

The Arimathean

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In November 2005 I moved into the Diocese of New York. Since then, fortunately, I have been present for many worship services celebrated by the Right Reverend Mark Sisk. On the day of Holy Tuesday, April 19, 2011, at our annual Mass of Collegiality at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Bishop Sisk preached this following sermon to all of the clergy from the Diocese of New York. He focused on our mutual responsibility for the members of our community.

As you are aware I have addressed this topic in previous issues of the "Arimathean", i.e., through our love for Jesus and our respect for all of God's creation we are called to step out of our individualism, ego bubble, and focus on the needs of others.

I feel honored to share this with you. Horace Choate

Sermon: The Right Reverend Mark Sisk, Bishop of the Diocese of New York

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine April 19, 2011

Perhaps some of you saw the CBS News story about the Japanese hamlet of Aneyoshi which was spared from the devastation of last month's horrific Tsunami. What happened was simple enough. The several dozen village residents paid attention to the warning etched into the face of a centuries-old standing stone table. The tablet read, *High dwellings are the peace and harmony of our descendants. Remember the calamity of the great tsunamis. Do not build any homes below this point.*

This tablet was one of hundreds that lined the coast: some of them 600 years old.

This warning certainly is unambiguous; but there is nothing shrill about it. It simply recognizes that tsunami's are a part of the reality of life. The danger they present is very real, it needs to be taken into account, and yet that danger need not dominate one's life.

There is, implicit in this serious though not somber message, the recognition that the truth of something we have discovered in the movement of tectonic plates. They will, by their nature,



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always be with us, shifting and buckling, destroying and creating. The very ground under our feet will move. The rather surprising fact is that though the movement itself may be only a few feet, a ten foot shift is considered huge, yet those few feet, shifting beneath us, has the power to change the world as we know it.

What is difficult to grasp, especially in the light of the horror of this tragedy, is that such tectonic shifts are essential. Without that movement, without the rise and fall of those plates, our world would die. Therefore, so far as our human experience goes, earthquakes and tsunamis will inevitably always be with us; so while they will always startle us, they ought not surprise us.

Shifting ground, however, is not limited to geologic phenomena. Other, life-altering shifts are equally inevitable. Think, for example, of the way experts talk about climate change. I would add that conceptual and cultural shifts can be

tectonic in scale as well. They too can mark the life of the human community for many centuries.

The reality of change and dislocation is, therefore always with us. Those who are called to the leadership of the Church, and especially those called to the priesthood, are commissioned to, among other things, stand as witness. Like one of those ancient stone obelisks, priests are called to remind people that the ground not only can, but will shift under their feet. However, we need to do more than bear witness to the certainty that the ground will move; we need as well to remind people that the promise of life abundant remains even after the shifting of the ground, if only a few cautionary principles are observed.

High dwellings are the peace and harmony of our descendants. Remember the calamity of the great tsunamis. Do not build any homes below this point.

I am convinced that, in our own time,

there is a subtle but enormously profound shifting of cultural tectonic plates taking place: We are in the process of eviscerating the meaning of the two fundamental plates on which we all stand: the plates that we label "individuality" and "community."

These two ought to stand together in tension: The individual shaping and being shaped by the community; and conversely, the community shaping and being shaped by the individual. Each needs the other.

The essential critique that Christianity makes of the popular western understanding of individualism is its controlling assumption that it is possible for an individual to exist, in the full sense of that word, separate from, apart from, community. The Christian claim is that we need each other to be fully human. We are by nature social creatures.

To understand why this assault is taking place, it is only required of us that we reflect on the role that community

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traditionally has played in human experience.

Most of us would find familiar a four-part definition of a good and healthy community which says that a healthy community involves a sense of mutual responsibility for the members of that community; that community is pivotal in defining the identity of its members; that those members participate in its life and the decisions that affect its life; and lastly, that a healthy community includes a sense of a responsible relationship to the world beyond the boundaries of the community itself.*

It is this rich and life-giving understanding of "community"-a community that entails mutual responsibility, identity and participation-that is, I am convinced, under active, calculated and relentless assault.

The assault is under way for the simple reason that a person who is a member of such a community is much less vulnerable to exploitation than an individual is on his or her own. That is why

communities are of importance to the vulnerable, and conversely, communities are an offense to those who wish to exploit the vulnerable.

There is nothing new in this assault. The powerful have always tried to maintain their power by weakening those that whom they considered to be their opposition. And what more powerful opposition could there be than a community of individuals who were deeply engaged in-and strengthened and protected by-a strong and determined community.

