

"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

June 2019

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Demons

The Rev. David J. Gierlach

I have had the good fortune over these many years to work with folks who struggled with demons. Those demons have many names and faces.

They include demons born of all kinds of active childhood abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.

They include demons born of passive abuse: abandoned children or children left far too young to fend for themselves.

The demons include alcohol and drug abuse; feelings of unworthiness and sometimes bouts of uncontrolled anger: sometimes directed outward, oftentimes directed inward.

What I discovered along the way is that in order to be of any use to someone struggling with their own demons, I need to continually face my own.

The fact is, we are each of us, in one way or another, beset with demons, and we are very often quite reluctant to confront them, and often reluctant to let them go.

People sometimes hold tight to their demons because they seem to provide protection against a harsh world.

The protection provided by drugs and alcohol is probably the most obvious: these substances take the edge off of brittle emotions, frightening memories and seemingly bottomless emptiness.

But it is the other demons, the ones not so easily exposed to the world, that today's readings call us to explore, to examine, and to offer up to God.

As Fred Beuchner puts it:

"You repress the memory that is too painful to deal with, say. You deny your weight problem. You sublimate some of your sexual energy by channeling it into other forms of activity more socially acceptable.

You conceal your sense of inadequacy behind a defensive bravado.

The inner state you end up with is something like a fortress, with an innermost jail cell, enclosed by an inner wall, enclosed by an outer wall, surrounded by a moat, which you erect originally to keep the enemy out but which turns into a prison where you become the jailer and thus your own enemy.

It is a wretched and lonely place.

You can't be what you want to be there nor do what you want to do.

People can't see through all that masonry to who you truly are, and half the time you're not sure you can see who you truly are yourself, you've been walled up so long." (paraphrase).

I think that's some of what's going on in our readings today.

We start with the slave girl who can tell fortunes.

We love people like that!

Who here hasn't heard of, or been to see, Lan, the Kaimuki gal who used to make a bloody fortune telling fortunes to folks! We eat that stuff up.

That's who Paul is up against today. Paul gets rid of the demon that gives her this gift.

Why is it called a demon you ask?

Why don't we look at fortune telling as a gift from God? Well, look where it gets this gal: she's enslaved by men using her for profit.

But there's more.

What fortune telling offers is a kind of false assurance about what's coming next in life rather than faithfully trusting in the loving God in whom there is no past or future.

For God, and for those who live in God, all is present, all is now.

Paul abruptly frees this girl and is quickly brought up on charges. There's no surprise in that. When the church starts questioning how people make money, the church is quickly labeled subversive, an enemy of the State.

That was the case then, and in those rare moments when the church musters the courage to question our inequitable economic system today, the same accusations are made.

Perhaps you noticed how Paul is not so nice to the young girl who is freed from her demon.

He allows her for days to trail behind them shouting out their true identity as servants of God;



and when it finally becomes annoying, he just gets rid of the demon.

There's no pat on the girl's head, no kind words expressed to her.

I read a letter to the editor to a religious magazine this week. The letter was referring to the story in Matthew's gospel about the pagan woman who pleads with Jesus to free her daughter from an illness.

You know the story.

Jesus tells the pagan lady that it's not right to feed the dogs (meaning her) when the children (meaning the people of Israel) are still hungry. Well, this letter writer is certain that Matthew has the story all wrong, or that someone messed up the translation, because his image of Jesus is as a nice man, and a nice man would never say such a thing.

But Jesus is not a nice man. Paul's not nice either.

And both Paul and Jesus know that God is not nice either. God is good, that is for certain, but not nice.

Nice looks the other way when trouble is brewing.

Nice ignores the demons, hoping they'll simply disappear on their own.

Nice does its best to sooth ruffled feathers.

But the One who is good confronts the demons, deals with the trouble, lancing the boils that fester in you and I.

Such is the work of the good God in our world.

So off to jail go Paul and Silas, yet, as the story unfolds, it's not those two who are imprisoned after all, no, the one who is really imprisoned is the chief guard.

Even though he holds the keys to the jail, it is the chief jailer who is about to commit hari-kari.

So he pleads: "What must I do to be saved?!"

