

March 12, 2020

**“Our mission is to celebrate God’s transforming Love in Jesus, by following where Jesus’ Love is calling us to serve the community”**



## Ascension This Week

**More On Faith  
— from Fr Bill Baker**

On Sunday, March 15

— 8 am Said Eucharist

—10 am Sung Eucharist

—11:15 Coffee Hour

—2:30 pm Service at  
Lakeside Manor

—4:00 pm IPC Lenten  
Committee offers *Even-  
song*, an Evening Prayer  
Service with hymns at  
St. Alban’s Church

—5:30 pm Friendship  
Dinner at the Unitarian  
Church

Inside this issue:

—”More on Faith” —an  
article from Fr Bill Baker

—IPC Request for Help in  
Rebuilding St Paul’s Ceil-  
ing

—Lenten Study Series and  
Soup Suppers in the  
Rectory.

—Lenten Retreat Day  
with Fr Mark Brown

—Save the Date events  
and meetings.

Sunday’s sermon focused on two human examples from our scripture of how we might live out our faithful lives. If you would like to listen to that sermon, please go to our Facebook page! In addition to covering how we might live our lives in faith, the sermon discusses how although Jesus is the Light of the world, we can sometimes find ourselves in darkness. We have all felt that feeling, where no matter how hard we reach for God, God is not with us or that we are alone or lost in the world.

Darkness in our faith can be caused by failure to succeed or depression or loss. At the extreme, that darkness can lead us to doubt--doubt in ourselves, doubt that God loves us and even doubt that God exists. This might seem like a horrible sin, to express doubt in God.

In fact, most people believe that doubt is the opposite of faith. I do not believe that. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. The opposite of faith in God is indifference. Indifference about whether God exists or not. Doubt, in my opinion is a natural part of our faith. Anyone of us who believes in God has overcome some doubt. Some amount of doubt is not just acceptable, it is also necessary and God understands that.

Think of the Gospel about Doubting Thomas. Jesus isn’t upset with Thomas when he sees him after the Resurrection. He says, “Peace be with you,” and then he shows his hand and his side to Thomas. I don’t think Jesus judged Thomas. Jesus simply fills in the missing information for him. He meets him where Thomas finds himself, even in his doubt.

I think that Jesus understood Thomas. Maybe Jesus felt doubt, too. Was doubt what led him to ask the Father to take this cup from him in the garden the night before he is handed over to the authorities in the Gospel of Luke? Could he have been afraid of the physical pain of hanging on the cross from three excruciating hours? If Jesus was fully human, it certainly seems possible that he had his own doubts and fears.

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The point I want to make is that doubt is a really natural part of faith. If we do not fully doubt the existence of God we still might doubt that God loves us, especially if we are stuck in a dark place. We also doubt certain parts of our faith. Do you believe everything about our faith all the time? I believe that goes beyond reason to never question anything about faith or God.

Just like our other dark places, we need to make peace with our doubt. Accept it as part of our journey in faith. We must embrace it, knowing that even Thomas found the Resurrection so impossible to believe that he said he would not accept it as true unless he saw Jesus himself. But then, we need to move past it, because if we don't we risk feeling guilty and shaming ourselves.

Anything that we live through becomes part of our past and part of who we are as faithful people. When we work through our doubts, it makes us stronger Christians and stronger people. Then we become ready to accept the grace that Jesus provided for us through his saving act on the cross. That is worth believing in!

Blessings, Fr. Bill+

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## **A Word on the Peace**

Unless the Bishop advises us to cancel services, we will have them this weekend. If you are sick, please stay home. Wash your hands often.

Refraining from shaking hands and hugging are recommended at this time. During the Peace this Sunday, please nod, wave hands or make the "peace" sign as you look your brothers and sisters in the eyes, acknowledge them and offer them peace. Let's really attempt to continue to connect with one another while avoiding physical contact.

