

The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church Burien, Washington

January 2016

Issue 2016-1

From Fr. John: The Eucharist and silence

One day, a group of rabbinical students were arguing about the meaning of a biblical passage. When the argument reached a fever pitch, they turned to the rabbi. "Show me the page," he said and when they did, he asked, "What do you see here?"

"The text we are discussing," they replied.

"The marks on the page," the rabbi said, "contain *half* the meaning of the passage. The other half is in the spaces between the words."

There are spaces around and between the words on any page. There are also pauses between breaths, stillness between thoughts and rest between bouts of activity.

For the past year or so, we have been restoring liturgical silence to the worship of this parish. There are moments of silence after our readings, at the breaking of the bread, after the homily and after communion that are intentional, though they may be surprising for newcomers to encounter, especially for those who come from more boisterous expressions of worship or who are not accustomed to intentional silence. Many parents are surprised to find that children respond well to these moments of contemplative silent prayer without words or images. Children are often more capable of maintaining silence than people imagine and some children are quite appreciative.

The great Medieval mystic, Meister Eckart, once said that "there is nothing so much like God as silence." St. John of the Cross and Mother Teresa both insisted that silence was the way that God speaks to us. St. Benedict used two words that translate into English as "silence": *quies* and *silentium*.

Quies is more like the absence of noise or a physical silence. We expect a certain *quies* in the pews—cellphones turned off, caution with papers and books, whispers rather than full-voice conversations and so forth. These are skills that our parents teach us that respect the presence of other people and open us to reverence for God. *Quies* is increasingly difficult to come by. Airports, waiting rooms and now even some gas pumps have televisions constantly playing. There is rarely a moment where we are not in range of manmade noise.

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Our Food Cupboard

The winter months are upon us and traditionally this is when our food cupboard is used the most by our neighbors in need.

Typical items needed are spam, tuna, Vienna sausage, canned meat spreads, top ramen noodles packets, mac & cheese, canned soup, canned fruit, applesauce, canned chili or other ready to eat canned products (spaghetti-o's, etc), cereal, canned vegetables, toilet paper, toothpaste, you get the idea.

You don't need to make a special trip to the store or spend a lot of money – the next time you are at the grocery store, throw a can of spam in your cart and bring it to the church on Sunday when you come to the service.

Every little bit helps. The families are very appreciative of anything they get.

The Women of St. Elizabeth met on December 9 for lunch at The Mark to celebrate the success of the bazaar held on November 21. The money raised was over \$3,400. After expenses were deducted \$2,800 was available for us to spend. The women present decided to contribute 90% of this to St. Elizabeth and 10% to charity. A change of direction from past practices for giving from bazaar earnings was necessary.

It was decided to give a significant amount to St. Elizabeth to support our mission as well as maintaining our building. This coming year, St. Elizabeth is financially stressed. We do want to continue outreach so a tithe of 10% of the earnings will be contributed to Meals On Wheels. On January 20th the women will meet in the St. John room at 11:30 with their bag lunches to plan activities for the year 2016.

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Silentium, on the other hand, is more like an interior silence, an attentive state of mind and an attitude of consciousness turned towards others or to God. To listen deeply, to give oneself to the act of attention is to listen with focused non-attachment, listening to receive not to reload. To offer one's silent attentiveness is to simply be fully present with love. Seen this way there is indeed nothing so much like God as silence because God is love.

Liturgy—like most forms of prayer—is largely about focused attentive presence. At the Eucharist we train our attention toward God through the gift of God's self given to us and the gifts of our selves given back to God in our hearts and on the altar. Our attention may wander as we look at the people around us, find our place in the bulletin or wonder what's going on with the Seahawks. But God's attentive presence with us never wavers and does not chastise our distractedness. Even in this seemingly minor way, God remains faithful even when we cannot and the Eucharist becomes a compressed experience of the vast and inexpressible mystery of God as well as the ultimately irresistible and sweet attraction of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

The combination of *quies* and *silentium* – interior and exterior silence – recognizes and restores this crucial contemplative experience. Silence as the space around the words refreshes language, invigorates familiar texts and opens us to new meaning. Without silence even sacred words can become noise. Silence in the Eucharist exposes presence and invites responsiveness.

