

*"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

## March 2019

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## Where's the Milk?

*The Rev. David J. Gierlach*

As you know, I'm not a big fan of happy clappy music ... nor am I one from here in the pulpit to ask you to raise your hands .... ever!

After all, we are Episcopalians!

But today, I'd like to break with tradition and do a little show of hands please.

Like, how many of us have stood in front of the open refrigerator looking for the milk, and yelled to our spouse, sibling or parent:

"Where's the milk?!"

Raise your hands please.

Then, when they yell out that it's right next to the mayonnaise, why, that previously invisible milk .... suddenly appears?!

And if your family is like mine, they'll then feel obligated to say something helpful like:

"If it had teeth, it woulda bit ya!"

Sound familiar?

Something right before our eyes, but which we haven't been able to see, suddenly appears!

And that's what's going on in today's gospel.

It was only eight days ago that Jesus took the disciples aside and asked:

"Who do people say that I am?"

And they reply:

"Some say a prophet, some say John the Baptist raised from the dead."

"But who do you say that I am?"

And Peter famously confesses that Jesus is the Messiah. But when Jesus tells him what's in store for the Messiah - the arrest and torture, the suffering and death — Peter can't stand it!

He scolds Jesus for saying such things, only to be denounced by Jesus himself for being so blind to the way things are, to the way things must be.

Peter and the others that day are standing in front of the refrigerator, looking for the Messiah, but they can't actually see him for who he is.

Today, we are given a second chance to see who Jesus really is, this day which we call Transfiguration Sunday.

The day when Jesus and his inner circle walk up a mountain and Jesus is changed - his face changes - his clothes shine like the whitest snow.

Today is the day when God, taking on the role of our spouse, sibling or parent, says:

"Here's the Messiah - right in front of your eyes - only you can't miss him now... because he's shining!"

And see him they do, and they are terrified!

But the seeing is only half the journey.

The other half comes with what the voice from the clouds tells them they must do:

"Listen to him!"

And that really is the hardest part.

Listening to Jesus means taking seriously what he's saying to us, and not reducing the magnificent strangeness of his way of life to a Hallmark card.

It's like the old rich woman who prattles on to her priest about her dreams of serving the poor, not because her heart overflows with compassion, but because she craves the praise she will receive.

Realizing her motives, the priest reminds her that "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams." Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*.



The way of Jesus is the way of love, not in dreams, but in action. Which brings us to why we do what we do every week here at St Elizabeth's.

We get together, every week, week-in and week-out, because not only is it easy to lose sight of Jesus in the midst of our money-obsessed, celebrity-obsessed, self-obsessed world, the fact is, it's even harder to listen to him.

Last Sunday sort of drove this all home in a way that only God, with her wry sense of humor, can do.

Last week, as you will recall, our gospel was one of the hardest teachings Jesus ever delivers: love the enemy, be kind to the undeserving, give to the unworthy...

Which usually rolls off my back, and maybe yours, as sweet but totally foolish nonsense, that I, and perhaps you, have no intention whatsoever to practice.

Except that last week God sends us a houseless woman, totally drunk, who's fast asleep in the last pew.

Efforts to wake her go nowhere.

So the question becomes: do we call the cops and have them haul her away, or, do we put into practice that very tough gospel lesson, and let this drunk daughter of God sleep it off in God's house while the holy mass goes on around her?

Do we stand in front of the refrigerator and finally see the milk?

In other words, can we see in this struggling woman the face of Jesus himself, since he tells us to look for him in the least, the lost and the left behind, or do we only see the irritating spectacle of a drunk, passed out in the pew?

It's not easy for anyone to see Jesus in the least, the lost and the left behind.

And yet isn't the truth of our faith that next to each and every human person (even drunk ones sleeping on church pews) is an angel proclaiming: "Behold, the image of God!"

It is easy to forget who we are, we are so easily distracted.

"Listen to him!" commands the voice of the Father ... yes but, I'd rather go to the movies.

"Listen to him!" okaaaay! — uh, hand me the newspaper please?

"Listen to him..." what?! — you think Jesus wants us to take all that love stuff ... literally??!

In Jesus, God is determined to unclench our cherished grip on our notions of good and evil, to expand our minds when it comes to defining what is just and proper.