He's not asking about spiritual salvation or religious salvation.

My guess is he's asking how to be saved from getting fired, or executed. It's a question that all of us demon-possessed folks ask from time to time. How can I be saved from what seems to be bouts of uncontrolled anger?

How can I be saved from, say, my love of porn?

How can I be saved from my need to put out the brave and "got it together" front when inside my life seems to be slipping away?

Paul gives the jailer the answer; but unless you sit with the answer for a while, unless you dig deep into this answer, you may hear it only as so much pious gibberish.

You heard the answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

And when you heard it, maybe you thought: "uh huh, more religious gibberish." But if we scrape our way through nearly 2000 years of spider webs and dust and misunderstanding to get back to what Paul is actually saying, perhaps we'll get a sense of where we are to go.

Our evangelical friends have made "believe in Jesus" into something like a Boy Scout oath: just say the words and all will be well.

Perhaps that's not what Paul is getting at.

Perhaps Paul is inviting the jailed jailer to see Reality with a new pair of eyes; to hear what is Truth with a new set of ears.

To "believe on Jesus" isn't a Boy Scout oath and it isn't a cure all to our personal demons, it isn't a solution to all that troubles us.

see that our small lives are swept up in the grand movement of God, through Jesus; that God is, whether we believe it or not, making all things new and, whether we believe it or not, God is taking humanity by its collective hand to a place where everyone is welcome, where every thirst is quenched with free living water, where the only ticket needed for entry is the ticket that says "help me, Lord."

Our demons fracture us.

They keep us divided within ourselves and in our relationships with others.

When we "believe on Jesus," we stand with the jailer and say, quite simply, "help me."

Quoting Beuchner again:

"It's not always easy to say--you have your pride after all, and you're not sure there's anybody you trust enough to say it to--but it's always worth saying.

To another human being--a friend, a stranger.... to God. Maybe it comes to the same thing.

'Help me.'

These words open a door through the walls, and hope is once again, possible. At long last, you're no longer alone." Beuchner. (paraphrase)

The invitation of today's gospel is to allow yourself to be grasped by your destiny, and this is your destiny: to become one with God.

It is that unity that our first mother and father broke when they ate the fruit, choosing to decide for themselves what is good and what is evil.

And so today, in our gospel lesson, as we eavesdrop on the heartfelt prayer of Jesus, that we might join him in his glory; that his glory might make us one; we come to the path we each of us needs walk if we are to enter that unity.

In John's gospel, the glory of Christ means the cross of Christ. At the center of every Christian life is the cross.

It is at the cross where we confront our demons.

It is at the cross where we find the ability to love one another, as Jesus loves us.

It is at the cross where we can finally see the truth of who we really are; and at the cross, come to realize that God accepts us, loves us, heals us, just as we are.

At the cross there is weakness. At the cross there is vulnerability. At the cross, our arms are opened wide. It's not easy to come to grips with demons.

It takes a willingness to be vulnerable.

It takes a willingness to let go of control.

And it takes a willingness to come face-to-face with memories that we would rather not remember.

But what is waiting for us if we take this path is neither death nor desolation.

What waits for us, is resurrection.

+amen





Happy Birthday

God's blessings on those with June birthdays!



Jerry Goo	06/01	Jodene Hawkins	06/12
Kerty Esisok		Kacy Hayashi	06/14
Kerty Esisok Robert		Sharon Sunagawa	06/15
Sanson Kom	06/02	Maria Bonilla	
Caleb Ramelb		Joan (Lani) Kealoha	06/16
Elipha Sorcey	06/03	Steve Costa	06/17
Wallace Tyau	06/04	Tucker Marlow	
Caridad Badua		Alan Ramos	
Noah Blaisdell	06/05	Estella Iwerks	
Molisi Toli		Ignacia Terno	
Julie Eis	06/07	Kenneth Fujishige	06/18
William Blaisdell	06/08	Nakayama Michael	06/19
Teatuahere Gierlach		Lawrence Young	06/20
Kelvin Padasdao		Ancheny Kom	
Linda Venenciano		Madson Michael	
Pearl Kau		Juden Bonilla	
Margarita Suyat		Caroline Anderson	06/22
Glenn Woo		Stephen Chun	
Gelsey Pulusou		Faith Pangelina	06/23
Tracy Blaisdell	06/09	Tyiana White	06/24
Lori Ho		Mason Starkman	06/25
Carl Eis	06/10	Imenta Helly	06/26
Charles Kokubun	06/11	Laura Smith	06/29
Bless Salvator		Amichen Pulusou	06/30

