

"I am the vine, you are the branches; abide in me and you will bear much fruit." John 15:5

Vine & Branches

Monthly News from St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, 720 N. King Street, Honolulu, HI 96817 • Phone (808) 845-2112

February 2020

Why Ritual?

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The Reverend Peter S. M. Fan,
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The Venerable Steven Costa,
Diocesan Arch-Deacon

The Reverend Deacon
Viliani Langi, Deacon

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My college attending daughter was on a tear last week, demanding to know why she has to live in an unjust, white, male dominated, capitalistic blood sucking society, etc, etc, etc....

When I look for some sympathy from my mom about these tirades she just laughs and says, "yeah, sounds just like you when you were 19!"

But the part of my daughter's angst that perhaps resonates with just about all of us at one time or another, no matter your politics or ethnic identity, is that the world we live in all too often feels meaningless, disconnected, arbitrary and sometimes even pointless. Somewhere along the line we have lost touch with the mysterious, and our connection with it.

We have lost the ability to hear myth as the unveiling of some deeper, even immense, truth; instead defining myth these days as something that is made up; a fairytale, just a nice story.

Something similar can be said about ritual too. I mean, why do we gather here Sunday after Sunday? Why aren't we just meeting at the beach in Waikiki for the sunrise or climbing up Tantalas to watch the sunset? After all, can't God be encountered equally well, if not better, in nature?

Yet here we are in this brick and mortar building, with a leader dressed up like a Roman of old, with our weekly recitations of age old prayers, our ancient practices that take bread and wine, turning these common foods into the very body and blood of Christ. Why do we do these things?

As it turns out, our gospel lesson has something to say about that, about why we do what we do. There, in the Temple of Jerusalem, 8 day old Jesus is brought by dear mom and dad to participate in the rituals. Circumcision for the boy. Purification for the new mom. And they are greeted by two old folks, one a widow for ever and a day; the other an elderly man; both waiting a lifetime to see what they see today.

It is the joining of the older testament with the newer. The older is not set aside, it is fulfilled. It's not discounted, it has, at long last, blossomed. The promised one has finally arrived; and with memory and prayer, with ancient rituals that cut away a foreskin and wash the recently pregnant, old and new are bound together in wonder and in awe. How different from our typical lives today. Our rituals are few and far between. We hardly eat together anymore, instead spending hours on video games and TV shows, binging on the latest Netflix series, as we while away a day, a week, a month.

Social media connects us with more and more people, without actually connecting us to anyone at all. Ritual is an invitation to live in a different way. Ritual is an invitation to experience the transcendent; to open the door to the holy in the midst of our ordinary days; to remember, if only for a moment, that we are far more than what appears on the surface of things; that we are children of God, sisters and brothers of Christ, creatures destined for divinity. Not just some of us.

Not just those who happen to believe in this or that. But all of humanity, everyone who has ever or will ever live: this is our human destiny, to become One with that which is the source of all that is, what some call God, always realizing that the source of all that is can never actually be named. Ritual reminds us that "we are the stuff of myth." M. Robinson, Essays, 80.

"Even if we have no language to address the scale of the experience we have, not only as dwellers in a cosmos, but also as creatures whose thoughts inhabit the vastness of myth, from creation to doomsday. We are creatures who see our galaxy as a path across the heavens, who spin tales of the impossible — even while we sleep." Id., paraphrased.



Ritual helps us remember that the fundamental struggle in life is not between good and evil, but between death and resurrection. Because everything God made is not only good, it's very good.

Because evil is nothing more than the absence of the good. The good gives life. The absence of the good brings death. These are not the arbitrary rules of an arbitrary God, but the very nature of reality. W. Stringfellow, *Imposters of God*, 64, paraphrased.

And here marks the fork in the road when it comes to the rituals we engage in.

No doubt there are rituals that serve life, just as there are rituals that serve death. Worship of power or money or military might — these are rituals of death: with the latest TV ads serving as their sacred liturgy.