And so, God takes us by the hand and whispers something like this:

"If you can manage not to be ashamed or embarrassed or offended at what the world dismisses

as despicable, if you can find it in yourself to be gentle with the losers, kind to the insecure, peaceful with the warlike, then, when Jesus and his heavenly host at long last appear, you, in the company of every human being who has ever lived, will hear the words you have longed to hear: "That's right, little one, that's what I wanted; I like what you've done". James Alison, *Raising Abel*, p. 182.

Modified.

How do we bend ourselves so that we too may hear those longed for words?

What daily path can we walk so that we become molded into Kingdom people?

Perhaps something like this is a start ...

"Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, oppose tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience toward people, bow down to no man, go freely with uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, ... re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, do these things and your very flesh shall become a poem..." Walt Whitman, *modified*.

The good news of Jesus Christ is that our destiny is to shine!

Not because we have seen God, but because God has seen us.

And so, if we can speak with each other in ways that foster humility, if we can be awake to life's marvelous complexity, if we can say "yes" to bettering the lives of others, especially the despairing and despised, if we can resist easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships, then, with the poet, we too might come to see, by the grace of this odd Messiah, that

"Earth is crammed with heaven,

And every common bush afire with God..."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning; Tracy Smith  
*modified*.

+amen



# Ashes to Ashes

Why do Mother Imelda and your Rector trod down to Kekaulike Mall in Chinatown every Ash Wednesday to impose ashes on the foreheads of those who wish to receive them (usually 70-100 people over the course of an hour or so)? Here's why: Because we live in a society that denies death on a chronic basis. Therefore, the public imposition of ashes on the forehead, given with the admonition that we are indeed dust, and displaying that sign publicly, is not only a rejection of our **death denying culture**, but also serves as a witness that but for the grace of God, we are all only future piles of walking dirt. Which, one would hope, will encourage people to seek ways to be open to God's grace and to remember just how transitory this life is, and so treat each other a bit better, loosen a grip on that cash in one's pocket and perhaps decide that **forgiveness is better** than a slow burning anger consuming precious days of a limited life span. And perhaps that public display is vital for the times we live in, not as an ostentatious display of faith, but as **a witness to the truth of our situation** as mortals, a truth our consumer laden, capitalist, celebrity worshipping status quo seeks to avoid and deny. The **black mark of a cross** on one's forehead is a **powerful symbol** opposing the "drink Pepsi and use botox and you will live forever" propaganda to which we are all exposed every day. Have a blessed Lenten season!



## Happy Birthday

*God's blessings on those with March birthdays!*

Colin Wong	03/01
Kifenin Dopich	
Maile Nicholas	03/02
Obeyi Helly	03/03
Damien Ballesteros	03/04
Roy Chee	03/05
Doreen Ching	03/07
Marites Unarce	
Aadriana White	03/09
Christy Horikawa	03/10
Arleen Young	03/12
Lillian Tyau	03/13
Yonlene Simpson	
Istina Eichy Muludy	
Sarah Bush	03/14
Ongolea Sungalu	
Ruthann Sorcey	03/16
Haku Blaisdell	03/17
Miriam Hue	
Miranda Young	
Ensen Repaky	03/22
Dorothy Eichelberger	03/23
Isabel Padasdao	
Anaseini Lino	03/28
Gerald Lau	03/29
Jefirstson Nixon	03/30
Brian Kau	03/31



## CHEAP LIGHTS!



Several parishioners stayed after church on Sunday, February 24 to learn about how to save money on our electric bill! Many thanks to **Jessica Davis** and her cohort at **Hawaii Energy** for the great advice and helpful hints!

## AARP TO THE RESCUE!!



## World's Most Beautiful Cooks!



Usually we just catch one or two of these fine folks in action so we decided to round up everybody and say a huge **THANK YOU** to this core crew who turns out week in and week out to feed our sisters and brothers!!!!

From now through tax day the AARP is giving free tax prep services on a first come first served basis every **Tuesday and Thursday morning** at Shim Hall! Funny, even Bill Gates stopped by the other day!



