

SAINT CHRISTOPHER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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A WORD FROM FATHER MATTHEW BURDETTE

THE SEASON OF LENT & NEW BEGINNINGS

It doesn't take a genius to guess that, as a priest taking on new kinds of responsibilities at a new parish, my thoughts of late have been preoccupied with the matter of preparation. Each day, I keep asking myself, "What must I do to prepare for this new role? Am I doing everything needed to be well prepared? What am I forgetting?"

I must confess something. No priest wants to begin a new ministry right at the beginning of Lent. The arrival of a new priest should excite and energize a congregation. But let's be honest: the arrival of a new priest also makes us a little nervous or anxious. So a new priest strives to be a calming presence, to bring a spirit of joy and celebration as we anticipate God's good plans for us. This goal is somewhat complicated by the fact that one of my first responsibilities as your new priest is to lead us through yet another time of preparation – a season of repentance to prepare for our remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection.

I have not been a part of the St. Christopher's community long enough to have earned the credibility to call our church to repentance. First, through prayer and time spent together, I

must grow in my love for you, while you must come to trust that love. Moreover, I do not yet know the specific changes of life to which the Lord is calling St. Christopher's. These things take time.

And yet, I *am* beginning my ministry at St. Christopher's just as Lent begins, and I trust that this timing is part of God's good and mysterious way of leading us. As I have thought and prayed about it, I have remembered what Lent is all about.

At its heart, Lent is the season of preparing for the one thing you can never, ever be fully prepared for: reception of God's grace and entry into lifelong growth in that grace.

The Book of Common Prayer tells us that, from the earliest days of the Church's life, Lent "provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism" (p. 265). And this very same *Book of Common Prayer* also teaches us that through Holy Baptism, God establishes an "indissoluble" bond with the person baptized (p. 298). God *binds* himself to those whom the Church baptizes. For this reason, Scripture and tradition both attest that the bond between Christ and the community of the baptized – that is, the Church – is most faithfully depicted in the bond between husband and wife: "[Marriage] signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church" (BCP, p. 423; see also, Ephesians 5:25-33).

In other words, Lent, the season of

preparation for Holy Baptism, may be compared to the season of preparation for Holy Matrimony, *engagement*. And for those who are baptized already, Lent is a time when we may look back on that season of spiritual engagement to Christ, preparing ourselves to renew our commitment, just as those who are married must periodically take time to remember why they married, and to return to the basics of self-giving love and unconditional commitment.

Preparation looks different for each person. When my wife and I were engaged, we fought just about every day. I'm not kidding. Each of us lived with our parents, and so rarely had sufficient privacy to argue, so we would sit in my car in a nearby park and argue in the car. We still affectionately refer to that park as "the fighting park." That's how we prepared for marriage. And in truth, it was exactly the preparation we needed, even as I have learned that there really is no preparing for marriage – marriage shapes us into the sorts of people who can be married.

So also with Lent and Holy Baptism. Lent can be a time of spiritual strife and difficulty, or great rejuvenation. Only you and the Lord know. But what's clear is that all the fasting and spiritual discipline in the world doesn't add up to Baptism; only the grace of Baptism makes us baptized, and it alone shapes us into the sorts of people who can call ourselves Christians. And for us who are baptized, Lent is a time when we check in, when we see how our Baptism continues to mold and reform us.

On Tuesday evenings this Lent, I invite you to join me in a weekly series about spiritual disciplines and how to develop a spiritual rule of life. This time spent together will be for some of us preparation to receive that grace for which we cannot prepare – Holy Baptism – and for others it will be a time in which we explore how to allow God, who bound himself to us when we were baptized, to continue shaping us and

growing us more fully into who we are.

And as far as my beginning my time at St. Christopher's at the start of Lent? I trust that it will be a time when God prepares us for our own future together, learning to love one another in his service.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO FR. JOHN THORPE, INTERIM RECTOR

We were blessed to have Father John Thorpe serve as our interim priest for much of January and February. Father John normally serves as Chaplain, and also teaches, at St. John's School in Dallas.

He brought his spirited style of celebrating services and his depth of knowledge for the Sunday adult education program undertaken between the services. At the coffee hour after the services on Sunday, February 17, we had a cake prepared to thank him for his contributions to our church community followed by a card signed by various parishioners.

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

Many of us volunteer to work with children during Children's Chapel and other related activities at St. Christopher's. As part of those activities, it is imperative that we abide by the Safe Church requirements laid out by the Episcopal Church to ensure the best possible protections for our youngest members. If you are already working with children, please ensure that your training requirements are up to date and have not expired. If you would like to volunteer to work with children, new volunteers are always welcome. In either case, please coordinate with Holly Wheeler to understand the Safe Church requirements and your compliance with those requirements.

PANCAKES & ENTERTAINMENT ON SHROVE TUESDAY

Join the fun on Shrove Tuesday, March 5, at the Annual Pancake Supper and Talent Show. The Talent Show will highlight performers of all ages sharing music, dance and more.

Daughters of the King members will get the evening started at 6 p.m. with pancakes to satisfy every appetite. The Talent Show begins at 7 p.m. Everyone is invited to enjoy this festive evening!

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

EVERY SUNDAY

8:00 AM

Holy Eucharist, Rite I

9:00 AM

Adult Faith Formation Class in Parish Hall

10:00 AM

Holy Eucharist, Rite II
Children's Chapel for Ages 3 - 7

EVERY WEDNESDAY

10:00 AM

Holy Eucharist, Rite I

10:45 AM

Bible Discussion with Fr. Burdette

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

TUESDAY, MARCH 5

6:00 PM

Shrove Tuesday Talent Show and Pancake Supper

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

8:30 AM, 10:00 AM, 7:00 PM

Ash Wednesday Services

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Church Work Day

SUNDAY, MARCH 10

Daylight Saving Time Begins

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

Saint Patrick's Day Parking Fundraiser

EVERY TUESDAY, MARCH 12 – APRIL 9

6:30 PM DINNER

7:00 PM LENTEN PROGRAM

8:00 PM TAIZE WORSHIP

Lenten Season Faith Formation Series

LOOKING AHEAD: SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

MARCH 3, LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

EXODUS 34:29-35

PSALM 99

2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-4:2

LUKE 9:28-36

MARCH 10, FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

DEUTERONOMY 26:1-11

PSALM 91:1-2, 9-16

ROMANS 10:8-13

LUKE 4:1-13

MARCH 17, SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

GENESIS 15:1-12, 17-18

PSALM 17

PHILIPPIANS 3:17-4:1

LUKE 13:31-35

MARCH 24, THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

EXODUS 3:1-15

PSALM 63:1-8

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13

LUKE 13:1-9

MARCH 31, FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

JOSHUA 5:9-12

PSALM 32

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21

LUKE 15:1-3, 11-32