Which is why idol worship is so dangerous, because idol worship reduces us to worshipping what we have created, whereas true worship, worships that which creates all that is.

One diminishes, the other enlarges. One leads to death, the other to a life of union with the One who is all in all. That's why our struggle is not between good and evil, but between death and resurrection.

Death awaits us all. Not only the death that comes as we close our eyes for the last time, but the death that comes from any loss, sorrow or disappointment.

Whether we encounter death when a beloved spouse dies, or when a promotion is denied or when relations have soured with one's children; death awaits all of us, sometimes daily.

That's what the letter to the Hebrews is saying today. God becomes a human being in Jesus. A human being who sweats and sings and mourns and laughs with us, who dies like us, yet who is raised from the dead.

"The resurrection of Jesus Christ demonstrates the power of God, confronting and transcending the power of death — here and now — in the daily realities of life." Id. at 65.

We worship idols because we fear death. Idols seem to promise some kind of safety in an uncertain world. Think of the Pentagon, or your retirement fund. But in the resurrection, the fear of death is unmasked; it is shown to be what it always was: a phantom, a ghost with no substance.

The resurrection is God's assurance that God is the God of life, that God is faithful, not only in this life, but in every death too.

When you suffer and endure the suffering, and come out on the other side of it with a strength and with gifts you never knew before, you have experienced resurrection. When you confront your defects of character, and having faced them, lessen their power in your life, you have experienced resurrection. Because of what God has done in Christ, death no longer has the last word.

And if we can wake up each morning with that assurance imbedded in our hearts and minds and souls, then we are free to face whatever any day or any person or any challenge can throw at us, because we are free: free from the fear that life means nothing.

In the resurrection, your life, my life, the life of every human person, is of immeasurable worth.

Every life is sealed and sanctified by the One in whom all things live and move and have their being.

When we finally accept that truth, our idols can return to their true and proper purpose in this world. "We can love our country, restoring it to a sense of its true vocation in the family of nations; we can use money as a medium to facilitate an equitable exchange of goods and services..."

In short, we can work in the service of life. We can work to heal fractured relationships between our sisters and brothers. And lo and behold, that work becomes worship.

It becomes worship in spirit and truth, because who we are — and who we are called to become — meet, embrace, and at long last, kiss. We are each of us called to a splendid dignity, simply because God delights in giving us this marvelous gift. Ritual helps us to recognize this gift, to welcome it — to be thankful for it.

+amen



Until We Meet Again

So sorry to say that our beloved **Fr Gerry Gifford** has died. He (and his beloved **Polly**) served our church from 1978 until 1989, and then went on to become the **Rector Emeritus** for over 30 years more. Fr Gifford brought a gentleness to St Elizabeth's that shall never be forgotten. He opened the **Immigrant Center** that served Honolulu's most vulnerable for nearly two decades in Shim Hall. And, he was instrumental in many of the outreach seeds planted in Palama. He died at Chinese Palolo Home on Christmas Day. Before he died, he remarked that he had spent much of his entire adult life among the Chinese people, both during WW II and then as a minister of the Gospel. Therefore, he wished to die among his people too. **Fr. Gifford's burial service will be Monday, June 22, 2020, here at St. E's.** We are all the richer for having known this kind, gentle and amazing man. A hui hou dear friend, until we meet again!



Father Gifford and dear Polly

Happy Birthday

God's blessings on those with February birthdays!

Elsie Okubo	02/01
Myra Okimoto	
Zachary Okimoto	02/02
Andrea Sagucio	02/04
Inasia Thomas	02/07
Shiloh Ramelb	02/08
Alicia Ho Nakata	02/11
Doris Lam	
David Kaloi	02/12
Beatriz Timonio	02/15
Elyson Badua	02/16
Edward A. Fitzpatrick	02/17
Betty Wong	
Harlan Arakawa	
Sue Jean Chun	02/21
Faye Tsukamoto	02/24
Tulenkun Jr. Tulenkun	02/25
Kazner Alexander	02/26
Herold Unarce	
Ashton Ballesteros	
Ethan Anderson	02/27
Lilia Timonio	02/28



The Peace Garden, complete with peace pole, hydroponics, aquaponics, above ground veggie beds and perhaps a llama is ready to spread peace and good food!!!!