"The Christian Faith is not a set of personal values or spiritual preferences, it is a claim about the way reality is constituted, about all things having been created by God and ordered to God's good purposes. It is a claim that God's purposes for the world are established and revealed in Jesus Christ."  
~Murray Rae

## On A Cold And Rainy Day



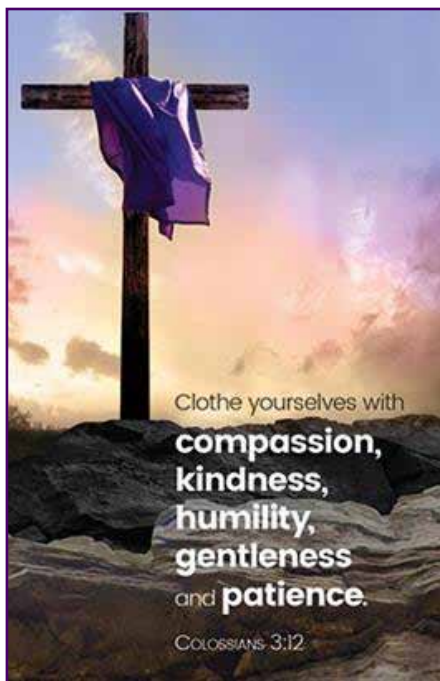
About once a month the police and a bunch of garbage trucks show up and conduct what is sadly known as a "sweep". It's not clear what the point of this exercise is, except to take away what few goods

these folks have, to have them return within hours or days to start the process over again. We are in dire need of **affordable housing** and of **shelters** that **do not put up needless barriers** to those who wish to get off the street.

Meowwww

While Lent is often thought of as a time to give stuff up, it's also a great time to think about trying **something new** - to **stretch** our spiritual lives. So maybe think about, instead of or in addition to giving up red wine and chocolate, spending 5 minutes each morning in **silent listening to God**; or come by every Tuesday and lend a hand at **Kay's Cafe**; or jump into Sunday school with the munchkins; or help Melanie organize the **youth car washes**; or read something written by **Thomas Merton**; or spend time with the reflections of **Julian of Norwich**. Lent is a time to grow...may your season this year bear much fruit!

Strrrrrrrretch  
for Lent!



Aunt Lani is at her best imitation of St Francis of Assisi as our church Kat shamelessly seeks some TLC!

# Sunday School News

By Sue Yap

The somber days of **Lent** are upon us. After celebrating and feasting on pancakes and fattening foods on Tuesday evening, Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday, March 6**.

During Lent, the Sunday school children will start the service each Sunday with a short reading and snuffing out one candle on the Lenten wreath each Sunday til on Good Friday the Lenten wreath is dark!

Holy Week begins with our annual **Palm Sunday Parade** on April 14th.

With the alleluia on **Easter**, the Christ candle is lit and the celebration of the Easter season begins!

So does the Egg Hunt and festivities for all the children!!! **April 21st!!!**

Blessed Lent.



## Kung hee fat choy!!



To feel close to God is a great comfort. It is depressing to feel alone and forsaken, to think that we have been left to our own resources and must rely on our own strength. I would not want to live a single day without being able to feel that God's angels are around me, and around the whole world. I cannot live one day without believing that we are never alone.

~ Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt

Many thanks to our dear **Gretchen Jong** for once again ensuring that the new year came off with a **bang!!** Right after the service we were treated with a thunderclap of firecrackers as **two lions** wiggled and giggled their way up the aisle where they knelt before the cross — and then proceeded to delight young and old as worlds and cultures embraced! All of this was followed by a deeeelicious **gourmet pot luck feast** that left one and all staggering to their rides, with full bellies and satisfied smiles!

# A Message from the Youth Coordinator

Aloha All! Let's welcome March. It's hard to believe how quick the months are flying by. Is it Spring yet? Because it's been wintry cold lately, but it feels so good! So I'm not complaining!

Last month **St. Elizabeth's youth** held our first fundraising car wash this year. Which by the way, did really well! However we could use more arms and legs, so I invite fellow youth and maybe even parents to come get your hands soapy, wash and turn cars into a shiny-shine! Hahaha! **Youth car washes are held every LAST Saturday of every month 8am-2pm**, so if your not doing anything and want to have some fun in the sun, come out, wash some cars and even get your car washed too! I would like to thank everyone who came to get your car washed, thanks for always supporting! And one more thing, if you go out to wash a car or a dozen cars...dont forget to HAVE FUN! Hope to see you there!

Summer is approaching quickly, meaning **Late Night Basketball League (LNBL)** season will begin shortly, so I'm searching for recruits (boys and girls) to join our boys and our girls teams. I'm also looking for a few good basketball coaches who would love to volunteer their time to coach boys and girls teams. If you or anyone you know has the skills and the knowledge and would like to volunteer time to our youth, please dont be shy to let me know. **I won't bite**, I promise! Hehehe!

