



# THE LION'S MARK

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR SAINT MARK'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA

A COMMUNITY THAT GATHERS IN FAITH, SERVES IN LOVE, AND PROCLAIMS HOPE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

## HONEY FROM THE ROCK

— FR. SEAN MULLEN —

Six months ago, two beehives were set up in the eastern-most end of the property at Saint Mark's, alongside the north wall of the Sanctuary, tucked in behind the Lady Chapel. One of the hives belongs to the parish, the other belongs to a partner in the Philadelphia Beekeeper's Association who needed a place for a hive. Two beekeepers in the parish were appointed to tend to our bees and their hive: Addie and Ellen. Our teacher, trainer, guide from the Association told us not to expect much, if any, honey this year. A new hive, we were told, probably needs to get busy making all the honey they will need to get through the winter. As I understand it, the bees eat the honey during the cold months when nectar is scarce and they stay holed up in the hive. Lucky bees!

It came as a surprise to me this summer when our beekeepers told me that the decision had been made to harvest some honey, since our bees seemed to be producing much more than expected. They removed a few frames, and borrowed equipment from the Beekeepers' Association to spin those frames in a centrifuge and extract and filter the honey. At the end of the day they had collected sixteen pounds of honey from our busy bees! Lucky us!

A few fun facts about bees put that accomplishment in a remarkable light. In order to produce a pound of honey the worker bees must visit two million flowers to gather nectar. Collectively a hive will fly over 55,000 miles in that process. Each worker bee will make just one-twelfth of a teaspoon of honey in her lifetime, which means that it takes the life's work of 560 bees to produce one pound of honey.

A beehive could be a model for the church in a lot of ways. The way the church stays healthy is when members go out into the world, gathering nectar, but also pollinating: by sharing the Good News of Christ and of his church. Each person's contribution – even small ones (1/12 of a teaspoon!) – is important to the life of the church and to its fruitfulness. And it takes a lot of us working together to do the work we are called to do, but when we do, the volume and the sweetness are something to behold!

This fall, the Stewardship Committee and I are asking the parish to gather in small groups for house communions in one another's homes during the weeks that precede Commitment Sunday, when we make our pledges of financial support for the work and ministry of the parish. The purpose of these gatherings is to enjoy that unique

fellowship that binds us together when we celebrate the sacred mystery of God's love in the Mass, but to do it in a quieter, more intimate, more personal way than we are generally able to engage in here at church. There will be no other agenda. We will not be talking to you about budgets, or best practices, the biblical basis of tithing, or proportional giving. If there is a theme other than Christ's love that we want to focus on, then let it be the amazingly fruitful work of the bees, and how they might be a model for us as a church.

God inspires us to be generous and fruitful. The bees provide their own kind of inspiration. And I am confident that most of us already know that we are each capable of giving more than one-twelfth of a teaspoon of honey to the beautiful work and ministry that is Saint Mark's Church. But if the bees can make all that honey with only a twelfth of a teaspoon each, just imagine what we can do together to build up God's kingdom with the gifts we have to offer!

Because the bees presumably are not introspective and do not spend time in contemplation of their work and the meaning of it, they probably also do not worry about it, nor does it occur to them what a remarkable accomplishment their production of honey is. To me it seems like a miracle that so much of something so good should come from such individual contributions of so many.

The same thing holds true of Saint Mark's: so much of something so good comes from the contributions of so many. Every appeal to Christian stewardship amounts to the same argument, more or less. The only variables, really, are how many bees we are, and how generous we are. And when we gather with one another to celebrate the living presence of the God of love among us, then he helps us with both of those variables. I look forward to sharing the Bread of Life with you in your homes, and some honey, too!



# 10:00 FORUM

Every Sunday at 10:00, we gather in the parish hall to think and talk about the life we are living as Christians. That's our special focus this year, the "Year of Christian Practices." We think it's best to work together on living a good life, because we are one in the Body of Christ and we were never meant to do this alone. Come hear the wisdom of our Christian tradition on topics like how to spend our money, how to pass our time, how to make decisions, healing, forgiveness, and dying. We will be working on one "practice" each month all year.

— NORA JOHNSON

## OCTOBER: HOUSEHOLD ECONOMICS

**OCTOBER 4: MOTHER NORA JOHNSON, "CHRIST AND CONSUMERS."** We live in a culture that urges us to over-consume money, food, drink, time, and everything else we can get. What does Christianity have to say about consuming? What's the relationship between over-consumption and a God who says, "This is my Body. Take and eat?"

