

The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church Burien, Washington

March 2016

Issue 2016-3

From Fr. John:

St. Benedict On the Observance of Lent

Lent is a journey, a pilgrimage! Yet, as we begin it, as we make the first step into the “bright sadness” of Lent, we see – far away – the destination. It is the joy of Easter; it is the entrance into the glory of the Kingdom. And it is the vision, the foretaste of Easter, that make Lent’s sadness bright and our Lenten effort a “spiritual spring.”

-- Fr. Alexander Shememann

At the beginning of chapter 49 of the Rule of St. Benedict (one of the early and enduring influences on Anglican thought and practice), Benedict says clearly that “the life of a monk ought always to have the character of a Lenten observance.” Lent as not simply another liturgical season among many, but is rather, in Benedict’s view, a program and model of all monastic life and, by extension, all Christian life. He would hardly recognize the Lent that is trivialized by giving up chocolate, watching less TV or losing ten pounds. However, the principles of this chapter still offer access to the deeper more powerful meaning and experience of Lent.

The first principle is most obvious: “refraining from sin.” Lent recalls the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert doing battle with Satan the tempter and it should be such a time for us. Lent is a good time for all of us to change the obvious ways that we turn away from God. The work that is harder but just as important involves changing the subtle, small habitual ones that we allow each day. Little “sins” have the ability to become encrusted in our personalities precisely because they seem so insignificant taken one at a time. Small moments can become patterns that can accumulate quietly into the kind of pride, arrogance, envy or anger that turns us away from God. These obstacles should be cleared whenever we encounter them; Lent is an excellent opportunity to take a full inventory of who we really are, and to make radical or subtle changes in ourselves or as Benedict writes: to “wash away during these holy days all the negligences of other times.”

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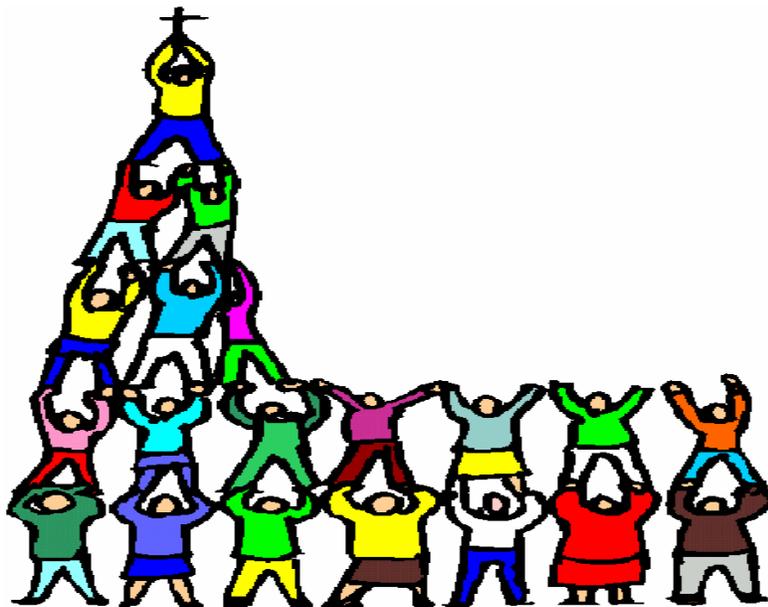
Our Food Cupboard

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 noodle 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.



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The second principle that Benedict proposes for Lent is to “give ourselves up to prayer with tears.” Consider the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector from Luke. Jesus teaches that the Pharisee’s prayer, filled with arrogance and pride, contrasts sharply with the prayer of the tax collector who recognizes his unworthiness and appeals to God’s mercy with inner tears. Our own Lenten prayer, according to Benedict, ought to be humble and “tearful,” simple and trusting – in other words, prayers of compunction – that rely on the loving kindness and tenderness of God, not ourselves, to bring us closer to God.

The third principle in this chapter is holy reading. For all Christians the reading of both Old and New Testaments can be an important part of the Lenten experience. Monks apply themselves to the Scripture formally during the daily offices, but also making other time for daily reading and study. These intervals can be informal openings for the Spirit or they may more structured engagements or something in between. But whether more formal or informal, Lent is particularly well-suited for reading and listening for the voice of God in Scripture or other inspirational works.

The fourth principle is abstinence from food; the practice most associated with Lent, and one that is not solely Christian. All kinds of people fast for medical, dietary or therapeutic reasons, but Christian fasting is rooted in Christ’s example. He used fasting and encouraged his followers to practice it as a spiritual practice; a way of learning Christ-centered self-control and personal restraint that are integral to a humble and wise perspective of our human limitations and utter dependence on God.

It is important to note the role of the Abbot mentioned in this chapter as well. Benedict calls for special personal efforts in contrast to the Master’s communal penance. To avoid practices that draw attention to themselves, Benedict has his monks seek their Abbot’s permission. This is yet another example of the marvelous balance between the individual and the communal.

And there is another important balance in this chapter: the balancing of mindful Lenten penitence with the anticipation of Easter joy. Almost paradoxically, this chapter on Lent—with its talk of our negligences, sins, burdens and tears—is also the only one in the Rule with two references to joy. Just as Lent and Easter are inseparable, so too are sorrow and true, deep joy. If we seek God in the midst of our sorrow, God will often use our tears to hollow out our hearts in a way that makes room for joy.

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God doesn't care what other people think of us, but He cares very much what we think of other people.
"The Journey"

The Elizabethan

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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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.

Rector: Father John Forman

Sr. Warden: Gabriel Grant

Jr. Warden: Gwynne Taylor

Treasurer: Linda Knutson

Office Administrator: Christine Ramirez

Elizabethan Editor: Christine Ramirez

2016 Calendar for Hospitality House

March 5 – Spring Fling Dinner and Fundraiser. Will be held at St. Francis of Assisi, Burien and will be catered by Puget Sound Skill Center Highline Students.

March 15-20 – St. Elizabeth’s week for preparing meals for the women.

June 7-12 – St. Elizabeth’s week for preparing meals for the women.

September 10 – **Walk** for the Women Fundraiser, Burien Town Square

October 11-16 - St. Elizabeth’s week for preparing meals for the women.

October - Collect new pajamas and slippers for the women.

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Anglican author Esther de Waal writes: “Compunction brings a sharp sense of pain, a stinging that I experience as I am touched, overwhelmed by this love, which reaches out to love and forgive and to end all that separates us. As I reflect what I am, my true state before God, and what I might be, what God wants me to be, I am aroused from my torpor, my willingness just to drift along, and am stung into action. Compunction draws from me a positive response to the love of God flooding my life and drawing me on to fuller and better things.”

Compunction is a dual sensitivity that puts before us both the reality of our own choices that separate us from God and the pressure of our desire to be totally possessed by God. It is the comparison of what we are with what we could be that triggers compunction: an intimate sensation that touches us at our deepest levels and often results in tears. And these tears, along with the results of all our Lenten practices, are gifts from God that allow us to share in Christ’s suffering and passion, and in the joy of new life in the resurrection. Through our Lenten practices, we undertake an annual process of self-emptying, of self-dying. When this process stays focused on the Spirit, through prayer and continual turning to God, it becomes a life-giving and powerful grace in our lives.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Holy Week and Easter Service Schedule

Maundy Thursday– March 24th
Agape Dinner followed by service

Good Friday—March 25th
Service at Noon

Easter Vigil—March 26th
Service at 7pm

Easter Day
Service at 10am

