



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast! January 19, 2020

Upcoming local community events . . .

The weather has been a wildcard recently, with temps in the 50's then down to -10 in places. 6-10 in. of snow in places last week with more predicted this weekend! It's disrupted several events....

- Jan 25, 2020: Mike Norris Memorial Ice Fishing Derby (Raquette Lake NY), 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- Feb. 3, 2020: Saranac Lake Winter Carnival Service, St. Luke's (Saranac Lake NY), 7:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. SL Winter Carnival is Jan. 31 – Feb. 9.
- Feb. 15-16, 2020: Raquette Lake Winter Carnival (Raquette Lake NY)

Events in the nation . . .

The historic impeachment proceedings have gone to the next step this last week. Gone, I hope, are the political rantings and rancor that have characterized this process so far. I want to share with you comments made by Benjamin Franklin at age 81, addressing General George Washington, president of the Constitutional Convention, on June 28, 1787:

"I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? . . . I therefore beg leave to move — that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that Service."

And let us not forget Martin Luther King Jr. Day!

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS SUNDAY: THE 2ND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-12; 1 cor. 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

Isaiah 49:1-7 -- Our reading is the second of the Servant Songs. The servant calls upon Israelites scattered around the Mediterranean. He is an effective instrument in speaking God's word. He speaks on behalf of the faithful of Israel, who will bring knowledge of God to all peoples.

Psalm 40:1-12 - This psalm has been called a "hybrid," as it has two purposes: a celebration of thanks to God *and* a plea for further help.

I Cor. 1:1-9 – Paul writes to a Christian community not noted for its harmony. It seems that they are richly endowed with spiritual gifts, but it is noteworthy that Paul does not mention faith, hope and fraternal love – as he does in other letters.

John 1:29-42 -- John the Baptist has denied that he is any of the figures expected by Jews to inaugurate a new era: he is neither the Messiah, Elijah, nor the prophet like Moses. Rather he prepares people for the coming of the Lord. He has told representatives of the Pharisees that one is already among them who is far more worthy than he.



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Not a Sermon . . .

You will not be alone if you struggle to figure out how the four scripture readings for this Sunday relate to each other, or if you come up empty handed when you try to identify a common theme or themes. How were the readings chosen for each Sunday in the Revised Common Lectionary anyway?

There are two extremes of answers, with others in between. One school of thought is that the readings were chosen with a common theme. The opposite school of thought is they were NOT chosen with a common theme in mind, but included one reading, particularly the Gospel, which aligned with the Church calendar, the season (like Advent) or a special Sunday (like Epiphany). In general, though, the RCL attempts to provide a broad reading of the Old and New Testaments over a three-year cycle. Some of the RCL commentaries I read will say something like, “the preacher will have difficulty preaching about all the readings for this Sunday and, therefore, may chose to focus on one.” This feels like one of those Sundays. Further, if you look at the readings for Sundays between now and Ash Wednesday (February 26), it is hard to see a connection between the readings of one Sunday to the next.

So, today I want to start a conversation about the Church in Corinth (the NT reading for today and next week). I have a soft spot in my heart for that congregation, as they were certainly a spirit-filled, lively group based on what we read. Corinth occupied a unique geographical place, located between two active seaports. Further, at the time Paul wrote the first letter to the Corinthians, around 51 CE, Corinth was still adjusting from Greek to Roman rule, and the people living in Corinth were adjusting to each other. When the Romans conquered Corinth, they razed the city and sold into slavery the residents they did not kill. To repopulate the city, the Romans “conscripted” people from all over the Mediterranean. These people not only were ethnically and linguistically different, they apparently followed a multitude of different religions. So, imagine a rough and tumble port city with people from all walks of life. With that background Paul started a Church.

Next week we will read more about the congregation of the Corinthian Church and their problems and the challenges Paul faced as their pastor. This week’s reading begins with Paul’s typical greeting in his letters. We might be tempted to skip through this and get to the “meat” of the letter (because we know there’s a lot to be dealt with in Corinth!) But the introductions to Paul’s letters provide us with insight into Paul’s most fundamental theological convictions...besides providing clues to the topics of the letter.

One of the key aspects of Paul’s ministry is “calling.” Paul declares he was called by God as an apostle. We are familiar with the road to Damascus story. But Paul also believes that “calling” is not exclusively for clergy. He states that Christians in Corinth are “called to be saints.” And a call is more than a personal gift, it is a gift to be shared and used in community. More next week! *Blessings, Vance.*

Prayers for

**FOR THE FAMILY OF MUGSY FUGE WHO PASSED AWAY THIS WEEK.
JIM (FRIEND FROM SARANAC LAKE) WHO JUST RECEIVED A SERIOUS CANCER DIAGNOSIS.**