

# RAQUETTE LAKE CHAPEL



March 2020 Newsletter

Raquette Lake, New York

## **MARCH SCRIPTURE**

[March 1 – First Sunday in Lent](#): Genesis 2:15-17; 3:17; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

[March 8 – Second Sunday in Lent](#): Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17

[March 15 – Third Sunday in Lent](#): Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

[March 22 – Fourth Sunday in Lent](#): 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

[March 29 – Fifth Sunday in Lent](#): Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45

## **WHAT IS THE SEASON OF LENT?**

If we did not grow up in one of those Christian traditions that observed Lent or the special days within Lent, most of us will recollect seeing people with ashes on their foreheads, eating fish on Fridays, and asking each other “what are you giving up for lent?” Though it may not be obvious, those behaviors do have a basis in Christian teaching.

Not all Christian churches observe Lent. Lent is mostly observed by the Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican denominations, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox churches. Lent is the 40-day Christian season of spiritual preparation before Easter. In Western churches, it begins on Ash Wednesday. During Lent, many Christians observe a period of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial, and spiritual discipline. Additionally, Lent has been a time for people to prepare for Baptism on Easter.

## **THE FOCUS GOSPELS THIS MONTH?**

The Matthew Gospel (4:1-11) is an apt beginning for Lent as it describes Jesus’s resistance to temptations during his 40 days in the desert. Next come four longer stories in the Gospel of John: Nicodemus and being “born again”; the Samaritan woman by the well; the blind man by the pool of Siloam; and the raising of Lazarus. One notable aspect of these four stories is that Jesus

teaches about the kingdom of the God to specific people. These are not sermons to faceless crowds: they are interactions with individual, everyday people from different social classes, in the midst of their daily lives and crises.

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## NOT A SERMON . . .

Last week two articles in the same edition of the NY Times caught my attention – clever headlines do that you know! “*How to be Good*” and “*Get Ready NY – The Plastic Bag Ban is Coming.*”



Clearly the “How to be Good” article was a secular one. Even so, it is difficult to keep ethics, morals, values, beliefs out of any discussion of *good*. The author, Simran Sethi, acknowledges this: “many of us have a complicated relationship with what it means to be good, [and so] it can help to reframe the subject and widen it.” That’s what she does in her article, explore what do we really mean about doing good. She interviews several people from all backgrounds, a professor of philosophy, an author, a Zen monk at Plum Village in France (Plum Village was founded by the well know Zen master Thich Nhat Hahn.) Here are their responses:

### What Does it Mean to Be Good?

- to understand what is best, for ourselves, our bodies, our community, our world.
- “generosity of spirit and deed, and the thoughtful consideration of others.” And sometimes sacrificing our own needs and freedom for the benefit of others.
- care for ourselves and the world. “In politics and culture, in the media and corporations, we have cultivated conditions that have produced a lot of violence, discrimination, and despair for which there is a collective level of responsibility.”

### What do Plastic Bags Have to do With Being Good?

I have to believe that the people who are behind the effort to ban single use plastic bags believe they are “doing good.” There’s no doubt that discarded plastic bags are an eyesore in many areas, and for those who try to reuse them, their good intentions are stymied by how unsubstantial the bags are with multiple uses. I suppose that’s how they got their moniker: “single use” because they fall apart after one use. Also, I hazard a guess most of us have no idea how the tons of plastic end up at the end of the disposable waste cycle.

To conclude, I commend the author of the article, Anne Barnard, who I believe captures the whole point of the discussion about doing good: “*But just thinking about how to carry a purchase, officials and environmental advocates say, could lead to an even larger shift, making people more mindful of what they buy and where it ends up.*”

Doing good? Being mindful of ourselves, others, and our world with our faith as a lodestone. I think that’s the purpose of Lent!

**References:** (1) “How to be Good,” Simran Sethi, 2/24/2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/24/smarter-living/how-to-be-good.html>; (2) “Get Ready NY – The Plastic Bag Ban is Coming,” Anne Barnard, 2/29/2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/28/nyregion/new-york-state-ban-plastic-bags.html>