



ST. JAMES' JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 2019

Rev. Dr. Franklin "Skip" Vilas—Supply Priest



Sermon for Epiphany 2, 2019

St. James Church, Hackettstown, NJ

Rev. Franklin E. Vilas, D.Min.

Editors note: This is the sermon Rev. Vilas was to deliver to the congregation on Sunday, January 20th when St. James' was closed due to weather.

"Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world, Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory"—

With these words, the prayer of the collect for today picks up the theme of light which marks the Feast of the Epiphany. In designating Christ as the light of the world, this prayer links him directly to the Creator God and to the creation itself, as it is described in the Book of Genesis.

There, you will remember, the writer states that in the beginning all was a formless void, and darkness covered the face of the deep. The moment of creation occurs when God utters the words, "Let there be light!" This beautiful poem of Genesis is not so very far removed from the insights of modern science. Whether or not the theory of the "Big Bang" is the answer to the origin of the Universe, it is clear that without the light radiating from our parent star, the Sun, there would be no life at all on Planet Earth.

The process of photosynthesis by which the energy of light from the sun enables the growth of plant life provides the food that has sustained animal life over the eons. Light is essential to our very being. It is small wonder that a basic element of the Creation story is light, and that for us the One whom we call the Christ is associated from the beginning with light.

This is not to say that there is something basically wrong with darkness. It is in darkness that we spend the nine months of gestation before we enter the world at birth. It is in the darkness of the soil that the seeds which are to become plants and trees are nurtured through the earlier stages of growth. And it is from the darkness of our unconscious mind that dreams, visions and inspirations emerge to enrich our lives.

Yet from time immemorial the darkness of night has also held the fears and the nightmares that have terrorized the human soul. So, light has come to represent the gifts of consciousness and the Spirit. When the collect speaks of Christ as the light of the world, it is spiritual awareness that is implied.

There was an event in the life of Robert Louis Stevenson as a young boy, which I would share with you this today. It was evening, and the child was standing by a window with his nose pressed up against the glass. He was observing the lamplighter, who in those days passed by as night fell, lighting the gas lamps that stood along the street outside his home.

His Nanny tried to persuade the boy to leave the window and come to bed, but he was entranced with what he saw. He said to her, "Nanny, come see this man. See what he is doing! He is punching holes in the darkness."

This is a wonderful description of the ministry of Jesus in his role as the Light of the World. How did Jesus, the Light of the World, punch holes in the darkness? I would suggest, first of all, that in his life and teaching Jesus punched a hole in the darkness surrounding our understanding of the nature of God.

In the eons of human life and human history that

preceded the birth of Jesus in what is now Palestine, many concepts of the nature of the Gods had arisen. The divine power was seen first as spread through all of the created order. Primitive humans found God in the sun, the moon, and in totem animals. Polytheism and pantheism were the order of the day, until in the Egyptian civilization the concept of one supreme God arose, and monotheism appeared in human history.

In the great monotheisms, including Judaism, God reigned over the lives of human beings as a supreme monarch, judging them from the heavens, and meeting out rewards and punishments. As the God of a particular people, this heavenly monarch supported a tribe in war, and oversaw the slaughter and rape that followed victory. While the God of the Hebrew scriptures exhibited strains of mercy and Justice, the ancient understanding of the remote sovereignty of God prevailed.

But when Jesus uttered the word “Abba” –Father— in reference to God, he punched a hole in the darkness of the understanding of the Creator, introducing the light of a personal, caring Force into to our human striving. Those elements of caring mercy that resided in other religions became for Christian believers a present and available reality—and for them Christ became, indeed, the “light of the world”.

And Jesus not only punched a hole in the darkness surrounding our understanding of God—he also punched a hole in our understanding of human beings—of ourselves. He showed us through his teachings and through his life that although human beings are indeed animals on the Planet Earth, there shines within us the light of the Spirit. Like him, we are potentially the children of God.

The Prologue of John’s Gospel, often read at Christmas, puts it beautifully. “To as many as received him, he gave power to become the children of God.”

This is, of course a powerful summary of the Good News of the Gospel. Jesus has punched holes in the darkness that surrounds our understanding of God and of ourselves.

Our collect for today goes on to pray that the light that pours through these holes punched in the darkness by Jesus will transform our very being.

“Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may Shine with the radiance of Christ’s glory”—

Like Jesus, we as his disciples are called to be bearers of God’s light to a troubled world. The Epiphany brings with it a challenge to every Christian. As we receive week by week the light of God available to us in the Word and in the Sacraments, we too are to become lamplighters, punching holes in the darkness.

The collect concludes with words that identify the Cosmic Christ as the bearer of divine light, reaching eventually the entire human race:

“---That he may be known, worshiped and obeyed to the end of the world.” Amen



Scott Carson, a long-time member of St. James’ passed away recently. A memorial service is being planned for March 2nd at St. James’. More details will follow. Please keep his wife Carol and children Kristen and Trever in your prayers.

This Month in Stewardship

Cranberries

Ocean Spray cranberries has a commercial on TV. Their message is: “Act tiny, be mighty.” This describes their corporate theme that they are a cooperative of family-owned farms that while tiny and giving individual attention to their farm produce, they unite to provide the mighty Ocean Spray brand that we know. For us the analogy turns a bit; St. James’ Church may appear to be tiny, but we are mighty in our acts.

In the terms of our parish we are the small farmer who is the steward of our farm and its product. We are one of the many churches that form the Diocese of Newark, the Episcopal Church of the United States and the Anglican Communion. We are a part of that body. We are the expression of the body of Christ at the corner of Washington and Moore.

Bishop Carlye Hughes’s visited St. James’ last month. She celebrated communion, toured our property, held a congregational forum and met with the Vestry and convention delegates. Her message to us was that we are not alone in our search for a priest and that we are one of what would be described as thriving small parishes. St. James’ is unique because we have a significant level of outreach in our community, given our size. We can be proud of our stewardship and discipleship in our community as we act mightily.

In general, as children we are taught that it is unseemly to brag or pat ourselves on our own backs about our accomplishments. We are taught that it is better to be mighty but act tiny. But as a congregation we can take pride in our worship, fellowship and outreach. We may be a well-kept secret, but Bishop Hughes recommended that we do more to tell our story. This is not to brag, but to share the good news of the good that we do.

Consider the following. We have a vibrant prayer ministry that holds up our members who are in need of prayer support. This work goes on in the background of our parish life. We reach beyond our parish to support those in need in our community. Within the last year we donated food for roughly sixty bags that were packed by our Sunday School children and distributed to families at holidays. Our Tree of Giving supported the children of three local families in need with Christmas presents. Our Gift of Warmth provided warm coats for children at the elementary and middle schools in town, as well as extending beyond to children and adults in Budd Lake and a county homeless shelter. Our Summer Backpack program provides supplemental food for local school children who are food-insecure. We also support mariners via the Seamen’s Church Institute with knitted scarves and hats through the efforts of the Heath Village Needle Workers and our parish knitters, the Yarn Twisters. We may look tiny, but our acts are mighty!

At our parish meeting on March 10th we will share our accomplishments of the past year, celebrating, if you will, how “mighty” we are. We will be able to read about what has transpired regarding various committees in the annual report and hear about what the year 2019 may bring. I hope you will be able to attend the one service at 9:00, followed by a brunch and annual meeting.

Paul



Bishops Visit

On Sunday, January 6th, the Rt. Rev. Carlye Hughes visited St. James' for an Epiphany Service. After the service, a quiche brunch reception was held followed by a community forum. We thank Bishop Hughes for being with St. James' and offering us her words of wisdom and encouragement.



Tree of Giving 2018

Once again St. James' parishioners rise to the challenge of providing three families with a spiritual boost this holiday season. We are not made aware of their circumstances when we are given the names of the parents of students at the local schools. Approximately 70 gifts including gift cards to Target and Shoprite were delivered the weekend before Christmas to three families: which included 7 children. One of this year's highlights: participation from our friends at Colonial Manor in purchasing and wrapping several gifts for one of the female students. Thank you once again for your generosity: donating funds, shopping, wrapping, and giving from your hearts.

Dave and Kathy Lacouture

Journal Deadline

March 2019 Edition

February 24th

Altar Guild

The Altar Guild would like to thank all who helped with Greening in December. After our need for "coffee and carbohydrates" was satisfied by the annual Wardens' Coffee, our worship space was made ready for Christmas with wreaths and poinsettias and the arrangement of our Nativity scene. It is always a joyous time...the pine and evergreens fill the Church with a wonderful fragrance, the poinsettias a blaze of magnificent red against the white frontal. And there is the anticipation of Christmas and the birth of our Savior.

