



Dear Friends,

As we look forward to the arrival of Easter morning and the empty tomb, our Lenten Journey is coming to its close. How has your pilgrimage served you this Lent? From the vantage point of being in the church during the week, it would seem our Lenten Appeal has been a wonderful success. Almost daily we have members of the congregation arriving in waves to help support both the Blessings Box and our appeal for the Richmond Hill Food Bank. Over 1,000 lbs. of donations have come in so far; we thank all of you for your generosity and support.

This Lent our parish has offered our first in-person Study program and Confirmation Class in 2 years. It is wonderful to see our parish slowly, but purposefully engaging more deeply in our faith formation work here at St. Mary's. One of the important underpinnings we've been focusing on for our Confirmation Class, is that life is for living. And that to Live Well, we must decide on who we are, what we believe, and what priorities are worth seeking. Have you taken time to reflect on those important decisions this Lent? If not, I would encourage you do so as we move ever closer to Holy Week and walk with Jesus towards his death and resurrection.

As Christians, our understandings about our faith are clear, but complicated. We are to walk as children of God in all we do, being "Little Christs" in the world. Hence our title and name, Christians. However, to live that out in every facet of our earthly life can be challenging, as daily we need to die to our self-serving thoughts and choose to live in Christ's love, to uncover the true depth of what our hearts and spirits are trying to draw us to. I heard a story once shared by a well-known American minister from New York City that really captured in a beautiful way this journey. It is a journey we are all on, and all struggle with daily.

The Reverend Jim Cymbala is the Senior Minister at The Brooklyn Tabernacle in Brooklyn, New York. He has served at this church with over 10,000 members for many decades and has led many vibrant ministries. In this account, he and shares an experience of what happened to him one Easter Sunday, several years ago. Please continue reading; I hope this message will speak to you as much as it does to me.

It was Easter Sunday and I was so tired at the end of the day that I just went to the edge of the steps of the chancel, took off my vestments, sat down and draped my feet over the side. It was a wonderful service with many people coming forward. The anointers and pastoral counselors were visiting with these people.

As I was sitting there, I looked up the middle aisle, and there in about the third row was a man who looked about fifty, disheveled, filthy. He looked up at me rather sheepishly, as if saying, "Could I talk to you?"

We have homeless people coming in all the time, asking for money or whatever. So as I sat there, I said to myself, though I am ashamed of it, "What a way to end a Sunday. I've had such a good time, preaching and ministering, and here's a fellow probably wanting some money for more wine."

He walked up. When he got within about five feet of me, I smelled a horrible smell like I'd never smelled in my life. It was so awful that when he got close, I would inhale by looking away, and then I'd talk to him, and then look away to inhale, because I couldn't inhale facing him. I asked him, "What's your name?"

“David.”

“How long have you been on the street?”

“Six years.”

“How old are you?”

“Thirty-two.” He looked fifty—hair matted; front teeth missing; wino; eyes slightly glazed.

“Where did you sleep last night, David?”

“Abandoned truck.”

I keep in my back pocket a money clip that also holds some credit cards. I fumbled to pick it out, thinking, I'll give him some money. I won't even bother to get a volunteer. They are all busy talking with others. Usually we don't give money to people. We take them to get something to eat.

I took the money out. David pushed his hand in front of me. He said, “I don't want your money. I want this Jesus, the One you were talking about, because I'm not going to make it. I'm going to die on the street.”

I completely forgot about David, and I started to weep for myself. I was going to give a couple of dollars to someone God had sent to me. See how easy it is? I could make the excuse I was tired. There is no excuse. I was not seeing him the way God sees him. I was not feeling what God feels.

But oh, did that change! David just stood there. He didn't know what was happening. I pleaded with God, “God, forgive me! Forgive me! Please forgive me. I am so sorry to represent You this way. I'm so sorry. Here I am with my message and my points, and You send somebody, and I am not ready for it. Oh, God!”

Something came over me. Suddenly I started to weep deeper, and David began to weep. He fell against my chest as I was sitting there. He fell against my clean pressed clothes, and I put my arms around him, and there we wept on each other. The smell of His person became a beautiful aroma. Here is what I thought the Lord made real to me: If you don't love this smell, I can't use you, because this is why I called you where you are. This is what you are about. You are about this smell.

Christ changed David's life. He started memorizing portions of Scripture that were incredible. We got him a place to live. We hired him in the church to do maintenance, and we got his teeth fixed. He was a handsome man when he came out of the hospital. They detoxed him in 6 days. He spent that Thanksgiving at my house. He also spent Christmas at my house. When we were exchanging presents, he pulled out a little thing and he said, “This is for you.” It was a little white hanky. It was the only thing he could afford.

A year later David got up and talked about his conversion to Christ. The minute he took the mic and began to speak, I said, “The man is a preacher.” This past Easter we ordained David. He is an associate minister of a church over in New Jersey. And I was so close to saying, “Here, take this and please just leave me alone; I'm a busy preacher.”

We can get so full of ourselves.

