

The Emmanuel Epistle

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Fr. Rob Bethancourt

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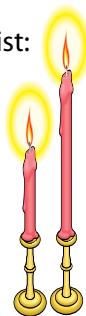
Rector Emeritus:
The Rev. Canon
Paul D. Edwards

Office Hours:
Monday - Friday
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Sunday Worship Services:
8:15 AM & 10:00 AM

Tuesday Eucharist:
10:00 AM

Wednesday Eucharist:
7:00 AM



Fasting & Feasting

Howard Rutledge, a United States Air Force pilot, was shot down over North Vietnam during the early stages of the war. He spent several miserable years in the hands of his captors before being released at the war's conclusion. In his book *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, he reflects upon the resources from which he drew in those arduous days when life seemed so intolerable.

"During those longer periods of enforced reflection it became so much easier to separate the important from the trivial, the worthwhile from the waste. For example, in the past, I usually worked or played hard on Sundays and had no time for church. For years Phyllis (his wife) had encouraged me to join the family at church. She never nagged or scolded -- she just kept hoping. But I was too busy, too preoccupied, to spend one or two short hours a week thinking about the really important things.

Now the sights and sounds and smells of death were all around me. My hunger for spiritual food soon out-did my hunger for a steak. Now I wanted to know about that part of me that will never die. Now I wanted to talk about God and Christ and the church. But in Heartbreak (the name POWs gave their prison camp) solitary confinement, there was no pastor, no Sunday School teacher, no Bible, no hymnbook, no community of believers to guide and sustain me. I had completely neglected the spiritual dimension of my life. It took prison to show me how empty life is without God."

This month we have entered into the adventure called "Lent". We don't have to wait for Heartbreak. Lent is a time in which we learn to join Jesus in fasting and feasting—remembering the forty days and nights he spent in the wilderness. Fasting is not done in order to coerce God's favor. We are already loved with the infinite heart of God. When Jesus went into the wilderness to fast and pray, it was after he had received the Father's blessing: "My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased!" Rather, Jesus relinquished, for a time, the bread of earth that he might enjoy "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." We Fast from the food that passes, in order to Feast on the food that lasts!

Although fasting often focuses on actual food, we can fast from anything that has become habitual or expected, in order to prepare for the fresh and unexpected. We might fast from lunch in order to read scripture and feast on the One who is the Bread of Life, but we could also fast from that second hour of television in order to tune in to heavenly vision.

Fasting can also include various habits or internal tendencies. Perhaps we make a choice to fast from our usual evening review of the things that went wrong, in order to feast on the signs of God's favor. What were the day's successes? If our monthly bill paying frenzy is fraught with fear over things financial, perhaps we can tithe a slot of worry time in order to reflect on the various forms of "wealth" that have already been granted. We don't have to wait for a concentration camp experience to deepen our spiritual life. Lent is a wonderful opportunity to voluntarily let go of mammon's menu in order to rediscover the eternally satisfying cuisine of the Kingdom.

*With prayers for a blessed Lent,
Fr. Rob*

STEWARDSHIP

"What is required of a steward but to be faithful?"

I Corinthians 4:2

What is a Steward? It comes from the old word "sty warden". A warden is a keeper of someone else's property. A sty is where they keep pigs. St. Paul asks the question what is required of a keeper of pigs? To best understand this we need to go back to the time of Paul.

What if you were a sty warden in Jerusalem? The owner of the pigs would come by and asked you, "How are you doing?"

You would answer. "Not too well. It seems no one around here wants to buy pigs. Apparently for the Jews eating pork is against the Law."

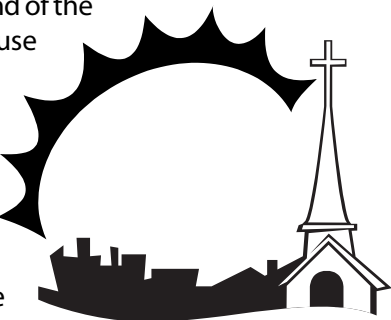
Don't worry about that" the owner replies. "All I want you to do is to be faithful." Feed the pigs. That is all that is required biblically of a steward.

The same is true today. What is required of us as stewards is to be faithful with the property God has given us. What does it mean to be faithful? Does it mean we have to win every time? Do we vote for the person most likely to win, or do we remain faithful and vote for principles? Do we put ourselves down, get discouraged and quit responsibilities when we lose, or do we remain faithful to what is required of us to do. It does not matter whether we win or lose or sell more or less pigs than others. What matters is, are we faithful with what God has given us?

The faith level of commitment is between us and God and no one else. We do not give to get committed. The basic principle is to become committed and then to give. No one should give anything until they have made their commitment to Jesus.

Lent is a time to examine our commitment level and the meaning of stewardship. Stewardship drives for financing are held at the end of the year. We should not confuse our stewardship with the budget.