**OCTOBER 11: JOSHUA CASTAÑO, "GOD AND GIFTS."** One way to talk about God's love for us is to talk about God as giving us a gift. What does it mean to understand ourselves as recipients? Join Joshua Castaño of Partners for Sacred Spaces to talk about the relationship between God's gift-giving and our everyday economic lives. What does the recipient of a gift do?

**OCTOBER 18: STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY.** Members of the Stewardship Committee at St. Mark's will talk to us about being a community shaped by and sustained by giving.

**OCTOBER 25: MOTHER NORA JOHNSON, "HOW DO WE LIVE SIMPLY?"** The history of Christianity has included a wide range of financial and material practices. Some pursue wealth, some volunteer for poverty, some are uncertain and plagued by guilt, envy, and uncertainty. This will be a down-to-earth discussion about how we determine what we need and how God calls us to live.

## NOVEMBER: KEEPING SABBATH

### NOVEMBER 1: MOTHER NORA JOHNSON, "PRAYING WITH THE

KALENDAR." Saint's days and other commemorations occur throughout the liturgical year, and we are invited to pray along with the Church and this "great cloud of witnesses." This very Sunday is the "Feast of All Saints." How does praying with the saints through the year shape us as Christians? How is it related to the notion of a Sabbath?

**NOVEMBER 8: PROFESSOR ELLEN CHARRY, "WHAT IS CHRISTIAN SABBATH?"** Many of us are familiar with the observance of a Sabbath day in Judaism. Join Prof. Ellen Charry of Princeton Seminary as she talks about the relationship between Christianity and the practice of the Sabbath.

**NOVEMBER 15: PROFESSOR PHILLIP CARY, "SABBATH KEEPING."** Professor Phillip Cary of Eastern University will talk to us about the Sabbath as "a front-line defense against being swallowed up by our work and its anxieties, our inflated desire to lean in, make a difference and change the world." Learn about the Scriptural background for this practice, and its deep importance for us and for the world.

**NOVEMBER 22: PROFESSOR PHILLIP CARY, "SABBATH KEEPING" PART TWO.**

## AND COMING UP NEXT...

## ADVENT: SAYING YES AND SAYING NO

All during Advent the Forum will be meeting to talk about how this season may be shaped by our "Yes" to God and our "No" to whatever keeps the presence of Christ from being manifest in us. We'll have poems that help us reflect on this topic, a deep discussion of the ways we might open to God in prayer, further exploration of our use of technology ("tech fast" in Advent, anyone?) and more thoughts about affluence and Christian practice.

## ACOLYTES, USHERS, ALTAR GUILD, LECTORS, AND OFFICIANTS TAKE NOTE!

Saint Mark's has by far the fullest and most demanding schedule of daily and weekly worship of any Episcopal parish in Philadelphia, or for miles around. Worshiping God in prayer, scripture, and song is at the heart of our mission, and we do it a lot! This ministry of worship depends on lots and lots of volunteers. This year we are inaugurating Saint Mark's Academy—an opportunity for fellowship, recruitment, training, and discussion for all those involved with the ministries of worship on the Altar Guild, as servers, lectors, officiants, or ushers. All those involved with these ministries are asked to please come to lunch on Sunday, October 18 at 1 p.m., and to stay for about an hour of conversation with the group of all those involved with your particular area. We also invite anyone interested in getting involved with these ministries to also please come to Saint Mark's Academy to learn about the work of each of these important groups of people, and to get involved yourself. This is a great opportunity to sign up for any of these ministries! If you have questions, please contact Fr. Mullen, or the Verger, Noah Stansbury.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### OCTOBER

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| October 4  | Blessing of the Animals and Choral Evensong, 3 p.m. |
| October 18 | Saint Mark's Academy, following the 11 a.m. Mass    |
| October 24 | Garden Clean-up Day, following the 10 a.m. Mass     |

### NOVEMBER

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|-------------|---|
| November 1  | Choral Evensong and Benediction, 3 p.m.   |
| November 2  | Choral Requiem for All Souls' Day, 7 p.m. |
| November 15 | Commitment Sunday                         |



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## REMEMBERING “THE HOLY CHURCH THROUGHOUT ALL THE WORLD”

JOSHUA CASTAÑO

In the words of the *Te Deum Laudamus*, we pray through a list of those offering praise to God, including cherubim and seraphim, prophets, apostles, and martyrs; and finally in a “Holy Church throughout all the world,” unified in one direction of praise. Within our cycle of prayer and worship here at Saint Mark’s we are kept faithfully connected with this community of Christians in all places, knowing we are part of “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.” Likewise, our remembrance of the departed in our prayer life is the witness of our living connection to all who share our faith, in all times and all places.