When Jesus was crucified on the Cross, and was raised again on the third day, he accomplished a victory over sin and death that purchased an abundant life in God which is available to all who will offer their hearts to him.

The Apostle Paul, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote a powerful truth that should govern the lives of all Christians who desire to enjoy the Continual and Ever-flowing New Life of Easter. St. Paul writes, *"Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. He died for all, that those who live, should no longer live for themselves but for Him, who died for them and was raised again."* (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

Lent is not about simply avoiding temptations, but about learning how to give the best of ourselves to God. Allowing us to see that our mortality and brokenness don't define us. And now as we look to Easter, we are challenged to look beyond a special Sunday and nice family meals, and truly grow in a life rooted in Christ. Easter is about coming alive. Dying to brokenness and living in grace. The heart and life that understands what Jesus accomplished on the first Easter, brings forth a life filled with meaning and a life freed by grace.

We live in a time and generation where if we are willing to work hard we can enjoy pleasure, money, acceptance, recognition, position, possessions, and recreation. But is that what a truly blessed life looks, tastes, and smells like? The so-called "Good Life" has a way of hiding the truth for a while. Life is not as full as it was intended and created to be, unless it is one that is Christ-centered. A Christ-centered life is lived by allowing the Holy Spirit to move you to live in a way that shows God's grace to not just yourself but the world. A Christ-centered life reflects a heart that is concerned about the Words spoken by Jesus and about putting them into action for him.

Our lives are called to be an expression of the truths of the Easter story. We arrive here by the journey of Lent, the same road our Lord took to arrive at the cross. And in following in Christ's footsteps, in our own way and our own time, we will be blessed and able experience the power of God within us. With it, we can do more than we could ever ask or imagine. By allowing it to live in our hearts, we can become one with that power. And as St. Paul reminds us in the book of Romans, *"If Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you. He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you."* (Romans 8:11)

As we look towards this coming Easter, as we reflect on our Covid journeys and the war in the Ukraine, may we seek out opportunities to be loving servants of God. As we look forward to the beautiful flowers and sweet-smelling scents that will greet us on Easter morning, may we also seek after the true beauty and sweetest smells of this life, by joining Christ in his redeeming work and revelling in the unfolding of God's Kingdom in our midst.

May you and yours have a Holy and Blessed Easter,

Matthew †

The Rev. Matthew H. McMillan
Parish Priest, St. Mary's Anglican Church

A Word About Our Easter Envelopes

The Wardens and I would ask that if people are able to catch-up on missed giving's or if you could help by making an extra contribution this Easter, it would help keep our budget in the positive column. Thank You for your support.



[St. Mary's 2022 Plans and Priorities Update](#)

Your St. Mary's Church Wardens wish you a most happy and joyful Easter. As we look to mark this most important date in the church year, your lay leaders wanted to share an update about our efforts this year, and the current plans and priorities for 2022. Our efforts for this year consist of focusing on 3 strategic categories: *our parish, our community, and our church facilities.*

Our main efforts have been to help ensure safe and continued worship of our Risen Lord. We have worked and invested in our offering of continued virtual worship and the safe re-opening of in-person worship. Our priority for the remainder of 2022 is to help our community return to a deeper level of engagement in our lives of faith. We have supported our clergy with their offering of Confirmation and Adult Study Programs, while also supporting planning for First Communion Instruction and more enhanced Sunday School programming as the numbers increase. We have also this winter re-started some of our family ministry outings while also including our refugee family, and are looking forward to more. We continue to prioritize Youth Ministry programming and are working on exploring parish partnerships and new possibilities. Our 150th Celebrations have taken center-stage as we seek to give thanks for our history, parish family, and the rich blessings we all share here at St. Mary's. Our hope is that through remembering and re-engaging with the parish, that we will all find new energy and new blessings as we come out of our Covid journeys.

Part of the priority for St. Mary's of helping our community, has been to help support our Korean and Orthodox Congregations during Covid. We have prioritized the sharing our broadcasting resources, helped with reducing costs and supporting their communities as they find creative ways to respond to Covid and transition out of restrictions. Our Outreach and Refugee programs continue to offer their important work in providing Food Security and in preparing for the arrival of our 2nd Afghan family. We are also thankful of the Outreach Committee's efforts of highlighting the impact of Anti-Black Racism, as they offer a study program this spring. We commit to building a more just and equal community in Christ's name.

Our buildings continue to provide a spiritual home and gathering place in Christ's name. We continue to ensure that our facilities are safe, secure, and operating efficiently, focusing, as usual, on the heating system and the working needs of the building as a whole. On Sunday April 3rd, we announced the signing of a sale agreement for our Vacant Lands to the doctor who owns the 2 properties south of the church. We now begin a severance process for the land being sold and hope to complete this in the later part of 2022. The parish will keep 80% of the \$2 million sale price and be able to invest those funds to support strategic priorities and capital upgrades to grow and strengthen the parish. Thank you everyone for your support and generosity.

Yours in Christ,

Sharon Hanns, Colin Webb, James Agyeman and Chas Mills