The current attack on community is designed to isolate and, thereby weaken, the individual. This effort has two strategic thrusts. The first, paradoxically enough, is to focus on the importance of the individual. The idea is to focus on the individual by discounting and deprecating those communities of identity and support that are so important. This approach will go so far as to suggest that only the weak

and flawed individuals ever need such community support. This first step is, then, to appeal to a mythic vision of rugged individualism.

The second step in the strategy is to monetize: monetize everything. To calculate everything in terms of dollars and cents, as though dollars and cents measured everything that is worth measuring.

This makes perfect sense if it is believed that all real value, value that counts, has been deemed to be economic in nature-that the good of society, is measured only by the goods of a society. For those who measure lives in dollars gained and lost, it is convenient to think of people as economic units that are interchangeable with other economic units.

From the perspective of the powerful it is simply so much easier to organize things and build their wealth when people can be dealt with as individuals cut off

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from any community of support.

Therefore the basic strategy becomes, appeal to individual interests, individual values, while attacking communities that might actually work on behalf of individuals to achieve those values.

I think for example of the decidedly chaotic enforcement of immigration laws. The obvious intent is to keep people frightened and unable to organize, while not unduly inhibiting them from providing the vital services that our communities so desperately need. Better to have frightened workers unable and unwilling to stand up for their rights, than to have organized opposition to exploitation.

In that same vein it should come as no surprise that labor unions, those communities that stand up for their members, are under such sharp attack. Clearly there are forces in society that are determined to use, even to stimulate, the current fable of economic necessity, in order to justify the

destruction of communities that protect the individual.

One has to listen very hard to hear among many of our public leaders even the slightest suggestion that there is any such thing as community-wide responsibility for those who are helplessly on the margins: the poor, the young, the under educated, the homeless, the immigrant and the sick. It would appear that, in the minds of many, those marginal ones are simply not part of the community for which we bear anything but the most grudging responsibility.

If the idea that the only entity that matters is the individual becomes linked with the idea that the only value that matters is a dollar value, we are in deep trouble as a people. Such a view, which seems increasingly triumphant, promises that we are destined to live in a parched and barren landscape marked only by the towering fortresses of the wealthy built upon the squandered

lives of the many.

It is in the face of this onslaught that what we, priests and bishops, are about to do is something radically counter-cultural. We are about to reaffirm the fundamental vows that we, as individuals, have made to a community.

We are about to say, once again, that we understand ourselves not only to be participants in the life of community, but that we understand ourselves to be people who have dedicated themselves to strengthening and preserving that community.

Now none of us is foolish enough to think that the community of the Church as represented by the doctrine, discipline and worship Episcopal Church is infallible and not in need of ongoing correction. Far from it. It does, it can, and it will, as a body, as a community of faith make, those changes. We who work so closely in the life of the Church are often among those who see most clearly, and feel

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most pointedly, its faults, and failures. One of the deepest spiritual challenges facing anyone who serves the Church as an ordained person is the tension between her or his own individual proclivities and the discipline to which we have committed ourselves.

All of this makes our vows all the more important. We are called to stand as firmly and clearly as those ancient stone tablets bearing witness to the wisdom and the power of community as a preserver of the individual.

The more powerful the

voices of individualism become, the more important our stand on behalf of community becomes. The temptation to yield to the apparently seductive success of individualism can seem to be overwhelming, but we must resist. We must stand together, and be seen to be standing together in support of the community of faith we have vowed to serve.

We have been called by God to strengthen community in order that all the world might know of the community of life in God that supports and sustains them.

We have been called to be priestly witnesses to the hope and the promise that, together, is ours in Christ. That Divine promise is to know ourselves to be members of the community of the living Lord. We are called to live our lives as a sign of that community: a community that gives meaning to identity, in this world and the next.

This, the living community is, in itself, a testimony to the hope that enlightens the world, today, tomorrow and unto the ages of ages.
AMEN

Bible Quiz

Q. Who was the greatest financier in the Bible?

A. Noah: he was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.

Q. Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible?

A. Pharaoh's daughter: she went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

Q. Where is the first baseball game in the Bible?

A. In the big inning. Eve stole first; Adam stole second. Cain struck out Abel. The Giants and the Angels were rained out.

Vestry Minutes

April 12, 2011

Meeting start 7:15 PM

Special Guest:
Canon Claudia
Wilson

Opening Prayer: Fr.
Horace Choate
Business

Canon Wilson greeted the Vestry and asked for the Vestry to voice its concerns regarding the financial situation and any other concerns of the group. A Vestry retreat/workshop was proposed to examine our roles and expectations, and we scheduled it for May 21st at 9:00 AM.

Minutes accepted
Treasurer's Report: Provided attached information about insurance and the monthly numbers. Donna has received copies of the general ledgers since Paulette has been our book keeper and placed them in the Cutler Room.