The link between the Eucharist and the way we live is crucial to any understanding or experience of its meaning and value. Celebrating the Eucharist only as a church obligation or as a folksy get together has little influence on conforming our lives to the Gospel. Unless we come together at increasingly deeper levels, the closing words "Go in peace" will mean we go in pieces, just as many of us may have arrived. Silence allows the full sacramental meaning of the Eucharist to unfold in our lives at levels beyond words.

The fullness of a living silence after our readings, the homily and after communion arouses or identifies the hunger that is at the heart of the world around us. Learning to pray contemplatively helps us to live more fully in the spirit, because the way we pray is the way we live and the way we pray is the way we celebrate the Eucharist. The world's unnamed hunger for contemplation may well be our greatest hope and gift to the community. We can become a powerhouse of loving, prayerful silence.

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Operation Nightwatch

Collecting socks here at St. Elizabeth was a booming success with over 130 pairs of socks collected. Father John is going to continue to collect socks during Advent along with travel size deodorants for the homeless that rely on Operation Nightwatch for comfort and hope.

Just a thought...

Every dollar in a church budget represents one person's generosity and goodwill. The church budget is not a necessary evil or a mere tool; it is a celebration of organized generosity.

Worrying won't stop the bad stuff from happening—it just stops you from enjoying the good.

Your Editor would very much

appreciate if more parishioners would contribute articles or information for the Elizabethan. There are several ways to do so—you can drop it off in the office, email it, mail it or call during office hours. We can give the Elizabethan a little variety if more people contribute to its content.

The Elizabethan is published monthly by St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church. The deadline for articles is the fourth Friday of each month.

Articles, calendar items and ideas may be mailed or emailed to the addresses below or left in *The Elizabethan* box in the Parish Office.

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HOSPITALITY HOUSE

Helping Homeless Women Find Home, Health and Hope

Donations Needed for January 2016

Your contributions of goods, volunteer services, and funding help provide the women with as many of the necessities and home comforts as possible. Thank you for your generous support.

Thanks to the generous donations of individuals and the Body Shop Southcenter, we do not need any personal items (unless specifically listed below) at this time. Please donate your personal items (makeup, shampoo, travel toiletries, etc) to another worthy charity.

The following is a list of our current needs:

Miscellaneous Needs:

Masking Tape (**Urgent**)
Chip Clips
Business Envelopes
Plastic Mattress Covers
Broom and dust pan
Mops
Towel Racks: basic, 24 inch

Food:

Cheese/Lunch Meat
Creamer & Sugar
Coffee (**Urgent**)

SPECIAL REQUEST OF THE MONTH:

Umbrellas

The churches collecting in January are:

**St. Elizabeth Episcopal
&
St. Bernadette Catholic**

Basic Needs:

Paper Towels
Dryer Sheets
Washing Machine Cleaner
Toilet Seat Covers
Large Garbage Bags (**Urgent**)
Floor Cleaner

Clothing:

Pajamas (All sizes)

You can drop your donations off directly at the shelter located
1419 SW 150th Burien, WA 98168 in Lake Burien Presbyterian Church.

Your volunteer coordinator also may be collecting directly at your church.

Hospitality House is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. Your donation is tax deductible.

Questions? Contact Sheenah Randolph at (206) 242-1860 or sheenahr.hospitalityhouse@gmail.com

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

MIDEAST FOCUS MINISTRY AT SAINT MARK'S CATHEDRAL

Series Introduction:

Seven Days from a Gaza Diary

A live performance adapted from the diary of Khulood Ghanem

Sunday, January 24, 10:10am in Bloedel Hall

A Borrowed Identity

Wednesday, January 27, Reception @ 6:30pm, film starts at 7pm

1913: Seeds of Conflict

Wednesday, February 3, 7pm

The Wanted 18

Wednesday, February 17, 7pm

Roadmap to Apartheid

Wednesday, February 24, 7pm

Corner Store

Wednesday, March 2, 7pm