

# The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church    Burien, Washington

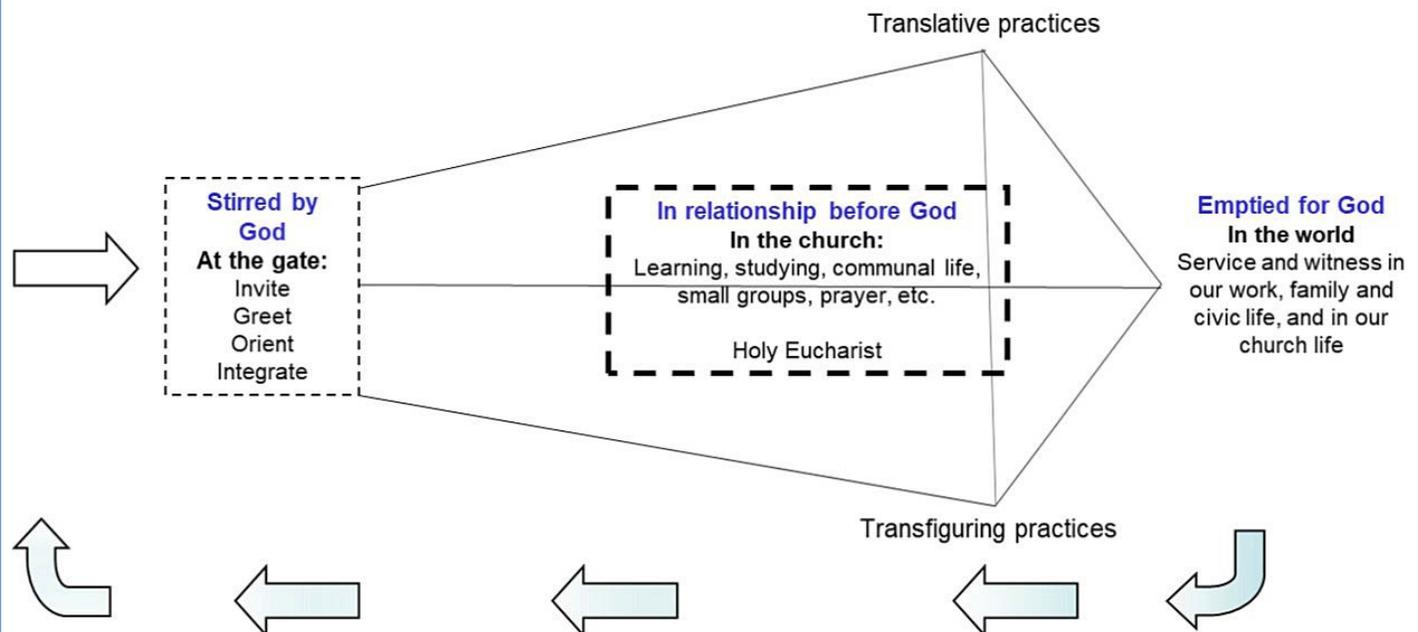
September 2018

## From Fr. John: Being spiritual vessels in the world

“Send us now into the world in peace,” we pray near the end of our Eucharist. Or “...send us out to do the work you have given us to do...” This prayer marks a transition in the Mass that gives us the name of the ritual: “mass” comes from the Latin *missa*, which means “a sending.”

Two months ago, we talked about the congregational role of hospitality as God gathers people to a church. We described Alice Mann’s four stages of gathering hospitality: Invite, greet, orient and incorporate. And last month we covered the life of the church supported by practices that translate and those that transform. This month, we examine the role of *missio* — of sending.

The pattern of the unique and primary purpose of a congregation matches the pattern of the Mass itself: we gather, we practice, we go “our several ways,” as we sang in a Mass recently. Just so, God gathers us, we practice and then God sends us out. This happens repeatedly as we become and share God’s loving presence in creation, coming to fill ourselves with God’s presence and love, and going out to empty ourselves over and over and over.



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In the community of the church, God renews us and fills us with insights, love and inspiration and then meets us out in the world, so that we can be instruments of God's loving presence for our friends and family, for neighbors and co-workers, even for complete strangers. The church, Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple once said, is the only institution that exists for people who are not its members.

And so, at the end of each Mass, the priest sends the congregation out to engage their daily lives. Each life differs in detail, but the mission is the same. Christ has fed us so that we may be food for others. We return to our work-life, our civic life and our family and friends. We go back into those relationships, communities, roles and occupations that are already a part of our lives. Once there, we serve Christ by serving each other.