IHS HOUSELESS SUMMIT



Our **Catholic Workers** gave a grrrrreat presentation on all of the complexities of ministry with the houseless. Lots of soul searching, sharing and exploring at the **third annual IHS Homeless Summit**.

THE CREED

THE CREED COMES IN
FOR CRITICISM,
AN ARTLESS, BORING SCRIPTING
WRITTEN CENTURIES AGO
BY RULERS SEEKING HARMONY
A BY-GONE ERA MAKING
BY-GONE CLAIMS.
ONE DOES NOT RECITE CREED
WHEN FALLING IN LOVE
IS AT HAND!
AND YET, PERHAPS THE CREED
IS SOMETHING LIKE
MARRIAGE VOWS.
THE VOWS ARE NOT THE LOVEMAKING
BUT THEY SET LOVES' STAKES.



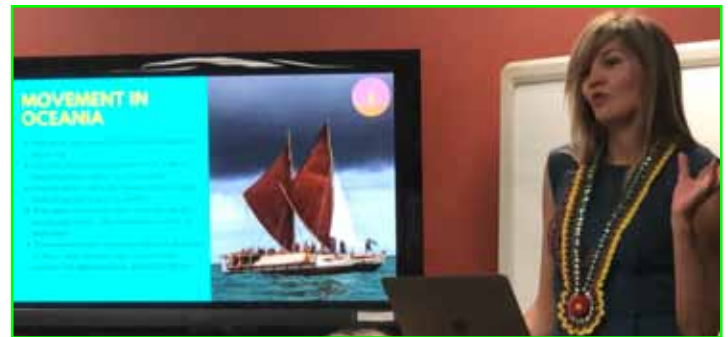
THEY ENCLOSE AND DEFINE AND GIVE
SUBSTANCE (AND BOUNDARIES?) TO
PASSION.
AND WHILE PASSION EXISTS WITHOUT
THEM,
THE VOWS PERHAPS GIVE A BEAUTY
AND DIGNITY THE LOVEMAKING
MAY NOT OTHERWISE POSSESS.
THE CREED IS RIGHTLY READ
IN PARADOX
AS ARE THE VOWS,
AS ARE ALL THINGS THAT TRULY
MATTER,
FOR IN THE TENSION, THE
SEEMING INCONGRUITY,
GOD SMILES.
PERHAPS THE CREED
IS THE BRIDAL TENT ITSELF
IN WHICH DEEPEST
LOVE
IS SHARED.

A SURPRISE GUEST!!

On Mother's Day we welcomed Fr.
Preston Lentz, Mary Ann and their
beautiful family!



Dr. Juliette!



Our pal **Juliette Budge**, who worked for a long time among the Chuukese community, gave her PhD defense last month and Ignacia Terno and her driver were lucky enough to listen in. She did her dissertation on our beloved community from the south seas and we are all proud to now call our friend **Dr Juliette!**

Bye, Bye Gazebo!!!



Whelp, our long suffering gazebo finally gave up the ghost! The beams were pretty bad, termites exhausted from holding on and thanks to our pals at **Kalihi Palama**, the cost to us to demolish is **zero**.

A Message from the Youth Coordinator

By Melanie Langi

SUMMERTIME!!!

Let's welcome the long lazy, hazy hot summer afternoons and warm summer nights. Where the days grow longer and the nights a little shorter. But best of all, NO SCHOOL!

So parents, I hope you have your pantries and cupboards, ice box and refrigerators are well stocked, partially resembling Costco's or Sam's Club. Because I know these kids will be hungry more often than usual during the summer.

And I don't know about yours, but my kids always view summertime as "FUN", however I view it as "time to clean" and they always tell me "uh Mom, its break!" my response almost 100% of the time is... "from school!" But don't fret, I'm not that bad of a mom that will make them clean all day long, everyday. I do have "Fun" things planned for them this summer.

