

The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church Burien, Washington

December 2017

From Fr. John:

Balance in the spiritual life:

A hunter in the desert saw Abba Anthony enjoying himself with the brothers and was shocked. Wanting to show the hunter that it was necessary sometimes to meet the needs of the brethren, Abba Anthony said to the hunter, "Put an arrow in your bow and shoot it." So he did. The old man then said, "Shoot another," and the hunter did so. Then the old man said, "Shoot again," and the hunter replied, "If I bend my bow so much I will break it." Then the old man said to him: "It is the same with the work of God. If we stretch the brethren beyond measure, they will soon break."

~ from the Sayings of the Desert Mothers and Fathers

When St. Benedict formed his first monastery in about A.D. 500, he was the inheritor of almost two centuries of monastic tradition. He respected the rigidly ascetic lives of the early Desert Fathers and Mothers, but thought a more moderate austerity expressed the values of the communal life more appropriately for monastic life. Benedict taught a middle way between radical asceticism and a life of indulgence: monks should eat adequate amounts of food, but not too much; they should have adequate amounts of sleep, but not too much.

He understood human nature. He knew that people who devote themselves to a life of worship still have weaknesses and foibles, and that changes for the better can take years of struggle. Benedict did not urge his monks to storm heaven in one day, but instead stressed a gradual journey. His more moderate approach to religious practice is uncompromising in its devotion to God.

Instead of a specific chapter on Benedictine balance in the Rule, the intent is a thread running throughout. He talks about the need for his monks to be deeply involved in the interpersonal relationships of community, but also to reserve generous amounts of time for solitude to relate to God as individuals. In referring to the "goods of the monastery," he implores the monks to "do everything with moderation." His allowance of a half-bottle of wine each day demonstrates his realistic appraisal of human behavior and an idealistic hope for what people can become with the grace of God.

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The daily rhythm of the monastic life of worship, study and work is the most compelling evidence of Benedict's sense of balance, proportion and harmony. Because the monastic purpose is to seek God, the Divine Offices provide the structure of the day, which Br. David Steindl-Rast has called "celebrating the seasons of the day." Everything is scheduled around the acts of corporate prayer. That sacred time is woven into the threads of everything else a monk does, which sanctifies the whole day. Non-monastic settings frequently reverse this structure so that work controls our day with prayer worked around other commitments. Anglican liturgies provide daily devotions intended to remedy this situation. Prayed on a regular schedule, these five to 10-minute sessions found in the front of the Book of Common Prayer are surprisingly powerful.

Living a life of worship alone, however, is not Benedict's ideal. The goal instead is to unify. Work is not a distraction from prayer, but the grounding in concrete acts that keep us in touch with the reality of God's created world. Conversely, putting work in the context of worship changes our perspective by increasing our mindfulness, our moment to moment participation in the sacrament of the present. Mindfulness in our work enhances our interiority, which opens the way to deeper prayer. Benedict demonstrates his vision of prayer grounded in work most succinctly when he admonishes the cellarer, the monk responsible for distributing the goods of the monastery, to "regard all utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels of the altar."

In addition to worship and work, Benedictine balance calls for study. Reading and meditating on scripture and other spiritually nurturing material is fundamental. In a recent Adult Formation series, we talked about the practice of *lectio divina*, a prayerful form of reading. The practice of consistent, intentional and prayerful reading is one of several ways to come closer to God.

Practices of scriptural and spiritual study engage the mind as work engages the body and worship engages the heart in the spiritual life. These three activities are to be pursued as a unity forming a single life lived in daily service to God. We seek a balance between denial of the world and overindulgence in what it offers. By turns, we can practice being attentive to our physical, emotional and spiritual needs; learning first to distinguish our needs from our wants. We can also practice being attentive to these needs in other people.

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This Old House of God....Building Update

The Parish Hall and kitchen continue to be posted on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) commercial leasing site. Exterior leasing signage has been put in place to help draw potential lessees. If you know anyone that is interested in leasing the space, please have them contact Tony Hettler.

Completed Work –

Thanks to Kirk Utley for installing cement tile on the exterior entrance to the working sacristy.

Thanks to Neighborhood House for installing blinds in the kitchen.