It can be confusing when a church presents its budget after having a time of stressing stewardship. It is fine to present the



budget. The congregation needs to know what is happening and the church needs to be transparent, but the budget should not be tied to giving. Giving only to a budget we approve or not giving if we do not approve, is not a matter of faith. We are not giving to a budget. We are giving to a ministry that is far beyond any budget.

To be faithful we need to give out of faith. If we do not like everything a church is doing with our money we need to find a church that does. To do that is almost like looking for a church which has no sinners. If you find one you want they may not want you.

No matter what we do here, or who we become when we are done, the question will be a matter of faithfulness. All we want to hear and all that is promised is the great "Well done good and faithful steward. You have been faithful over little I will make you faithful over much".

Fr. Paul

SAGE

In attendance this month were Barbara Anzevino, Judy Holmblad, Bob Johnson, Glen and Scott Buehler, Willie and Fred and Cheri Collin.

Fr. Rob stopped by and gave a wonderful blessing. We then enjoyed a pasta dish, chicken and fruit salad along with a choice of FIVE different ice creams for dessert.

We received an update on the Marshals. Dorothy is ready to rent out their home and move back to our warmer climate.

Discussions included, playing ping-pong, bridge classes that people are taking, farmer's markets and the opportunities involved in downsizing such as Lee and Carl are doing. Lee and Carl are moving on March 2 into Emerald Court.

Further discussions included The Red Hat Society and sewing projects. Barbara helped several shut-ins transporting to and from Doctor's Appointments and other needs. Also, she is training to be a trainer for Guide dogs for the Blind.

We all counted our blessings and gave thanks for the beautiful weather.

Schedule for Holy Week and Easter

Maundy Thursday
Good Friday Service
Easter Vigil
Easter Services
Easter Egg Hunt

Foot Washing and Communion
Seven Last Words
Candlelight service with Communion
Communion with Choir

April 1 at 7:30^{pm}
April 2 at 12-3^{pm} & 7:30^{pm}
April 3 at 7:30^{pm}
April 4 at 8:15^{am} & 10^{am}
after the 10^{am} service



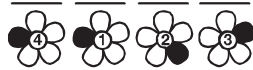
God's teaching is like....

In Deuteronomy, Moses' words to the children of Israel remind us of spring, which brings growth and new life.

Use the flower code below to fill in the blanks, revealing Deuteronomy 32:2, NIV.



"Let my teaching fall like



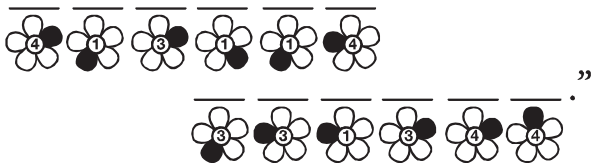
and my words descend like



like



like abundant



DIRT CUPS

Make this easy snack for your family or your friends at Sunday school. As you eat it, celebrate the miracles God brings in the spring.

What you need:

- 2 cups milk
- 1 (4-serving size) box of chocolate instant pudding
- 1 (8 oz.) tub of frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 1 (16 oz.) package Oreo cookies, crushed
- 8 (9 oz.) plastic cups
- gummy worms and frogs
- plastic flowers (optional)

What you do:

1. Mix milk and pudding in a large bowl. Beat with a whisk until well blended. Let stand 5 minutes.
2. Add whipped topping and half of the crushed Oreos.
3. Place 1 tablespoon crushed Oreos in each cup. Fill cups 3/4 full with pudding.
4. Top with remaining crushed Oreos.
5. Chill at least 1 hour or until ready to serve.
6. Decorate with gummy worms and/or frogs.
7. Place the stem end of the plastic flower into the center of the pudding dessert.



We Need To Know

Please let the clergy know of any members of the parish that are unable to come to church and would like to receive communion. If you know of someone who has been admitted to a hospital, remember to inform the clergy. With the new privacy laws, the clergy can no longer check the roster for parishioners that may be hospitalized. It is "Better We Know Twice Than Not At All!"

Support Our Advertisers

Each issue of the Emmanuel Epistle is printed at no cost to our Parish, thanks to C&M Church Publications. They are able to do this by selling a single page of advertising in each issue. Please check the back of each issue's calendar and if you are in need of a service listed, consider using one of our supporters.

Emmanuel Preschool News

Dear Emmanuel Friends,

It's hard to believe but we are already thinking about springtime! Springtime means that we will be learning about God's creation and the beautiful new things that grow in the spring. We'll learn about Easter and what that means and we will learn about how much Jesus loves us!



Springtime also means it's time to think about registration for next year! We will begin enrolling current students at parent conferences on March 18th. Then we will open it to new registrations on Saturday March 27th. Call the office for questions & information at 724-738-1541.

May God Bless your day!
Nancy Shively
Preschool Director

Emmanuel Episcopal Church

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HOLY WEEK