

Enjoy the St. James July Journal



St. James Community Journal July 2014

Dear St. James Members and Friends,

Please enjoy reading the July St. James Journal. For our upcoming events please visit www.stjamessf.org. If you have items for the next journal, please contact Rose Scarff. For more info about St. James please contact Erazm Pochron in the church office at stjames@stjamessf.org or (415) 751-1198 x2. Thank you!

--Rose and Erazm

A Season of Listening at St. James

by The Rev. John Kirkley, Rector



Jesus said, "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:39) To be a disciple of Jesus is to live a dying life. We have to die before we can live. What does this mean?

The dying to which we are called is first and foremost the dying that we experience when we cultivate the practice of listening. Authentic listening is always a little death. It requires me to set aside my preconceptions and preoccupations so that I can be present to another – or Another. At least temporarily, I have to allow my ego to die, to let go of the imperative to impose my will and instead cultivate a stance of receptivity. Such listening is quite different from screening out what I don't wish to hear, or seeking only what will help me to express more powerfully an essentially preformed response. When I really listen, I open myself to the possibility that I may be changed, even profoundly changed. I may discover that I am not who I thought I was, or who I want to be, or that I am becoming someone quite unexpected. I listen, so that I may discover my true self.

The deepest listening frees us from bondage to the internal and external voices that divert us from attending to our true self. St. Paul speaks of this as the death of the old self, crucified with Christ so that we might no longer be in bondage to sin – sin, understood here, as anything that separates us from our true self in Christ. Dying in this way, we are raised with Christ and alive in God. This is what it means to die so that we may live. Obedience – the root meaning of which is "to listen" – is acting in accordance with our true self.

Christian disciples are people who are obedient to Jesus – people who learn to listen to the true self that Jesus reveals in the pattern of his own dying life. Living a dying life begins with listening, and then acting from the true self who speaks from the still point of our being. Listening sets us free so that we can respond to life in ways that

allow others to attend to their true self.

In his book, *Seven Thousand Ways to Listen*, Mark Nepo eloquently describes his experience of progressive hearing loss. He resisted acknowledging the loss initially, but eventually embraced it as an invitation to a deeper interior silence. His deafness has heightened his appreciation of the power of listening.

"Now," he writes, "I go to a café near our house where the young ones know my name and make my hot chocolate ahead of time if they see me in the parking lot. What's beautiful is that they know everyone's name and everyone's drink. This is the sweetest kind of listening. And you'd think, having lost a good deal of hearing, that noise wouldn't bother me. But in fact it bothers me more. I find it overwhelms me. Even when I turn my hearing aid off. So I ask the kind young ones to turn the music down and they do this now, without my asking, as they make my hot chocolate. This too is instructive . . .

"To honor what those around us need in order to hear is an ordinary majesty. The young ones in the café are my teachers in this. Not only do they do this for me, but it's their ethic regarding everyone. It's the relational environment they create – a place to gather where everyone can hear. Their simple caring has made me ask, do I honor what those around me need in order to hear? Do I help them find their center point of listening? I ask you the same" (Nepo, p. 8).

"A place to gather where everyone can hear and find their center point of listening" sounds like a good definition of Church to me. Here at St. James, we are inviting people into a season of listening. Next month, following the 10 a.m. service each Sunday, you are invited to participate in a small group gathered to listen to one another reflect on those things that bring you joy in life and those concerns that keep you awake at night. The point is simply to listen to one another as an end-in-itself, trusting that nurturing a culture of listening is one way that we can live a dying life as disciples of Jesus.

Some of you already participated in these groups or one-on-one conversations during Eastertide. While participants found it to be a positive experience, some initially expressed skepticism about the process. "Why are we meeting?" "Are you going to asking me to do something?" These questions reveal the cynicism of a culture in which genuine listening is rare, and manipulative agendas often are masked by pseudo-listening – even, sometimes especially – at church!

We are inviting a little bit of vulnerability, and trust that we can be a community where everyone can hear and find their center point of listening. Meister Eckhart said there is nothing so much like God as silence. And we are never so much like God as when we listen.

The Child is the Guide

by Laurie Gudim



"Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost." – Matthew 18:10-14

I like how in Matthew's Gospel this parable of finding the lost sheep springs from an admonition to not despise the little ones, the children. The image of having an angel who always stands in God's presence is particularly touching.