We were truly blessed that all the decorations remained fresh and colorful for the Bishop's visit on January 6... the Feast of the Epiphany. This is the first time that the plants have lasted so long... reminiscent of the feast of Hanukkah when the oil lasted for eight days!

But then we had to "Un-Green." This is not a job I look forward to or enjoy. The poinsettias are dead and wrinkled. The wreaths are sticky and have lost their wonderful smell. And they are so dry that when you remove the bows you are up to your ankles in pine needles!

So, thank you to Wendie Germain and Rae Aron who quietly cleaned up and changed the frontal to green after the 10 AM service.

And thanks to Pete Quelly who braved the cold in order to take down the wreaths and roping outside the Church. In addition, he managed to jury-rig a device that removed the wreaths from the walls. This eliminated the need to drag the ladder out from the closet.

Thank you to our grandson, Cameron, who fought the urge to play with the figures from the Nativity scene and neatly wrapped and packed each piece away. Thanks to Millie Quelly who did everything I asked with a smile and a positive spirit.

And although we try very hard to clean up... a big thank you to Pauline who never complains about the mess that is always left behind.

The Altar Guild is grateful for the generosity of the congregation for donations received that helped defray the cost of decorating our worship space this Christmas season.

Meg Critchley

St. Margaret's Chime Choir Notes

2018 was quite a year for the chimers at the House of the Good Shephard. They gave a concert in the Spring at The House featuring classical music by Haydn, Schubert, and others. Then it was time to look forward to our next concert which was music for Advent and Christmas. Rehearsals started in July.

Along the way we also participated in the annual Hymn Fest hosted by Gethsemane Lutheran at the end of November. This was our first opportunity to play outside The House and the logistics were a bit daunting. 3 members in wheelchairs required 3 separate trips from The House to the church and then back to The House after the concert as the bus can only take one person in a wheelchair at a time. God bless the driver, Brian, for being willing to make those trips! Chairs were required at the bell tables, having escorts to help me help the members out of the bus and into the church. Laura Petrie, the Music Minister at Gethsemane, and her crew did a wonderful job! Our warm-up went pretty well but when it was time to perform, well, the ladies were outstanding! They got a standing ovation from the audience, not only due to their performance but because of who they are – senior citizens, at least 1 of whom is over 100 yrs. old - still able to make music, and also in recognition of the work that goes into preparing for such a performance. That memory still makes me tear up. The ladies were quite taken aback by the audience's response and It's a memory they will treasure! As Kay Kendricks, our 101-year old member, said, "I was going to retire after this but now I think I have a bit more still to give"!

At our Christmas concert at The House we were able to hear some residents singing along with some of our carols. That was a special part of the concert.

Our next event will be in June when we will present a concert of Broadway music. We will be using some of St. James' handbells to augment our chimes and to provide a brighter sound for the group...Pam



Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE:



St James' Corned Beef and Cabbage

Fellowship Dinner

Saturday March 16th

5:30 to 7:30 in Snyder Hall

Cost \$10. Per adult

Children under 12 free

Details to follow~

2/1 & 2/2

2/2

2/3

2/10

2/14

2/24

5 2/28

Diocesan Convention

Youth Night

Family Breakfast

Convention Forum Discussion

Sunday School at HOTGS

Gertrude Hawk Candy Sale Begins

Annual Meeting Reports Due

Journal Articles Due

Vestry Meeting

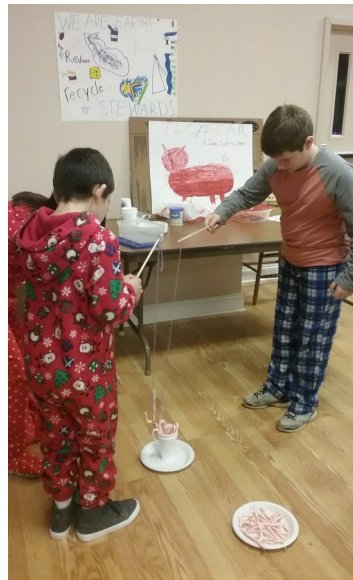
Sunday School News

Sunday School meets in the Parish Hall during the 10am service every Sunday except for Family Sunday (the first Sunday of the month). All children are welcome to attend. Godly Play lessons are taught to the children, which includes a Bible story or lesson and an activity.