Finally, but not least, we continue our **Youth Bible Study** every Friday nights beginning at 7pm. Come out and fellowship with us. Journey with us, as we walk through Gods Word together! And as always, refreshments to follow!

Have a blessed month!

Your friend,

Melanie Langi

## Gossamer

The fractal is that  
Repeating pattern everywhere in nature  
On leaves  
Snowflakes  
And leopards spots.  
Take it large and fractal is the  
Multiverse...  
The never ending existence of a trillion zillion  
Universes  
In which we each exist  
In which we each live out every possible life experience  
Love  
Loss  
Culture  
Color  
Gender  
Race.  
What if in one such world  
Blacks enslave whites  
Women rule over men  
And hetero sex is the oddball sex?  
What if every experience that  
Could be felt  
Is felt in full  
By each and every one  
Of us  
In a dazzling array of lives that will see me as fat and old  
In one  
Beautiful and young  
in another  
Married  
Once,  
Twice,  
Many times, or  
Never,  
dying young, then in another,  
spending years with white hair?  
Not the successive lives  
Of reincarnation  
But the simultaneous lives  
Of fractal?  
If we experience all experience  
each contributes to the  
Necessary whole  
Making each of our  
Fractal lives  
priceless beyond measure  
Is it then that  
God brings  
All of this together?  
Will we then know  
As we are known?  
Will we see  
As we are seen?  
Will we love  
As we are loved?

## NOTES FROM THE CATHOLIC WORKERS

### WASTE: A LENTEN CHALLENGE

A **motor scooter chassis**. An air conditioning unit atop a wooden pallet painted blue. Two giant black garbage bags sealed at the top enclosing ??? Surrounding it all, overgrown grass and weeds, dead palm branches, topped off by assorted cans and bottles and sprinkled with bits of paper, broken glass, and a loose hanging wire from the pole above.



**What scene is this?** Aunt Mary's porch? (Aunt Mary was a woman who never threw anything away on the premise that everything would eventually find a use.) No, it's the sidewalk in front of our church, St. Elizabeth's, 720 North King Street, Honolulu.

Even if you concede Aunt Mary is right, over time, especially God's time, deposits exceed withdrawals and the mountain of stuff just grows. If you never get a second chance to make a first impression, how about second, third, fourth impressions? If cleanliness is next to godliness, how godly do you suppose we look to those who pass by? To ourselves?

Fr. David is occasionally spied out on the sidewalk painting the half wall that supports the wrought iron fence—he's been seen painting that too! But what about the rest of us? Do we do anything to keep our sidewalk clean, safe and inviting to the newcomer?

The first problem may be the question of who exactly is responsible for the city sidewalk's maintenance. The city? Are they charged with maintaining public areas such as streets and sidewalks? One would think yes since this is the authority under which they conduct weekly "sweeps" of the areas occupied by our houseless brothers and sisters along Kanoa Lane. But then, why don't they sweep King street and pick up the rubbish on the sidewalk? After all, the city provides our neighboring Chinatown with a "Clean Team" that daily sweeps streets, power washes the sidewalks, and picks up litter. Do we need to demand the same on a weekly basis?



Actually, no. On a recent walk, Barbara stopped and spoke with persons out sweeping King Street sidewalks of the business adjoining, all said it was **their responsibility** to maintain the sidewalk. And they are right. The Revised Ordinances of Honolulu (ROH), Section 14-20.1 states: "Every property owner whose land abuts or adjoins a public street shall continually maintain, and keep clean, passable and free from weeds and noxious growths, the sidewalk and gutter areas." What about yard waste you ask? It must be contained before placing it at the curb for recycling collection. But we don't even have yard waste recycling, or any other type of curbside recycling pick-up. **What can you do?** You could offer to occasionally **take home a bag of sorted** (by us) recycling: yard waste or mixed (plastic, glass and cardboard). It would sure help us a lot if we could recycle!

Finally, those bulky items? Yes, once a month, on the first Wednesday, the city will pick up bulky items, but they "must not be placed at the curb any earlier than the day before the collection day." **Ooops!**

Fr. David is doing his part; might some of us come up with a plan to clean up our sidewalk and support his efforts? Might some of us focus on sidewalk and gutter clean-up when we have our spring work day?

We at Wallyhouse Catholic Worker propose a challenge: **Let's make St. Elizabeth's front shine by Easter!**