Stop by Wallyhouse and plant a seed, do some fishing, or, pet the llama!!!!

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day



“Those who are not looking for happiness are the most likely to find it, because those who are searching forget that the surest way to be happy is to seek happiness for others.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.



"I don't believe that nonviolence is something you can arrive at rationally. We can develop it as a spirituality and can obtain the grace necessary to practice it, but not as a result of reason. . . . We are called upon to be supernatural. We reach that way of being, not as a result of nature, but of prayer."

Miguel D'Escoto

A gaggle of the gang from St E's showed up to ride and walk in the annual MLK, Jr. march through Waikiki!!!!!!!

It was a wonderful time to share common goals with people from so many diverse backgrounds.

A fitting tribute indeed to the prophet and lion of the 20th century. May we all continue to share in his dream of a free, equal and just society!!!!!!!!!!



Saturday Breakfast Besties



The lovely **Seniors of Saint Andrews Priory** joined us for a Saturday of cooking, cutting, cleaning and chaos! A good time was had by all and we are most grateful to the young women for spending Saturday morning here in lovely downtown Palama!

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Chinese New Year came early this year and once again we had a rollicking good time wit Uncle Ernie's Lion Dance down the middle of the church, all of which started off with the bang of totally illegal fireworks!!!!!!!!!!

It was a splendid Chinese new year brunch with food from all four corners of the world. Many thanks to all who cooked so much and for those who served and for those who enjoyed it!



AARP TO THE RESCUE!!



Need help with yer taxes?? Who doesn't?? Good news is the Afghani Ass'n of Resurrected Plutocrats (Oh, AARP means something else?)....is offering **FREE tax services** starting **Tuesday Feb 4th**, then **every Tuesday, from 9am till noon, Thursday, from 11am - 4pm**, in Shim Hall!!!

Sunday School News...



The children in music class with **Miss Ajaon, Joshua Lino, and Miss Seine** learning the offertory hymn they will sing in February!

Jesus Loves the Little children... with added twists to include the unicorn... and wishing the congregation, Kung Hee Fat Choy eagerly awaiting the loud fireworks and Chinese lion to make an appearance at the end of the service!



We have 3 Chinese brothers helping the children to learn the Chinese New Years song along with our Sunday school stellar singers... **Catherine and Elizabeth!**

This month the lessons focus on the Beatitudes- Jesus sitting with his disciples on the mountain!

People who feel hopeless should be filled with joy, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.... people who are teased and bullied because they are faithful to God's ways will be filled with joy, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs! Rejoice and be happy, for your reward in heaven is great! And what did Jesus mean... "you are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world!"

The last week in February we will celebrate **Shrove Tuesday, February 25th**, evening prayer followed by Pancakes, Pancakes, Pancakes...Pancake Supper! Everyone is welcome to join us!

Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday** (the day following shrove Tuesday) February 26th.

The children will participate in the Lenten service on Sundays -look for the Lenten wreath (6 candles) as the children read the opening prayers and extinguish one candle each Sunday counting down to **Easter!**

In Advent, we waited for the birth of the baby Jesus. At Christmas, we welcomed the baby who brought God's glory and peace. Now we welcome the man Jesus who shows and tells us about God's love. We look for the Holy Spirit to teach us.

Sue Yap



Da Youth Report

Greetings my friends of lovely St. Elizabeth's. Our extreme youth ministry is thriving as we continue to deepen and grow in programs, activities and fundraisers. There are four main programs throughout the year that focus on individual growth and help form a personal relationship with Jesus as well as with others.

1) Weekly Friday Night Youth Bible Study is held at 7pm. For the purpose of encouraging our young people to learn more about our given faith, build new, lasting and healthy relationships, to become more involved in a positive and spiritual growth.