The parable is a story of inclusion. The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine sheep together. This togetherness is the realm of metaphoric community, of belonging, the place where relationship with God is known and valued. Being lost from that place is being out of touch with the spiritual sap that runs through us from our deepest core. Being found is coming into the awareness that we are one with all that is, universe-wide.

We can be part of a faith community, dutifully going to worship, engaging in outreach, and participating in learning opportunities and still be a lost sheep. The lost one is not someone who has done anything wrong or the one who has drifted away from a human spiritual community. Instead it is the one who believes that she or he does not belong to God and is not welcome in God's realm.

The child in us understands talking to God. That does not mean that when we were children we had a particularly good spiritual relationship with the Holy, nor an evolved understanding of who God is. On the contrary, the mind of a child is a particularly fundamentalist, black-and-white place. No, our faith formation is a life-long journey into deeper and better discernment of our Creator.

But the simple belief that we are welcome, the willingness to risk a conversation, and to have trust that there will somehow be a response, despite rational indications to the contrary, that is a child-like quality that we need. And the simple willingness to take something miraculous at face value, the understanding that our minds are not the final arbiters of reality, that is something we also need. Play that is not ego-driven, wonder that is not contrived, hope that blossoms out of the most unusual circumstances, all these things are the gift of the child perspective.

God makes God's self felt in all these places. God's presence is all around us, and we know that when we are awake in our child-like souls. Whether or not we call it God, the relationship we find is the important thing. Even when we have no formal way of understanding it, the experience is key. Being found is as simple as turning around to see differently. And then we truly do see.

They have angels, the children within us and the children without – angels who continually see the face of God.

--Editor's Note: Laurie Gudim is a religious iconographer and liturgical artist, a writer and lay preacher living in Fort Collins, CO. See her work online at [Everyday Mysteries](http://EverydayMysteries.com). This piece first appeared at <http://episcopalcafe.com/>. I highly recommend this daily blog. The St. James Women's Group used this piece as a starting point for their discussion at the June meeting.

News from the Vestry

by Barbara Webb, Senior Warden



Your vestry met on Sunday June 15. The ranks were a little thin due to vacations and Fathers' Day, but several items were discussed:

Stewardship -- The word strikes terror in everyone's hearts. "Please, please don't make me the Stewardship Chair!!!" Stewardship and the Pledge Campaign are not the same thing. Stewardship is a way of living, in which the parish and all its members should be growing all year and every year. Stewardship includes finances, but also includes the unique gifts and talents of the congregation. The Vestry is taking a different approach to the Pledge Campaign this year. We are currently "fleshing" it out. You all have talents; be it artistic, writing, technology, video making, storytelling, hosting a dinner, etc. or even raising money. Please give serious consideration to be on the Stewardship Committee. You will be joining several vestry members who will also be on the committee. If we have a large enough committee, you will only have to do one or two things, not all of it.

Upcoming Events -- If you have ever wondered what goes on behind the closed door to the Caldwell Room on the third Sunday of the month, you probably want to be on the Vestry. If you want to know where the finances come from, how they are handled and how they are disbursed, then you definitely want to be on the Vestry. If you want to know how the Diocese works, how the Parish interacts with the Diocese, and how the Diocese interacts with the National Church, you want to be on the Deanery. August 24 is Vestry/Deanery Day. Members of the Deanery and Vestry will be available to talk to you. I have been on both and found them to be equally rewarding.

Parish Picnic on September 28 at Mountain Lake Park. If your talent is organizing parties and picnics, organizing games for children, and/or grilling, we can use you. Talk to any Vestry member or Fr. John.

Fall Art Fundraiser on October 17. Details will be forthcoming.

Your Vestry is not meeting in July. Look for us in the September Journal. Happy Summer!

Pain and Patience

*by Julie Terraciano, MFT
California Counseling Institute*



During the seemingly simple maneuver of searching for a key to open the back door of my son's house, I recently fell and hit my ribs against a railing. I had picked up my 5 year old grandson from his school, and was looking forward to our weekly after school time together. I felt instantaneous surprise and pain.

Ten minutes prior to that moment, I had entered into the delightful zone experienced by adoring grandparents everywhere. This was our time; we could do whatever we wanted to with it. At his house and at mine, we draw, play music, read stories, take walks, sit on our porches and enjoy the days. I felt immediately deprived of my pain-free right side and of my lovely time with him.

