political and military Messiah? From the Passover meal with his disciples Jesus goes to the Garden where, in agony, he accepts the events that will not pass over him. He is painfully aware that he will suffer the consequences of exposing the silly, stupid, senseless and sinful conditions of his day and challenging the acts of political and religious leaders. What are our expectations of Jesus? Do we betray or abandon Jesus when we think he has failed to meet our expectations?

Option 2

“Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.”

Prayer is not so much about what we *say to* God but about what we are willing to *hear from* God. When we are in true communion with God to discern his will for us he may ask us to do something difficult or unpleasant, something we have not done before, something that may antagonize our family and friends, or something involving financial or physical risk. And it is okay if our first answer is “No!” But if we are good stewards of our prayer life, growing constantly in our communion with God to discern his will, we must ultimately say “Yes Lord!” Only a fool would want to accept the cup that Jesus knew was in front of him. Jesus was no fool. But Jesus was not willing to destroy the communion he had with the Father, so he was willing to accept the cup. What are we willing to hear from God? When God places a cup in front of us that we would rather not accept, how will we respond?

April 16, 2017
Easter Sunday
John 20:1-9

Option 1

“For they did not yet understand the Scripture, that he had to rise from the dead.”

Happy Celebration of the Resurrection of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity from Human Death as Proof of Eternal Life for Those Who Believe in Jesus! Or, to shorten that, **Happy Easter!** It is Incredible! [From *Miriam Webster Dictionary*: **in.cred.i·ble** (adjective) \ *in-kre-d-bəl* 1. **difficult or impossible to believe**; 2. **extremely good, great, or large**.] For the disciples “rise from the dead” was **difficult or impossible to believe**. The salvation of all mankind it is **extreme good, great and large**. The multi-colored egg laying bunny, the chocolate and sugar treats in a basket full of fake straw, the fancy clothes and elaborate bonnets are all trappings we have adopted to help celebrate the **incredible** act of God incarnate as a human being who was born, lived, died and rose from the dead to save the human beings He

created out of unconditional love. As we enjoy the trappings let us not fail to truly celebrate the **Incredible REALITY of Easter**. So, **HAPPY EASTER!!!!**

Option 2

“For they did not yet understand the Scripture, that he had to rise from the dead.”

Simon Peter and John rushed to the tomb after Mary Magdalene told them it was empty. They had spent the past three years with Jesus watching as he healed the sick, drove out demons, raised people from the dead, and was transfigured in the presence of Moses and Elijah. They knew Jesus on a first name basis. Now they are confronted with the most important and revealing event in the history of the salvation of mankind - the Resurrection. It would take two visits by Jesus to the apostles, locked in an upper room, and a meal he served them on the shores of the Sea of Galilee for they began to believe Jesus was truly risen. Our own faith in the Risen Jesus is constantly tested. As good stewards of that faith we must continue to grow in our awareness and appreciation of all that our Triune God has done for us. We must learn and love Scripture and Tradition. Our desire should be to get to know Jesus, Our Risen Lord, on a first name basis.

**April 23, 2017
Second Sunday of Easter
Or Divine Mercy Sunday
John 20:19-31**

Option 1

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

After his Resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples hiding in a room “behind locked doors.” To calm their fears he said, “Peace be with you.” Then, standing in front of them, with holes in his hands and a spear gash in his side, Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” He sent them into the world to do and say the same things that resulted in his crucifixion. That had to concern the disciples. But then he said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” and empowered them to reconcile sinners with the Loving God who created them. When others disciples feared going near Jerusalem, Thomas said, “Let us also go die with him.” When Jesus appears in the room a second time it is Thomas who proclaims, “My Lord and my God.” Jesus knew those who did not know him and see his wounds after his Resurrection would believe in him on the strength of the faith of others. Those who come after us will believe in Jesus on the strength of our faith. Do we believe Jesus as “Our Lord and our God”? Do we proclaim that by what we do and say?

Option 2

“Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.”

“On the evening of that first day of the week” Jesus appeared to his disciples who were in a room *behind locked doors*. He said, “Peace be with you” and breathed on them and gave them the power to forgive sins. He passed on to them the responsibility for his mission and message. Thomas was not with them and had some doubts. A week later they were still hiding *behind locked doors*, but now Thomas was with them. He saw Jesus and proclaims, “My Lord and my God.” Jesus knew that Thomas and the others believed because they had seen. He also knew others who had not seen him would come to believe. That is us. Fortunately, we have the faith of Thomas, the other disciples, and billions who have believed in Jesus over 2000+ years to support our faith in Jesus as our Risen Lord. What are we doing to deserve that faith? What are

we doing to nurture our faith? What are we doing that will lead others to believe in Jesus because of our faith? What are we doing to carry on the mission and spread the Gospel of Jesus?

April 30, 2017
Third Sunday of Easter
Luke 24:13-35

Option 1

**“And it happened that, while he was with them at table,
he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.”**

When Jesus encountered two disciples on the road to Emmaus it is clear that they did not understand all he had endured. He bluntly tells them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!” Despite his disappointment he did not abandon the two disciples, but “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures.” To paraphrase St. Augustin, Jesus is hidden in the Old Testament, and revealed in the New. How fortunate we are to have the faith of the apostles, the many disciples who followed them, and billions of Christians over two thousand years who believed that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation, forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Are we grateful for the gift of their faith? Do we accept and nurture our faith by daily or frequently reading God’s Word revealed to us in the Old and New Testaments? When is the last time we read Sacred Scripture and listened for God to speak to us?

Option 2

**“Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way
and opened the Scriptures for us.”**

Despite a flurry of archaeological activity in the Holy Land, especially around Jerusalem, Scripture scholars have not definitively located Emmaus. St. Luke says it was seven miles from Jerusalem. Several sites northwest of Jerusalem compete to be the “village of Emmaus.” Yet, it is not the location that makes Emmaus significant; it is the event - the Risen Jesus teaching two of his disciples all of the passages in the Old Testament that referred to him. What a wonderful experience, especially when they recognized him after “He took bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them.” We have the New Testament and Tradition, the completion of God’s Revelation of Himself to us. Every time we participate in the Eucharist, Jesus, in the person of our priest, takes bread, says a blessing, breaks it and gives it to us. Oh, how our hearts should be burning within us, no matter where we are. If not, we may need to spend more time walking with Jesus by reading Scripture, wherever we are.