Work in progress –

Seattle City Light has agreed with the proposal to install LED lighting in the sanctuary and it will significantly lower our electric bill. Seattle City light will pay for approximately 80% of the costs.

The west office windows need to be re-glazed or replaced with a thermal pane window. Grant money from the diocese or Seattle City Light would be available for thermal pane replacement windows. This is also safety issue that needs to be addressed.

The plans for long-term maintenance of the building and grounds need to be addressed. If you have a desire to share your talents, please contact Carolyn Terry.

Linda Knutson

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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Benedictine spirituality is foundational to the Episcopal way of being Christian in the world. The ancient Rule of St. Benedict influences our aspiration to spend our time and resources intentionally, mindful of our interconnectedness with each other and the world. It is a continually simplifying approach to life with the intent of becoming more fully alive – more fully human. By rejecting empty noise, activity and acquisition, we are free to live what Sr. Joan Chittister has called “a rhythm of life that includes the natural, the spiritual, the social, the productive, the physical and the personal.”

Walking a Benedictine path of harmony, balance and wholeness is an effort to integrate these and transcend into the mystery of Christ: it is not a life blandly compromised into mediocrity, but a life in creative tension, drunk deeply, lived well and touched by God in all areas.

Who or what are the JJJ's? On occasion, Fr. John will thank the JJJ's. Here is a brief history: Several years ago, perhaps more than 20 Ed Barnes (May he rest in peace) decided that it would be appropriate to get some help in caring for our buildings. He, Ted Parks and Don Purrington went through the Parish directory to determine who might be available to help. A letter was sent to all those that we considered available, along with a post card so the participants could respond with their preference of which day in the week would be best for them. The response was good and Thursday was selected. We would gather at Meal Makers, a restaurant owned and managed by Kevin Fitz., one of our own. After breakfast we would proceed to the church to do those things that were necessary. Some of our accomplishments included replacing the siding on the parish hall and south wall of the nave, as well as repairing the failing plaster over that altar. JJJ stands for Josephs Jeriatric Jacks (of all trades). Out of Ed Barnes's fertile mind came the creative spelling of Geriatrics. It should be noted that at one time we had two females join our group. They were Anne Gilbert and Jean Pfeiffer. Jean was our cheer leader and Anne was an excellent painter and enjoyed painting.

Sadly our ranks have thinned. Some have passed away, some have moved and some have "Retired." If you can spare some time on Thursday mornings we would love to have you join us. We currently meet at Huckleberry Square for breakfast at 8 a.m. However that is not a requisite and you can just join us at church at 9:00 am.

If you have questions please contact Don Purrington.

St. Elizabeth's Food Cupboard is well used and our neighbors that use it are grateful for it's availability. If you are inclined to contribute items, here is a list of things that are needed:

Canned vegetables, soups, canned fruit, toilet paper, paper towels, toothpaste, cereal, peanut butter, bag beans, rice, condiments, any kind of canned meat, top ramen, mac & cheese, cereal, baby wipes, diapers, baby food and soap of any kind.



Congratulations to everyone who hosted and participated in the Dinner for Six Groups this fall. We appreciate your support and friendship. Over thirty people have participated in this dinner fellowship and we had six new participants this fall.

Each group of 6 meets monthly to share a meal and fellowship. Groups are flexible with the menu, scheduling and time. Usually hosted in someone's home or apartment, groups are also dining at local restaurants or coffee shops.

During December - we will be hosting our last dinners of 2017 and then in January we will start new groups for 2018.

We already have new people signed up for next year - so if you are not currently in a Dinner for Six group and would like to participate - please let Janey Montgomery know at janeymontgomery68@gmail.com. We will form our new groups in January and all participate in the St. Elizabeth's Parish Potluck and Annual Meeting , January 28. Then new groups will host dinners in February through May. Each dinner concludes with the Compline reading. Plan now to attend and get to know more people at St. Elizabeth's.

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Deliver all of us, O Lord, from the notion that anything of value or worth can be obtained by hostile or violent actions.

Advent Schedule:

Quiet mornings - On Sunday between 9am to 9:30am we will gather for silent meditation before mass in the library.

Every Tuesday during Advent, starting Dec. 5th, The Rev. Canon John Ferguson will lead a class on "Praying the Liturgy", the class will be held twice a day, once at 3pm and again at 7pm