I expressed some of this disappointment to him in between his snacks and my phone conversations with my doctor about appropriate self-care advice and scheduling an office visit. He listened while playing with his trucks and trains and came up with some very wise advice of his own. The next day, I shared the following meditation with our counseling group.

Why do mishaps come out of nowhere? Why this pain now, that pain then? Why did I lose my balance and fall against the railing? Cal tells me, "Well it's good it already happened, because now you are already getting better. It wouldn't be good if it was still going to happen."

The nurses and doctors, so caring in their reassuring advice: "Wow that must have hurt!." "Don't forget RICE...rest, ice, compression and elevation." "Ice now, heat after 48 hours, helps the healing." "Don't forget to breathe." We're tempted not to because it hurts, but breathing deeply every 15 minutes helps the healing. And my body is healing now, just as Cal said.

I knew he was right when he said those words. Even as I was experiencing the first sharp pains, I knew I was moving toward health again. Those are the words and thoughts that I impart to my clients, my family, and my friends. The impulse of our bodies, hearts, and souls is always toward healing; that is the movement of nature.

However, the patience part is often challenging to come by. I have had to be more patient than I've wanted to be over the past ten days. The concept of bodies and hearts healing makes complete sense to me; the reality of allowing the patience for that to happen takes reliance on the support of others and the self-nurturance of the very breath we breathe.

Holy Realism

by Kathleen Norris



--Editor's Note: this article by Kathleen Norris, was presented at the Trinity Institute Benedictine Spirituality Conference in 2003 and is from Explorefaith.org as posted on Episcopalcafe.com.

The popular wisdom is that the words "[holiness]" and "realism" don't go together. Holy people, like poets, are dreamy and sentimental. Never get to places on time. ... Holy people are not of this world. [They are not real about life.] Their mind is always on higher things, including perhaps the old pie in the sky.

My goal today is to overturn [these] false notions of holiness, for I believe that it surfaces in human beings precisely when we are being most realistic, most grounded, most down to earth. Holiness is never fussy or sentimental. Neither is a good poem; it's ultimate realism. My evidence for this belief is that holiness endures, persistent as a weed through the depredations of all the ages, throughout all the terrors that we human beings can inflict on each other and have inflicted over our history on this earth. Holiness prevails, and poetry. Religion and poetry are among the most ancient of human activities, predating even agriculture. And battered as they are today by secular indifference or co-optation ... by legalism, fundamentalism, or terrorism, by right-thinking ideologies, [or] tyrants; religion and poetry are with us still, still witnessing to hope at the dawn of the 21st century. Both holiness and poetry [may seem] anachronistic, ... [but they are] peculiar forces with a life of their own in the face of the dog-eat-dog world we know too well, and as necessary as breath, giving us the hope that evil does not have the last word.

[Another] point about holy realism is that it is grounded in the present, in the real world, and especially not in our heads. We have in our society so many temptations to live in our heads. We're constantly invited to live our lives through the carefully packaged lives of celebrities, even people who are famous only for performing some infamously stupid or vulgar act. We might imagine ourselves in the glossy magazine ads. Our lives would be centered on a purse or a pair of sandals. We see a dress in a store window lit as if it were an object of devotion in a church. Holy realism rejects these false images of the world and human life, and it reminds us of who we really are.

I believe that we need poets ... and we need religion to keep bringing us to our senses. I recently read a fine book by Garret Keizer entitled *The Enigma of Anger: Essays on a Sometimes Deadly Sin*, in which he suggests that the recent phenomenon of road rage in America is a good example of anger that results from our living in our heads, from our exaggerated subjectivity. Like many forms of quick trigger anger, road rage is ultimately, as Keizer says, "a loss of reality. Both the perceived offense and the response to it are completely out of proportion." It's ultimate narcissism, just one example in our culture where we could all use a good dose of humility and to sort of adopt what I think of as the ultimate Benedictine attitude, to say, "Well, who am I? I'm a mere mortal, like the person who just cut me off in traffic."...

