

THE CANTERBURY TALES

DECEMBER 2017



FR. MARK'S MUSINGS

Some of you know me to be something of a scrooge when it comes to Advent. I have a reputation of putting Christmas off until the last minute, i.e. Christmas Eve if possible. I like to keep the seasons distinct and not blur the line between Advent and Christmas. Liturgically, when we have a change of seasons, I like there to be a significant change in the way the church is decorated, what music we sing, and the prayers we use. I like the idea that we are fully aware of the change of season and that we celebrate each season with all the passion that each one offers to us. Personally, I think it helps make the Christmas season even more joyous when we have been patient through the secular celebration and wait for the real Christmas season to begin and I know that that makes me look like quite the curmudgeon at this time of year.

However, do not misconstrue from this that I am a scrooge come December 24th. For me that is one of the most exciting days of the year. It is the peak of the build up to Christmas and a time of joy. I love the Christmas Eve service with the M&M choir, the Candles and Carols, and the wonderful joyous music, but most of all there is a special joy in sharing the Christmas season with all of you and with my family. This is often a time when we are moved to think of others more than ourselves as we are shopping and giving and planning meals and events, and I think it reminds us that it is in giving that we receive the most joy. Numerous studies have shown that true happiness comes from giving and sharing. At Christmas we seem to grasp this message well. At this time of year there is an increase in giving all over the world to almost

every charitable organization. We worry about the homeless and put on Christmas meals. The Salvation Army collects major donations this time of year. (You've all heard of the red pots being filled with large bills or even Krugers.)

So what I would like you to consider is this. As you go about your Christmas preparations, remember that we are preparing for Christ in our lives. To prepare for Jesus we begin with repentance. With repentance comes forgiveness and with forgiveness comes a new awakening to the world around us and the needs of so many. As always, the definition of loving God is to love one another as Jesus loved us. So let us make this Christmas season a new awakening to the love of God and a new awakening to one another, and that the greatest joy comes from the giving to one another. Make it a joyous Christmas all year long for you and for someone in need. It is indeed wonderful to prepare for Christmas family reunions, and wonderful meals. Let us also prepare for the Kingdom of God and the joy that comes with it as we acknowledge Christ in our lives, and we will indeed celebrate the coming of Christ and the kingdom of God.

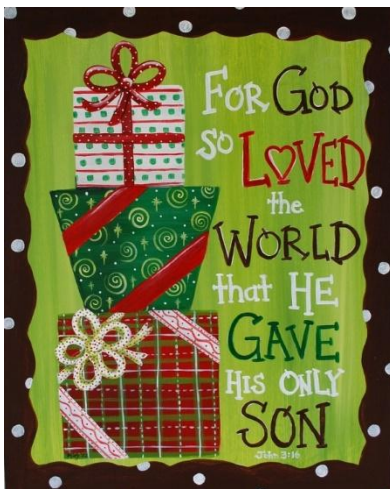
Peace always,

Fr. Mark





DEACON'S NEWS AND NOTES



I opened the [Living Well through Advent 2017](#) after church Sunday and found my word for this Christmas, and for my New Year's resolution—WONDER!

Suzy Kassem, Rise Up and Salute the Sun: The Writings of Suzy Kassem reflects: *"The key to a wonderful life is to never stop wandering into wonder."*

I had a taste of this philosophy this year in my moving (after 22 years in the same place) and in my opting to give up my (expensive to maintain) car!

I have met amazing people and had enlightening experiences.

As **Charlie Chaplin** says: *"You'll never find a rainbow if you're looking down."*

Please know how grateful I am to be part of the St. Thomas of Canterbury community, all you do to support each other and to enrich the wider community; all the altar guild does to set a "holy" atmosphere and have things ready for the services; all the sweet and savory treats after service; all who clean and repair and change light bulbs; all who plan and organize events; all who have offered and given me rides.

PEACE, always!

I am at Nicholson House the 1st, 4th, and 15th of December. If you are in the area, please stop in for a visit and a tour of the diocesan office.

Blessed Christmas,

Deacon Marge

DIOCESAN BEAT



The Diocese of Milwaukee
The Episcopal Church in Southern Wisconsin

Bishop Miller continues on medical leave after surgery on his right rotator cuff.

Nicholson House, the diocesan office, will be closed for Christmas/New Year from December 22nd, 2017 through January 2nd, 2018.

In preparation for next year's diocesan convention on October 13th, 2018, a task force is reviewing Canon 28 of our Constitution and Canons, as well as working on a Draft of Canon 8. They are looking for input from **all** members of the diocese. The draft of Canon 8 – Of Parish Status and Oversight – as well as a survey, have appeared in several of the recent E-News. I, myself, found it frustrating to access the material, so I will chat with Father Mark about a good way to get the pertinent material to you in the New Year.

PEACE.





NOTES FROM PAUL STOVING, SENIOR WARDEN

Let it go, let it go
Can't hold it back anymore
Let it go, let it go
Turn away and slam the door

Disney's movie *Frozen* came out in 2013. Maggie quite liked the movie, until she learned that the movie's popularity led to a *Frozen* attraction replacing one of her favorite rides at Disney World. In the lyrics from the movie that I've quoted above, Queen Elsa sings that she needs to let go of the past and the things that have been holding her back. So to it must be with us sometimes; as hard as it can be, we must be willing to let things go when they are getting in the way of our relationship with God. How do we know when to let things go? One way is when they own us rather than the other way around.

