

March 5, 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 Temptation — from Fr Bill Baker

On Sunday, March 8

- 8 am Said Eucharist
- 10 am Sung Eucharist
- 11:15 Coffee Hour
- 2:30 pm Service at Lakeside Manor

Inside this issue:

- “More on Temptation” — an article from Fr Bill Baker
- Letter from the Bishops re Coronavirus precautions
- extract from article on coronavirus and the common cup
- Lenten Series and Soup Suppers beginning March 5th in the rectory.
- Save the Date events and meetings.

Since temptations are such a big part of life, avoiding them can be difficult. If you try to avoid the temptation of sugar, much like a diabetic, you will find that sugar is added to many foods. If you want to quit smoking, the urge for nicotine is powerful. Whatever temptation we wish to avoid, if we don’t want to fail, we need to prepare for the challenge. I offer two suggestions to assist us with our temptations.

A person needs to know what they are dealing with. If you want to stop drinking alcohol, you need to understand why you drink, and if you can figure it out, what you are avoiding by drinking. It is also important to understand the times and places that you drink. The two suggestions for success avoiding temptation are to **avoid and add**.

Avoid the people, places and things associated with drinking. If drinking is a social thing, one might need to skip happy hours after work or parties. By staying away from the temptation, like bars or drinking buddies, we are less likely to drink. The same is true of other issues. If you gamble online, avoid gambling websites and apps on phones and computers. If you smoke with a certain co-worker tell them that you need their support in quitting. If you gossip, avoiding calling those friend who you gossip with.

However, if the reason one drinks is related to stress, it becomes important to figure out the stressors in life and reduce them. This can be difficult if the stressor is a job or difficult relationships. Avoidance of stress might mean changing jobs, or talking to our supervisor to reduce workloads or responsibilities. This sounds scary, but it doesn’t have to happen all at once. If life is really stressful, we can also seek the help of a mental health professional. For some people, seeking the advice of a therapist might seem scarier than quitting a job, but asking for help is a very good thing. And, as always, we should pray!

After avoiding certain behaviors, it becomes important to **add** something to fill up our time or replace what we took away. If you were spending a lot of times in bars, start a gym routine after work. This might both serve to fill up your time, and add the benefit of lowering stress. Working out is a great stress reducer. Join a “Meet Up” group or volunteer doing something you enjoy. If idol hands are the devil’s workshop, do not give yourself the temptation of having too much time to be tempted.

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The last few week's sermons and newsletters have focused on the difficult process of change. Lent is a good time to think and pray about what changes we can make in order to become better Christians. We are all broken by sin and struggle to avoid temptation. Continue to commit your life to God. Pray. Seek those things which help create the Kingdom of God right here, but also be gentle with yourself. What God asks of us, although vital, are not simple choices. These are not just Lenten devotions. We are working on life-changing commitments.

The Common Cup

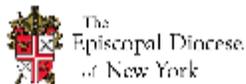
I am not an alarmist and I worry about very little. Most people are amused by how easily I fall asleep at night. My head hits the pillow and at once I fall asleep, reminiscent of the Psalmist who says, "I lie down in peace, at once I fall asleep, for only you Lord make me dwell in safety." 4:8.

The same is mostly true about the coronavirus. I am not worried about getting it myself and I have very few reservations about sharing the common cup. I suppose it could happen, but why worry about it. I have included two other clergy perspectives in this issue and how we should respond during this time of potential outbreak of the coronavirus.

We will continue to offer the Common Cup at Ascension in the coming weeks, but, if for whatever reason, you do not feel comfortable receiving the cup, please know that receiving only the bread is fine and I support your decision. Just being part of the Communion that we share on Sunday, you receive the benefits of God and I assure you, whether we receive the Cup or not, we are all still part of Christ's body! Please do not lose any sleep over worrying about receiving the Common Cup.

Blessings, Fr Bill+

Thursdays in Lent at 7:00 pm Fr. Bill will host a Lenten 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. A flyer is posted in the church Undercroft with full details, and can be viewed in last week's newsletter.