In December, Sunday School / Youth Group had a Christmas party. The kids watched a movie, played games, decorated/ate Christmas cookies, and made Christmas cards.

On Saturday February 2nd, we will be having a Valentine's Party in the Parish Hall from 6-8pm. All children are welcome to come in pajamas and bring a friend! Please let Alicia or Jeanette know if you can attend.

On Sunday February 10th we will be delivering Valentine's Day cards made by the children to the House of the Good Shepherd residents. We will meet at the Parish Hall at 10am and then drive over together. Please let us know if you're able to attend.



Epiphany Dinner

Great food and fellowship were had by all at the St. James' annual Epiphany Dinner on January 12th.

We were so fortunate to have Pete and Gerri Huryk join us from Maryland. Gerri brought her cookies, potato salad and deviled eggs to add to the wonderful dishes and desserts prepared by our parishioners for this event. Pulled pork with various sauces was served, and once again the variety of side dishes and desserts was amazing, so appreciated and enjoyed.

Pete Huryk brought a script about the Wise Men's visit to the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. Emma Martin and Emmy Huryk, dressed in costumes, read the parts of the wise men and did a great job. They had had only one rehearsal just an hour before "show time!". Thank you to everyone who came out to make this evening a success and to Dave Lacouture for his behind the scenes organization of this event.

Phyllis Bartkus



February 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 8:00 AM Eucharistic Service - Rite 1 10:00 AM Eucharistic Service Rite II 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM The Church El Shaddai	28 10:30 AM - 3:00 PM KAQ	29 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM Literacy Tutoring	30 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM El Shaddai Church	31 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM KAQ	1 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM El Shaddai Practice	2 6:00 PM Sunday School Event
3 8:00 AM Eucharistic Service - Rite 1 10:00 AM Eucharistic Service Rite II 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM The Church El Shaddai	4 10:30 AM - 3:00 PM KAQ	5 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM Literacy Tutoring	6 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM El Shaddai Church	7 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM KAQ	8 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM El Shaddai Practice	9
10 8:00 AM Eucharistic Service - Rite 1 10:00 AM Eucharistic Service Rite II 10:00 AM Sunday School to visit House of the Good Shepherd 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM The Church El Shaddai	11 10:30 AM - 3:00 PM KAQ	12 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM Literacy Tutoring	13 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM El Shaddai Church	14 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM KAQ	15 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM El Shaddai Practice	16
17 8:00 AM Eucharistic Service - Rite 1 10:00 AM Eucharistic Service Rite II 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM The Church El Shaddai	18 10:30 AM - 3:00 PM KAQ	19 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM KAQ Bereavement Lunch 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM Literacy Tutoring 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM Joseph T Quinlan Bereavement Counseling	20 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM El Shaddai Church	21 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM KAQ 7:00 PM Finance Committee	22 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM El Shaddai Practice	23
24 8:00 AM Eucharistic Service - Rite 1 10:00 AM Eucharistic Service Rite II 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM The Church El Shaddai	25 10:30 AM - 3:00 PM KAQ	26 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM Literacy Tutoring	27 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM El Shaddai Church	28 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM KAQ 7:00 PM Vestry Meeting	1 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM El Shaddai Practice	2 Funeral Service

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St. James' Staff & Vestry

Supply Priest	Rev. Dr. Franklin "Skip" Vilas
Rector Emeritus:	The Rev. Clarence Sickles
Parish Administrator:	Julie Mills
Organist	Dmitry Nikolaev
Sexton:	Pauline Volkert

Vestry

Senior Warden:	Paul Bartkus
Junior Warden:	Peter Quelly

Janice Cipriani	Pam Laura	Sam Wood
Nancy Miller	Gene Seiter	Kathy Erwood-Lacouture
David Olesen	Chika Okoye	Karina Hernandez

Vestry Clerk:	Pam Laura
Treasurer:	Janice Cipriani
Bookkeeper:	Barbara Olesen

Barbara Olesen, Editor

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