Rector's Report: Midnight Run/ Interfaith is having a concert as a

fundraiser. Tom Chapin is performing and Interfaith is asking each congregation to donate to help defray costs of the fundraiser so all the money raised can go to Midnight Run. We will be donating \$100 to the concert. We have ordered banners for Holy Week and Easter Vigil. The company was out of frames so we will be constructing the frame ourselves. We will be updating the directory. A copy will be left in the front and people will be asked to update their information.

Stewardship campaign: Bp. Roskam recommended talking to Bp. Smith about stewardship. Fr. Choate also emailed Allen Barnett.

May 13, 14, & 15 Fr. Choate will be at the University of the South for Myriam's graduation. We will have Morning Prayer that Sunday. May 22, Cathy Gmoser's family is having a

family gathering at the church.

A dinner dance was discussed as a fundraising option. Clive spoke about an event held by St. Luke's Church. Anton's was proposed as a place to hold the event. Also suggested are a dinner at Castelleto, a Milonga, another Caribbean Night. Al Shapiro should be contacted to get the word out to other churches.

Warden's Report: Chris Larrow: Billie Ann Grant has approached us about being on the Vestry. Chris will confirm with Billie Ann that she has the time.
Other Business: Clive Brown: People should not enter the sanctuary until the sermon is finished if they come during the sermon. Perhaps the usher can tell people when to enter.
Chris Larrow: Church Bulletin is missing a section of communion.

Closed with Lord's Prayer: 9:04 PM

Save the Dates!

- Sunday, June 19th is our Annual Summer Picnic after the 10:30am service.
- Sunday, July 3rd, our summer Sunday 10:30am service shifts to 10:00am. During the months of July and August this 10:00 service will be held in the Cutler Room.

Prayer List

Alla Borzova's father **Alexander, Debbie** Gillette-Hermansen, Billie Ann Grant's friend **Brenda** Lefford, Louis Grant's father **Lloyd**, The **Carpenter's Kids**, Paige Lockwood's friend **Jack** Demaers, **Connie** Barrett, The **Udogwu Family**, **Eunice** Riblinger, Charles White's niece **Sheila**, Mary Carol Miller's friends **Jane** Dunne and **Carol** Vanecek, Jennifer Larrow's friend **Elizabeth** Graves, Barbara Brown's friend **Dottie** Cunningham, Carol Rohl's sister-in-law **Joan** Hanley, Althea Serrants' daughter **Grace** Anderson-Smith, Marion Hellthaler's friend **Janet** Aurrigemma, Warren Stramiello's grandmother **Shirley** Wurst, **Robert** Ewen, **Avery** Lessing, **Mairead** Kelleher, the Rev. **Addie** Clark



Altar Flowers

ALTAR FLOWERS given by:

April 13—Katie Saliba and Warren Stamiello

April 24—Mary and Obie Clifford & Bruce and Theresa Patterson

May 1—Joanne and Kevin McDermott & Eunice Riblinger

May 8—Herbert Camp & Doreen McDermott

May 22—Dominick and Eleanor Festa

June 5—Paige and Rob Lockwood

June 12—Joan Lord

June 19—James Carroll

June 26—Mr. and Mrs. Robert Delleback

ST. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

2172 Saw Mill River Road
White Plains, New York 10607

(April/May 2011)

"If you'll not settle for anything
less than your best, you will be
amazed at what you can
accomplish in your lives."

~Vince Lombardi

The Rev. Horace Choate, Rector

Chris Larrow, Sr. Warden Jennifer Haus, Junior Warden

Vestry: Ben Alexander, Suzette Atkins, Karen Barnaby, Barbara Brown, Clive Brown,
Prospero Udogwu, Donna Rosengren, Katie Saliba, Althea Serrant,
Donna Rosengren, Treasurer

The Arimathean, published monthly (except July/August) by St. Joseph of Arimathea Church

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Glad Tidings!

Happy Birthday to:

04/04	John Scheib & Patty Young	05/01	Lucille Knight
04/06	Nancy Platt	05/03	Barbara Jill Brown
04/08	Catherine Gmoser	05/03	Alexander Joseph Eforo
04/08	Ann Owens	05/05	Donna Rosengren
04/15	Elizabeth Benomar	05/06	Dana Fuller
04/28	Kamron Larrow	05/07	Patricia Kardash
04/29	Christopher Larrow, Jr.	05/12	Evelyn Fornges
04/30	Danielle Marryshow	05/14	Eliza Jensen
		05/16	Bruce Patterson
		05/18	Jason Adkins
		05/29	Adam Benomar
		05/29	Alexandra Benomar
		05/29	Sara Benomar
		05/30	Gozie Udogwu