Anglicans, Roman Catholics and increasingly number of Orthodox communities use a word to name the lay ministry's subtle distinction from ordained ministry. The word "apostolate" comes from the Greek *apostello*, which means to "send forth" or "to dispatch." Notice the theme here? All Christians are baptized into the ministry of Christ's royal priesthood. And there are similarities in ordained and lay expressions of ministry as well as some differences.

There are reasons that we educate and form some women and men, and then set them aside - ordain them - for certain roles in the church. Our liturgical life in community is where Holy Scripture and our tradition come alive. We play out the drama and the teachings of scripture in the liturgical worship of the church. The mysteries of the sacraments take on the "fullness of grace" in the liturgy. Prayer and celebration of the feasts of the church as the communion of saints are concentrated and sanctified by liturgical worship. The whole of creation is touched by the liturgical life of the church.

Ordained people and non-ordained people have roles in the liturgy and governance of the church. Both also have the opportunity to be as fully present as they can be in serving Christ; to work toward well-being and truth, justice and mercy for all of God's creation; to be loving questioners of our institutions; and to act out the Eucharistic pattern of being taken, blessed, broken and given.

The apostolate is the church's gift to the wider creation around us. The word refers to our engagement as Christians and people in our daily life. And so, to be a true follower of Christ, we first must come to know ourselves as children of God, flawed as we may be. We begin to accept that we are loved by God and held by God, and then are able to carry the light of God's grace for the sole purpose of emptying it out into creation. Your specific apostolate depends on your life circumstances and details, but all are given to creation by living reconciling, peaceful and Christ-centered lives as spouses, partners and companions, as family members, as professionals, home-makers or retirees, as volunteers and voters, as consumers, as community elders, as students — no matter what aspect of life or what stage of life we are in, there are ways for every Christian to embody the truth, beauty and goodness of God's love wherever they are - their unique apostolate.

*(continued on page four)*

## **New to our Library:**

The Classics of Western Spirituality is a remarkable series of the writings of a variety of theological thinkers. Here are just a few that you can find in our library:

**Francis and Clare: The Complete Works** - St. Francis (c. 1182-1226) and St. Clare (c 1193-1254), brother and sister who founded the Friars Minor and the Poor Clares.

**Élisabeth Leseur: Selected Writings** - (1866-1914) French mystic who creatively and originally practiced her faith as a lay Christian.

**John of the Cross: Selected Writings** – (1542-1591) Saint, Teacher of the Faith, mystic, and monastic reformer best known for his work *The Dark Night of the Soul*.

**Julian of Norwich: Showings** -(c.1342-1416) English anchoress who wrote of the feminine side of God, the humanity of Christ and the fullness of divine love.

**Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense** and **Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher** - (1260-1328) Eckhart was a German theologian, philosopher, mystic and a brother in the Dominican Order of Preachers.

**Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer and Selected Works** - (c. 185-254) One of the first and most important Christian mystics.

**The Cloud of Unknowing** (Late 14th Century) An anonymous work by a medieval Christian mystic, is a guide to contemplative prayer.

**William Law: A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life-The Spirit of Love** -(1686-1761) Law was an ordained Anglican priest and spiritual advisor in the time of George I. He is considered to be one of the greatest post-Reformation English mystics and theologians of the Anglican tradition.

## 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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*(continued from page two)*

The movement into and out of and back into the church, focused on the Eucharist, is much like the inhale and exhale of the physical breath that sustains our physical life. In our gathering for renewal, we practice patterns of behavior that ground us more deeply in our identity and *missio* as baptized children of God; as practitioners of the Anglican way of being Christian in the world. We take in and are renewed by the Spirit, the Breath of God, and then we go out and release the Breath of God that mingles with our own unique breath into the relationships that God has blessed us with.

We grow into Christ by praying and worshiping with others, some of whom are easy to be with and others less so, so that God can enhance our self-awareness and relax our self-centeredness until we become functioning instruments of love. We serve Christ by being non-judgmental, grace-filled, generous participants in God's work of transfiguring all of creation into the realm of heaven. Our starting point is the place where we are right now.

**Apostolate within the family:** In a perfect world, we would all have families where we learn and experience unconditional love and the values of loyalty and truth; justice and mercy; an empathetic imagination and concern for others; a sense of restraint and a sense of humor; the willingness to negotiate differences and an openness to cooperation. Some people grow up in this kind of a family environment. Many do not.