When asked, Jesus tells us the greatest commandment:

He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." [Matthew 22:37-39]

Elsewhere, Jesus also warns us that, "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other." [Matthew 6:24] We can't love both God and money, or more generally, things. You may recall me mentioning in my stewardship talk a couple of months ago the rich young man who approaches Jesus and asks what he needs to do to get into heaven. Jesus tells him to follow the commandments. When the young man says that he already does, Jesus tells him that he lacks one thing – he must sell everything he has, give it to the poor, and follow Jesus. The man goes away sorrowfully, for as Mark puts it, "he had great possessions." [Matthew 19:22]

What do these all have to do with each other? We must be aware of when we fall into the trap of loving things more than we love God. These can fall into the obvious, of loving money or an object, or they can fall into the less obvious. Do we allow the love of a tradition, or the wording of a prayer, or a choice of music get in the way of our loving of our neighbor, or of God?

A coworker of mine, knowing that my taste in music leans towards classical (that's an understatement), recently told me about his visit to a new church. He was horrified at the

choice of music at the service – hard rock. There were drums and electric guitars. To him, he could not reconcile the music at the service with the message, and instead thought that he saw the devil in the music.

I surprised him by disagreeing. I pointed out the words of Paul:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. [1 Corinthians 9:20-22]

I pointed out to him that it's not the particular choice of music that matters; it's the message in the music. If the right message is in the words, and in their attitudes and actions, then the choice of the music doesn't matter. If rock, or rap, or other types of music, helps get the message through, who are we to judge the choice of music? Perhaps I could paraphrase Paul; to those that like the '82 Hymnal, I'll sing from the '82 Hymnal. To those who like rock music, I'll sing rock; to those that like rap music, I'll rap. (Actually, probably not, I'm terrible at rapping, and probably not much of a rocker either.)

As I've noted before, the hard part is knowing what is right for each group. The church my coworker went to learned that traditional hymns were not for them. Likewise, rock might not be for others. Those who've listened to me in the past may recall there have been times when I've let go of something near or dear to me when it hasn't been in the best interest of the group (Choral Rite I anyone?). To this, I usually note that "It's just a thing," for I choose not to worship a thing over God.

This holiday season, let's take a good look at ourselves, our habits, our traditions, our culture, our music, and our prayers. If our hearts are in the right place, and we have the right message, we're in good shape. If, on the other hand, we love these things more than we love each other, or God, then we are serving more than one master and, like Queen Elsa, for our own sake, we need to "Let it go."

As always, I appreciate your thoughts.



Paul Stoving

SPOTLIGHT ON MINISTRIES



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY WEEKLY ENVELOPE COUNTERS

The following parishioners count and prepare reports on St. Thomas's weekly contributions.

Joy Becker

Donna & Scott Celsor

Lisa Chmielewski

Veronica Heaney

Joan & Mark Lamson

Barb Miller

Lee Monk

Kris Reed

Randy Schraw

Shelly Wawrzonek

Kat Worzalla

Tammy Wyman

We thank these parishioners for their time and talent.





A SPECIAL CELEBRATION

KATHIE, JESSE AND JACOB HEIN

On Sunday, November 26th at the 10:00 AM service the parish community celebrated the baptisms of Jesse and Jacob Hein. As we welcomed Jesse and Jacob, we also said goodbye to the Hein family as they prepared to move to Grand Forks, North Dakota. Both Kathie and Jesse have been active within STOC; Kathie sang in the choir and was on Vestry, Jesse was an usher and both were Coffee Hour hosts. They will be truly missed.



Special cakes were served to celebrate the baptisms at Coffee Hour.



JOY ZICK

Joy Zick passed away the morning of November 22nd of heart failure. Her husband and daughter were by her side when she passed. The funeral service was held on Saturday, December 2nd at St. Thomas of Canterbury followed by a luncheon in the parish undercroft.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory.



ROBERT BABEL

Robert Babel passed away on Monday, November 20th. Funeral arrangements have yet to be determined by the Babel family. If no service is held before Christmas, the St. Thomas of Canterbury community will have a memorial as part of our Sunday worship after the first of the year. Please watch the weekly bulletin for more up-to-date information.



ENVELOPES FOR CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Just a reminder that ***Sunday, December 17th*** is the deadline for returning envelopes for Christmas flower offerings. We are doing this earlier than usual to have a more accurate budget of what to spend and to have everyone's name listed in the Bulletin for the Christmas Flower Offering. There are spare envelopes on the Narthex table as well as in the office.



2017 GIVING TREE

Just a reminder that items will be accepted for this year's Giving Tree recipient, the Hope House, through ***Sunday, December 17th***. Personal hygiene items such as soap, shampoo, deodorant, feminine hygiene items, toothbrush, toothpaste and floss along with winter clothing articles of coats, hats, scarves and gloves are greatly needed. Thank you and God bless you for all you do for others in their need.

~ The Outreach Committee

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SERVICES



December 24: Fourth Sunday of Advent, Rite I at 9:00 AM



December 24: Christmas Eve Service, Rite II at 5:00 PM

December 25: Christmas Day Service, Rite II at 10:00 AM

DECEMBER/JANUARY CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS



Gary Heaney	December 12
Roy Wyman	December 12
Angie Bier	December 14
Hadley Knapton	December 15
Scott Celsor	December 17
Judith Kienzle	December 20
Kathleen Hein	December 22
Noelle Gehlhaart	December 26
Violet Kluessendorf	January 1 5
Evan Klumb	January 4
John Labisch	January 6

ANNIVERSARIES



John & Louise Allen	December 19
David & Brilly Jonathan	December 28
Angie Bier	January 3