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## **Opportunity to Help --**

**There are envelopes in the back of the church to support the IPC's effort to help rebuild St. Paul's ceiling. They are hoping for a \$600.00 pledge from each parish to attain the funds necessary for St. Paul's to rebuild.**

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**Light:** When we see by the light of Christ, everything that is close to us, things as simple and as vital as light and water and food and shelter and community – everything – is transformed into a vehicle of grace. ...

**Water:** ... Baptism is a sacrament of surrender, the sacramental act of letting go of fear and control, making friends with the unknown, and beginning to trust that God will sustain you, even in the midst of chaos and death.

**Food:** When we remember food is life, we gain a better understanding of what it means to ask God to give us our daily bread . . .

**Shelter:** The liturgy itself shelters us, the same patterns unfolding, again and again, day by day, week by week, year by year. ...

**Community:** Being in loving relationship means that the truth of our very selves will be revealed.

Thursdays in Lent at 7:00 pm Fr. Bill is hosting a Lenten Study Series & Soup Suppers in the Rectory. This year the Lenten Series- “The Signs of Life”, from the SSJE, explores the signs and symbols at the heart of Christian worship. This free 5-week offering encourages individuals and groups to explore the riches of our worship traditions, liturgy and sacraments, and the art and architecture of our worship spaces, revealing the full meaning of these signs, deepening our experience of Christian vocation and guiding us toward ongoing conversion.

## Save the Date: Upcoming Services, Meetings and Events:

**Morning Prayer During Lent:** During Lent, Morning Prayer will be offered on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at 9:30 am in the church. Please consider adding this to your Lenten devotion.

**Thursdays in Lent at 7:00 pm** Fr Bill is hosting a Lenten Study Series and Soup Suppers in the Rectory. See the flyer in this newsletter for more information.

The IPC Lenten Committee offers **Evensong**, an Evening Prayer Service with hymns at **St. Alban's Church on Sunday, March 15th at 4:00 pm**. Guest Homilist: The Rev Jerry Keutcher. The theme of the service will follow the SSJE 2020 Lenten study "Signs of Life - Why Church Matters - Light / Water / Food / Shelter / Community." A light supper will be shared after the service. (76 St Albans Place, Staten Island, 10312. phone: 718-984-7756)

**Sunday, March 15:** The next monthly Friendship Dinner is Sunday, March 15, 5:30 to 7:30 at the Unitarian Church of Staten Island, 312 Fillmore St., SI 10301, next to Snug Harbor. This is a wonderful opportunity to socially meet those of other faiths bringing us together through the One common to us all: God. It is Pot Luck and you are asked to bring a vegetarian dish.

Please join us at **5:00 pm on Saturday, March 21**, and every third Saturday of the month for a **healing service at Ascension**. As many of you know, Arthur Ullstrom has a spiritual gift of healing prayer. He will be joined by Dcn. Geri and Fr Bill for the laying on of hands and prayer for healing.



**Thursday, March 26: Building Bridges Interfaith Seder**, 6:30pm at Olivet Presbyterian Church, 97 Myrtle Avenue. Paid reservations required by March 20, and can be made through Fr Bill and Cindy McCloskey.

**Friday, March 27: Chicken and Fish Fry at Christ Church.** 6:00—9:00 pm. \$12 per person, \$8 for children up to 12 years old. Take out dinners available. 718-272-6100 & 917-514-2407. Reservations suggested.

**On Saturday, March 28**, Fr Mark Brown will hold a Lenten Retreat Day at Ascension from 9 am to 2:30 pm — **"Slow Down: Resurrection Ahead"** — offering quiet reflection, guided meditation, and conversation. Fr. Mark will share impressions of his many visits to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and how it has deepened his understanding of Resurrection not only as something that happened to Jesus or something that we ourselves look forward to, but also as something woven into the fabric of everyday life even now, in ways both great and small. RSVP by Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> by calling the parish office or leaving a message. We will conclude our time of retreat with a celebration of the holy Eucharist. Refreshments and lunch will be provided.

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Find us on Facebook@Church of Ascension Staten Island



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<http://www.ascensionsi.org/>