Here's are some of my ideas I'd like to share with you folks. Movies are great! Grab some popcorn, candy and a drink, plopp yourself in a chair, and enjoy the nice ac and ohh the movie. Bet it'll be the best hour and a half you'll pay for. Lol. The pool is always fun and refreshing, or even the water park. I hear at the Kroc Center in Kapolei you can get a day pass (cheaper than that big waterpark down the road) and spend a day at their waterpark. Ice Palace is always fun too! Spend time in a cool 60 degree "weather", drinking hot chocolate and watching the kids skate around and around and around...are you dizzy yet?

Nature walks, hiking, or even the Zoo sounds like great ideas, especially if you want to keep the kids healthy and active. Don't forget your hydroflask. Stay hydrated! Let's not forget the beach! Where everyone of all ages can hang out and have fun in the sun and on the sand or even in the water! Sit or lay under the cool shade of a big monkey pod tree. Relaxing listening to the waves of the ocean or the childrens laughter Whatever you choose to do this summer with the kids, make it Fun and memorable!

Did I hear someone say basketball? Or Coach? I am so relieved to have finally found a coach for our boys basketball team. Coach Rhashun Jimerson better known as Coach J comes to us from Eastside Riverside, California. From a family whose passion is breathing and living basketball. Coach J is in the Army stationed here at PHH. He has been playing basketball since the age of 14. His dream was to become a professional player in the NBA, but wasn't focused at the time so he decided the next best thing was to join the Army. As time progressed his dream also changed. He now wants to become a coach and also referee. Could you imagine the joy he felt when I asked if he would like to coach our boys! Well we are making part of his dream come true. The boys and I are so happy to have him here with us! Welcome Coach J!

Season is approaching soon. The boys practice hard every Monday and Tuesdays at Kauluwela Park from 4pm to 6pm. Games to begin on June 13th at Palama Settlement beginning at 4pm. I'm hoping for an awesome season! GO SAINTS!

CAR WASH! CAR WASH! CAR WASH!

Every 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month our youth work hard at making each car shine like the sun! So come down, get your car washed or help us get down to the nitty gritty grime helping wash a car or two. Teaching our youth the value of hard work, community service and togetherness, good work ethics, meeting new people, and making new relationships. Giving them a sense of worth and pride in a job well done. Then join us for Pizza after a day of hard work.

Lastly, during these summer months we will continue our Youth bible study sessions on Friday evenings at 7pm. Bring a few friends and come fellowship with us!

Did we hear Father David approve for Pizza after each session?!

Till next time folks,

Melanie Langi

Sunday School News

By Sue Yap

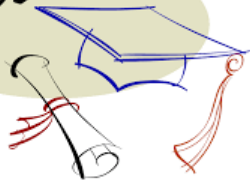


Flowers for all the moms! Thanks to **Del Shea** making the beautiful miniature vases, flowers, ferns and rosemary donated by **Miss Lisa and Miss Sue**, the children helped make the day special for moms, grandmas, tutus, ...

and practiced with **Miss Seine and Miss Ajaon** - singing the Offertory Hymn - What A Wonderful World in thanksgiving and praise!



Scholarships



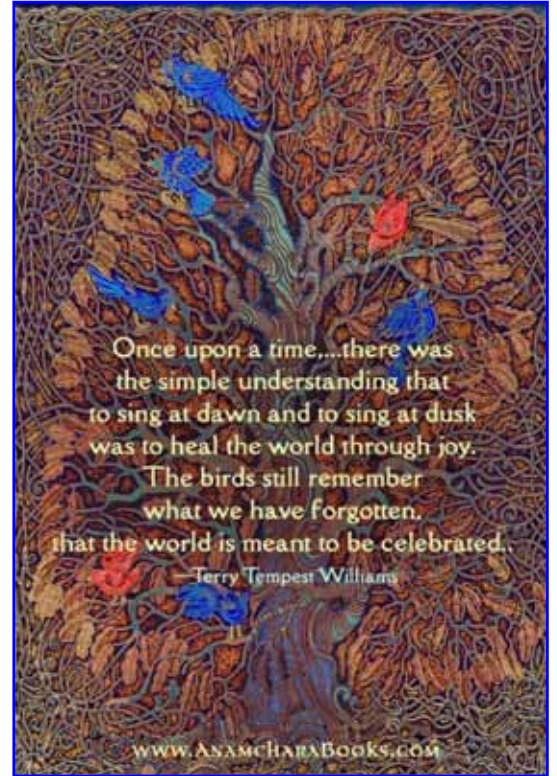
Scholarship applications are open to students who will be full time students at a **post-secondary school in the 2019-2020 school year**. Please review the scholarship criteria included with the scholarship application.