2) Easter Camp is a yearly overnight camp beginning on Maundy Thursday through Easter Sunday. Lessons, activities, community service and prayers are held throughout the entire program. This year 2020, I have decided to replace the over night camping to a day camp instead.

3) Late Night Basketball League better known as LNBL. In partnership with Parents and Children Together (PACT) and Palama Settlement as well as other community organizations LNBL was created to help keep our young people off the streets and out of trouble late nights during the summer months. Allowing our youth to have a positive safe way and place to hang out and show off their basketball skills. A few of our boys who have aged out of the league will continue to serve as they give their time to be a positive role model to our younger generation and give back to the community by becoming assistant coaches for the game they love and grew up playing. I'm so proud of them!

4) Summer Camp at Camp Mokule'ia provided to students grades 1-12 where the participants are able to spend a week on our beautiful North Shore with fun filled activities and a chance to form new and lasting friendships with other youth within the diocese.

Other programs such as Girls Circle through Palama Settlement gives our middle school girls an opportunity to explore career opportunities and learn job seeking skills. Lastly seasonal activities such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas programs close out the year.

In 2020 I look forward to continue as your Youth Coordinator and also look forward to the growth of our young people as well as programs and activities that will help better ourselves and our diverse communities.

Thank you for all of your continued support.

Your friend
Melanie Langi



"The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say, 'What are you going through?'"
— Simone Weil

Thank you **Jeff Ing** as our new freezer for Shim Hall has arrived!!! You are a dear friend of St E's and we are deeply grateful for your generosity!!!!!!

Notes from the Catholic Workers

Wallyhouse Peace Garden

COMMUNITY

"Can you imagine doing what James and John did? Think about it...leaving everything, family, livelihood, familiar comforts...to follow some itinerant preacher to who knows where?"

So asked Fr. David at last week's Wednesday (Jan. 22) morning bible study regarding the call of James and John, sons of Zebedee (Mt 4:12-23), who left their nets to follow Jesus.

The call to "**leave everything**" is actually a part of the Catholic Worker charism, and is known as voluntary poverty. Catholic Workers leave the ordinary way of living to live in community with other like minded people who desire to live in solidarity with the poor. This usually translates to funky houses, minimal (\$250ish) monthly stipends, unfamiliar housemates, and irregular work. But we do it anyway.



Abandoned train station, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

David, not sure if it was Jesus who called, or the Holy Spirit, or just plain impetuosity, felt compelled late in life to jump ship with only the thinnest of promises from a Brazilian bishop about what awaited him. "**You've lost your mind!**" was the reaction of members of his immediate family upon learning he was moving to Brazil. Turns out he ended up in an abandoned railroad station in southern Brazil to serve as minister in charge of an almost-defunct Episcopal mission church.

barbara, confident it was Jesus calling, also left family, friends, language and country to join David where we brought the mission back to life, started a Catholic Worker house and helped organize the **Third Order of the Society of St. Francis**, which today is active throughout Brazil. Fifteen years later we were called again, this time to St. Elizabeth's to open **Wallyhouse**.

Niambi, too, left everything —promises of work with a new degree in hand, friends and family— to join the Wallyhouse adventure. Worse for her is the burden of student loans, making the leap a bit more precarious because she needed income to pay bills.

After all, the leap promises no assets, no income, no immediate friends, no language or cultural skills. These are just a few of the many very good reasons not to go forward. In fact, if you think about it, there is no reason to take action, except faith.

So, how do we do it? We don't have a formula, nor a special prayer, nor Jesus or God in our pocket. Nor is it dependent on the state of our soul. **It's community.**

Others start to notice your needs, often without being asked, often without you yourself knowing them. It a matter of receiving the kindness and support of others. It is as if the entire Universe conspires to open doors you didn't even know existed, for you to walk through them. It is uncanny and marvelous. It is humbling and heart-opening. **It is community.**