Fortunately, learning to accept our baptismal family as children of God allows us to surrender all hopes for a better past and start to take responsibility for introducing these values into whatever group of people forms the family you now live with. For example, by bringing the breath of God into your home, you can:

- Break destructive patterns that might otherwise be passed on to the next generation.
- Nurture relationship with those individuals and parts of your family that are open to growth, and learn to forgive and love those who are not without accepting their toxicity, neglect, abuse or other destructive behavior.
- Cultivate gratitude for your life, flaws and all, and your family of origin as a resource for learning and a workshop for deepening your own spiritual practices. You may become a source of healing for a sibling or for others in painful family situations.
- Express, manifest and practice your spiritual life as an individual and as a family.

Unless you are in an actually dangerous situation, your role in whatever family you are in may be a vocation. Through you, Christ incarnates and serves in raising children, caring for the sick, enjoying life, growing old, sharing joys and griefs, and dealing with all that family life brings.

**Apostolate with friends:** "No longer do I call you servants," Jesus said to his followers, "but I have called you friends." Our friendship with Christ is part of a full spiritual life. Friendship with other people is both apostolate and a source of renewal. C.S. Lewis saw our friendships as being part of how God shapes our lives and deepens our capacity for love and glory. People find hospitable parish churches to be a place of friendship. In his Rule, St. Benedict called his monasteries "schools for the Lord's service" and most today call themselves "schools of love." The same self-awareness is evident in thriving Episcopal churches.

We live out that awareness in our friendships outside of church by learning to know

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and trust who God has made us to be. We grow into that potential in communion with God and with other people. We become complete and full people in relationship with others. And we can bring God's grace into our friendships both in church and outside church by remembering our baptismal promises: to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves; to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

For example, by exhaling the breath of God into your friendships, you can:

- Help your friends see themselves as active, creative participants in their lives even when they have come to understand themselves as victims only. There are victims, of course, sometimes we need a friend to help us see that we have chosen to surrender all responsibility for our lives and are slipping into powerlessness by blaming others or our situation entirely.
- See your friends as the incredible children of God that they are and challenge them to live into their best selves and sometimes to rise above their circumstances without badgering or abusing them.
- Serve them as a loving ally without rescuing them when they are in trouble, feeling lost or have lost touch with their best selves.
- Open yourself in vulnerability and allow yourself to seek and grant forgiveness.

**Apostolate in civic life:** Episcopalians come from a tradition that values civic engagement and responsibility. We see it in our history of the disproportionate percentage of Episcopalians serving as presidents of this country and in congress. We see it in our parishes where so many give their time to feed the hungry and serve on school boards. Unlike some of our brothers and sisters in other denominations, Episcopalians continue to avoid over-identifying with a specific political party. We are all across the spectrum of conservative to moderate to liberal and insist that the separation of church and state means neither should become the other.

We do bring the spirit of God into our civic activities, but our guiding principles are our baptismal vows, not a specific platform or stance. In our political life, we tend to:

- Be concerned with how to be a devout Christian who accepts and learns from the discoveries of science and anthropology
- Act and vote like a person engaged in political interactions based on respect for the views, dignity and power of others
- Work to be instruments of God's love with the pragmatism needed to live in and improve life in the world for all God's children.

And then we return to the Eucharist and to our church community to be refilled with Christ, to be renewed and reinvigorated.

May God bless you with inspiration, strength and loving companions, and bring at last into your place with the communion of saints in God's heavenly with the words, "Servant, well done!"



# *The Elizabethan*

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## **ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

“I love all [people], in and for your sake,  
though not as much as I ought or as I desire.  
I pray your mercy upon all [people],  
yet there are many whom I hold more dear.  
Since your love has impressed them upon my heart  
with a closer and more intimate love,  
so that I desire their love more eagerly –  
I would pray more ardently for these.”  
~ **St. Anslem, Archbishop of Canterbury**

**Coffee and conversation:** Beginning on Friday, September 7th, there will be an opportunity to come and chat over coffee and such from 10 a.m. to noon in the St John room. All are invited to come for a little light nosh and conversation. We hope this can be a casual place for parishioners, interested friends and curious neighbors to get more acquainted with each other in small groups outside our worship together as a larger congregation. The next scheduled dates are October 5, November 2 and December 7. Volunteers are signing up to make the coffee and bring treats. If you are interested, Janey Montgomery has put up a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board across from the library. Please join us!