At the same time that we affirm the Church’s eternal unity and mystical connection we acknowledge its coexistence within a world that never seems to stop making war. In this reality of violence and oppression we have become aware that the faithful in many nations have lost their lives, and seen ancient churches, as in Iraq and Syria, become now silent and riddled with the scars of these conflicts. Those faithful Christians in the Middle East that have survived have now left behind the familiarity and comfort of their homes to flee as strangers and oftentimes unwelcome refugees. Some in our own nation have asked if this moment might see the end of historic Christian communities in the Middle East.

As a community of prayer and people of hope we can respond and witness even here on Locust Street. This November following our annual Requiem on All Souls’ Day, we will have a special opportunity to offer prayers for our departed brothers and sisters throughout the world. We hope that this can be a special way of focusing our thoughts on the Christians and churches that have suffered especially in the 21st century during a painful and bitter period of ongoing conflict and terrorism. One of our shrines in the west end of the church (adjacent to the garden and Fiske Doors) will be made available as place to light candles and pray for communities where Christians have been martyred. A list of these communities will be provided at the shrine to aid in your prayers and meditations. We hope that this is one small way that the light of faith is not extinguished and that we can remember our brothers and sisters who have died confessing the faith of Christ.



## A NEW SONG

SIMON THOMAS JACOBS

“O sing unto the Lord a new song: let the congregation of saints praise him.” So begins Psalm 149. While the text does not correspond directly to any of the appointed readings for the sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Giuseppe Pitoni’s simple and elegant setting nevertheless seemed appropriate for Homecoming Sunday at Saint Mark’s, with the return of the Parish Choir to its regular routine and the lauded place music holds within the life of this parish.

But it turned out to be a more suitable choice than I could have imagined. Processing with the choir on Sunday morning I heard the true embodiment of this opening verse as congregation, choir, and organ joined together in the praise of God – and it didn’t end with the first hymn! It was a truly moving and uplifting experience to make music with all of you and I look forward to doing it each and every week.

It is perhaps not surprising that Psalm 149 has inspired numerous choral settings, and the same can be said of countless other texts from scripture. As a church musician, one of the great joys of my ministry is having the opportunity to program music which, one hopes, complements the lectionary and inspires the listener. Occasionally it might be as simple as selecting a work that incorporates a specific text, but often one must select music that communicates a more complex message from scripture. In such cases, the music can become a vehicle for concepts and ideas that may not be as easy to grasp or respond to through spoken word alone.

It is a privilege to be able to share this ministry with a parish so committed to its music, and I hope the musical selections for the coming season will resonate with you in the same way the church resonates with beautiful sounds every Sunday morning.

JOIN US!

# 20s/30s SIMPLE SUPPERS

## UP NEXT: SIMPLE SUPPER WITH BROTHER LAWRENCE

*The Practice of the Presence of God* is one of the most significant volumes of Christian spirituality and devotion in the Christian tradition. It is also one of the slimmest. First published in 1692, this book is a collection of conversations and letters of Brother Lawrence, a lay brother in a Carmelite order in Paris. Brother Lawrence lived his life with great gratitude for all the many gifts of God that he saw all around him. He was not a learned man, but his life became the textbook for how to practice a faithful awareness. For Brother Lawrence, no task was too menial to teach him about grace. He worked primarily in the kitchens of the monastery and wrote about how that place of everyday, humdrum work became, with his own prayer and attention, a space where he could “possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon me knees at the Blessed Sacrament.”

For our 20s/30s Simple Supper on October 21, we will be sharing in a discussion of this little gem of a book. All 20s/30s are welcome to join us. Read the entire book if you can (it will take you only minutes) or read only an excerpt (provided by Mother Takacs). Or just come be a part of the conversation. Bring your own thoughts and experiences of practicing an awareness of God’s presence – the people and places that help you in this, the challenges that make such a practice difficult. As is our custom, we will also take time to eat, connect, and worship together, and in all things to look for the presence of God.



## FAMILY GAME DAY

ERIKA TAKACS

Are you a fan of Apples to Apples? Does your family love a rousing game of First Orchard? Is your daughter a master of Spot It? Well then join us on Saturday, October 17 at 11am in the Parish Hall for our Family Game Day. Bring your favorite games and snacks to share – the more unusual the game, the more we’ll enjoy it! We’ll spread out the game boards, put on some good music, and enjoy some time for recreation and play – together, as a community of faith. All families with children are welcome.



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