Holy realism asserts that life does matter, how we live it matters. It's not willing to accept ... that the endless daily drudgery is all there is to life. Holy realism takes a stand for awe and wonder and beauty even in the midst of ordinary daily activities. That is asceticism to me, I think. In a prose piece, [poet] Kate Daniels ... writes of a burgeoning poem that she was forced to set aside, in a typical day of teaching, and couldn't get back to [that] night because her children and her husband were coming home and had to be fed. "Like me," she wrote, "they are tired and over-stimulated. The events of the day are clamoring inside them. The good events want to be shouted out, the bad see the inside or are precipitously acted out in ferocious sibling wars. We have all come home to each other to be healed and hailed, to be soothed as a victim, chastised if a perpetrator, and morally realigned. But we

are so tired and we lash out in irritation, frustration, anger." That sounds very familiar to me. In the midst of chaos in her kitchen, the children doing homework are littering the floor with paper scraps, the dog overturning the garbage pail, Kate Daniels takes a stand. "Try as I may, and I do, I have a hard time browning the ground turkey I'm planning to mix with canned spaghetti sauce for the glory of God. I try to find the poetry that exists even here. I know that God is here but in the chaos and the noise, I can't seem to find Him."

Now this is a woman who can find God in the midst of changing a diaper, so we know she's morally realigned and very strong. But now in that kitchen she feels bereft of any consolation. And I connect with that very much. I don't have children, but I have been a caregiver for my husband for about three or four years. And so I really do understand that you sense that God is there but you really can't find God. ... But even the fact that Kate Daniels or I am aware of the absence of God is a form of holy realism. We can have faith and hope that there is something better than the ordinary pains and frustrations of life. Holy realism is grounded defiantly in the daily chores of life....

Our culture, of course, is overloaded with data. It's wanting in meaning. It tempts us to indifference and unhealthy detachment. We don't really want to pursue even our evil thoughts or our good thoughts to find out where they could lead. We get shortchanged. The ancient monks spoke of the temptation of ... indifference, not caring, as being tempted to look outside of one's cell to see if the other monks were up to anything. Our modern day equivalent may be turning on CNN. But the temptation is the same. And the result is also the same, not caring, indifference. The holy realist is aware of this and knows all too well that temptation to indifference, but he or she resists, asserting that life does have meaning, life is worth caring about, and how we live it matters. ...

Holy realism knows that life is worth living in any season. It counters that silly T-shirt I sometimes see: "Life is a #@## then you die." Holy realism knows that life is both gift and struggle, and then we die, each one of us. And we can't begin to imagine the good things that God has in store for us then.

Benedictine [monastics] ... really live immersed in the Psalms and Scripture so that death and even darkness come to be, if not acceptable, ... at least seen in light of faith.

Pat Mayer, Artist in Residence at StumbleUpon

Wed., July 16th from 4 to 7 p.m.



Our own Pat Mayer will be the artist in residence for July through September at the search engine company StumbleUpon's headquarters at 301 Brannan Street. There will be an artist reception on **Wednesday, July 16th from 4 to 7 p.m.**, and you all are invited!

This is a great opportunity to see Pat's more recent work. You may remember that a couple of years ago her art was exhibited in the nave of St. James during Lent in an exhibit called "*Weaving Together the Scraps of Our Life.*" Rev. Kirkley wrote that "Pat Mayer's collage work is an invitation to look anew at the parts of our lives we'd rather discard or bury deeply: what seems like garbage in isolation can become something beautiful when integrated into a life seen whole. . . offering a meditation on the grace of reconciliation that heals the broken pieces of our lives and makes us new."

Summer Break!



Please note that during July and August there will be no Men's Breakfast, Women's Group, Mindfulness Meditation, or *Lectio Divina* meetings. The Vestry will not meet in July and the St. James Journal will take a break in August. Have a safe and happy summer and see you in September!

JULY & AUGUST CALENDAR

July 6, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m.
July 13, Sunday	Service at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. Service 9 a.m. Choir Practice St. James serves at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality
July 19, Saturday	4 p.m. Liza Colton Memorial Service
July 20, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m.
July 27, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. 9 a.m. Choir Practice
August 3, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m.
August 10, Sunday	Service at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. Service 9 a.m. Choir Practice St. James serves at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality
August 17, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m.
August 24, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m. 9 a.m. Choir Practice Noon – Vestry Meeting – Caldwell Room
August 31, Sunday	Services at 8 a.m. & 10 a.m.
Every Tuesday	7:30 a.m. Morning Prayer & Meditation
Every Wednesday	6:30 p.m. Evening Prayer & Meditation 7:30 p.m. Buddhist Meditation in Caldwell Room

The St. James Community Journal is a monthly publication on behalf of:

St. James Episcopal Church

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