The completed scholarship application is due by **July 26, 2019. NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Applicants may request an application via email to: **arleen.young@live.com**



It's time for **SUMMER CAMP** at Camp Mokuleia!!!!
June 9-14 is for High School and Middle Schoolers...
June 23-28 is for Elementary Schoolers
July 7-12 is for Middle School and Elementary!!!!!!
AND BEST OF ALL, IT'S FREEEEEEEE!!!!!!!!!!
See Melanie Langi for sign up!



Our friend **Dean** from the **Buddhist Temple** gives our **David C** a check for **\$2500** for the **Wallyhouse Peace Garden!!!** It's wonderful when different faiths work together for a common goal, eh?????

NOTES FROM THE CATHOLIC WORKERS

The Fire of Pentecost

Years ago, we had the opportunity to hear Christopher Senyonjo, a retired Anglican Bishop of Uganda, say regarding his ministry in support of human dignity for all people, "I want to be a flame that starts a fire."

Fire has been a consistent theme throughout my career as an artist. I am never satisfied how to portray it. Early on I began with making images of the fire of hell, then of God in the bush, and then experiences of personal hell and finally of heaven (see image). A different understanding of fire came to me through a class at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, in the 1980s. I had the privilege to take a class entitled "Biblical humor and clown ministry," offered by the biblical humorist and story-teller, Dr. Margie Brown. A few of us were offered the further opportunity to learn the art of fire-eating, which included dancing a flame of fire on our tongues. Intrigued by the symbol of fire and because of the Pentecost story of fire dancing on the heads of the apostles, I readily took the option.

Our small group met with Margie outside class twice a week. We began each session with centering and breathing exercises, we learned how to make fire sticks, we learned proper environmental conditions. Above all we learned how to spot one another, for fire-eating should never be done alone.

When the day came to extinguish the flaming fire sticks in my mouth, I burned myself severely and couldn't eat solid food for over a week. Margie comforted me, "It only takes one time. You will never burn yourself again because you now know what to do." She was right. I learned not to clamp my mouth on the fire but to hold it gently before exhaling the flames.

Responding to the call of the Holy Spirit to serve the poor in Brazil and the US has not been so different from experimenting with fire. The Spirit has brought many blessings, but the journey has also led to some very dark places, particularly the poverty and addictions we see daily in the people we serve. Surviving spiritually depends on the protection and illumination of the Spirit, invoked through daily meditation and prayer, and actualized through community. Fire-eating is not safe to perform alone and neither is ministry.

The closer we come to doing the work of the Spirit, the more the demons Fr. David preached about try to stop us. The demons use our human frailties, our fatigue, our hubris, our disappointments, to turn us against each other, to doubt ourselves, to undermine our ministry. We blame ourselves or others for our failures. Thankfully, our communities ground us and remind us that it's not about me but about us, all of us, the community of faith and the community of those we serve. The work of the Spirit does not belong to one individual but to the Body of Christ. It is not a matter of what we think the houseless need but to allow them to evoke our gifts.

Pentecost reminds us that the Spirit is fire, potentially dangerous and ungraspable. It cannot be managed by any of us, only held lightly if intently.

Bishop Senyonjo's fire will heal his homeland, but not before it consumes all he holds dear except his integrity and faith. The calling of the Spirit to host a Catholic Worker house at St. Elizabeth's is playing with fire, but the flames are not of hell, but of heaven.

Excerpted from Don't Touch Me! Daily Stories of Gospel Relevance by David Catron & Barbara Bennett