March 3, 2020

Faith and Facts in a Climate of Fear

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We are writing to you about COVID-19, the coronavirus disease currently affecting the lives of many around the globe. Much advice and information has already been disseminated—and rather than repeating it all, we refer you to the *Episcopal Relief & Development* website, which has an excellent page titled *Faith-Based Responses to Epidemics*. You can reach this page by entering <https://episnyd.io/erd> in your browser or by going to www.episcopalrelief.org and following the links.

We also offer these simple guidelines for adaptations of services:

- Remind congregants not to come to church or meetings if they feel ill.
- Clergy should wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before services and use hand sanitizer before distributing communion.
- Provide hand sanitizer for congregational use.
- If desired by the congregation, adapt rituals to minimize personal contact.
- Communion: those who are ill should stay home; those who are concerned may abstain from communion or receive "in one kind" (host only); use of the common cup with proper purificator procedure presents relatively low risk; intinction should be avoided.
- Sharing of the Peace: waving or bowing are perfectly acceptable in place of shaking hands or hugging.

Above all, we should be compassionate, and ground our actions in faith and facts.

Episcopal Relief & Development puts this well on the page linked to above:

Our role in responding, as churches, dioceses and compassionate Christians, is to:

- Combat fear with knowledge in order to encourage preparedness and decrease stigma.
- Maintain operational continuity and continue worship life in the case of potential quarantine and disruption.
- Show God's compassion and care to those in our communities who are affected.

Today we express our profound gratitude for your own leadership and discernment. We have already read and experienced, in our congregations and communities, thoughtful, measured, and helpful responses to the COVID-19 outbreak.

As becomes necessary and as the situation evolves, we will communicate further.

We close with a prayer.

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP, p. 832)

The Rt. Rev. Andrew ML Dietsche
Bishop of New York

The Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin
Bishop Suffragan

The Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool
Bishop Assistant

The following extract is from an article written by Fr David Silbey at St Paul's Episcopal Church in Walla Walla, Washington:

.... I can recommend three options to you:

1. *When in doubt, drink from the common cup* - it is the most sanitary way for you to receive the consecrated wine at the Eucharist. Christians have been doing so for centuries, and still manage to die at the same rate and pace as the general population!
2. *If you don't want to drink from the cup, don't intict for yourself.* Instead, leave the host on your hand, and allow the Eucharistic Minister to intict it for you, and place the host on your tongue. This ensures that only people with washed hands are handling the hosts, and it eliminates the unsanitary conditions that are caused by intiction.
3. *Finally, if you don't want to receive the cup at all, it's ok not to.* The church believes that all of the grace of the sacrament of the Eucharist is conferred wholly in each element - both consecrated bread and wine. To receive only the host is not to have a "half blessing" or to receive "half communion." Instead, receiving in one kind is to fully partake in the Eucharistic feast.

Finally, let your consideration for others carry the way you would through any other sickness: if you have a fever, stay home; if you have a cold, don't shake hands at the peace; and always, always, always wash your hands with soap and water for 15 seconds or longer.

....Some of you may know I was trained as a scientist before pursuing my ordained vocation. As such, my first instinct was to turn to peer reviewed literature - here are the two best sources out there. If you want to nerd out like me and get into the weeds, here they are. If you want a copy of the journal articles themselves, email me at davids@stpaulsww.org, and I'd be happy to provide them to you.

- Letter to the Editor from CDC Scientists, "Risk of Infectious Disease Transmission from a Common Communion Cup" *American Journal of Infection Control* (Vol. 26, pgs. 538-539).
- Key quotes: "no documented transmission of any infectious disease has ever been traced to the use of a common communion cup" and "the risk for infectious disease transmission by a common communion cup is very low"
- Peer-Reviewed Article, "The hazard of infection from the shared communion cup" *Journal of Infection* (1988) (Vol 16, pgs. 3-23).
- Key quote: "No episode of disease attributable to the shared communion cup has ever been reported. Currently available data do not provide any support for suggesting that the practice of sharing a common communion cup should be abandoned because it might spread infection."

Here is the link (to mailchimp) provided for the article:

<https://mailchi.mp/687aa6e2baa7/covid19-communion?e=%5BUNIQID%>

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.

Saturday, March 14: St Patrick's dinner at St John's Church on Bay Street.

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"** RSVP by Wednesday, March 25th 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.

Saturday, May 9: Save the Date for the Episcopal Church Women's Annual Meeting. More information will follow closer to the date.

