

Parish Announcements for the week of July 6, 2008

TODAY: Sacramental Healing is offered in the chapel during communion time. Those wishing to receive the prayers and anointing for healing should come to communion first, and then go to the chapel. **The Altar Flowers** are provided in thanksgiving by Bob and Helen Slagel. **The Sanctuary Light** is provided by Jim and Barb Hess in thanksgiving for their grandchildren Kyle and Jacob. **Education and Formation programs** will resume in August.

This week we pray the eighth of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): *to develop a global partnership for development.*

Through Labor Day Weekend, the parish office closes at noon on Fridays. The deadline for inclusion of material in the Sunday bulletin is Wednesday morning, for the Sunday following. This requires that **all material for the Sunday bulletin** be submitted no later than Tuesday afternoon.

The Parish Office will close at Noon daily for the next two weeks. Volunteers will be at the office from 8:30 a.m. until Noon each day to assist you. Teresa will be spending time with her grandchildren and will return to the office on the 21st.

Let's remember to do it again this year while the weather allows: ushers and parishioners, please leave the inner and outer (red) doors in both vestibules open to the nave of the church so that while we are at worship the joyful noise we make will carry out to those passing by on the street. Let's tell passers-by that there's something going on inside these walls! And if any possible traffic noise is distracting to you, feel free to come in closer.

Thanks to Amy Van Epps for providing vocal enrichment in our worship this morning, to Adrienne Hanson for sharing her thoughts about Independence Day, and to all who helped to select, edit, and deliver our readings.

Enjoy reading *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells, Lafayette's One Great Read Title. July community activities flyers featuring *The Time Machine* are on the credenza. St. John's Book Discussion will consider *The Time Machine* on Wednesday August 20th at 7:00 p.m.

Reflections on July 4, 2008

When I was growing up, the Fourth of July usually meant a barbeque in the backyard, a concert in a nearby park, a visit from grandma and grandpa, and a climb to the top of one of the foothills overlooking Denver, where we could see five or six firework displays set off from different parts of the city. As early as kindergarten, I learned how to be "patriotic": I could recite the Pledge of Allegiance, all four verses of the Star Spangled Banner, and portions of the Declaration of Independence, and I was taught to look with awe at veterans who had served in our armed forces (particularly those of the United States Air Force, who, according to my dad, were the best). As I grew older, I began to see my own family's story as part of a national narrative that told of individuals who summoned the courage to sacrifice in personal ways to achieve the ideals of justice, liberty, and equality. My mother would tell of my great-grandmother, who, as a teenager, made the long journey alone from Russia to the United States, where she worked as a maid in New York City for twenty-five cents a week. And my grandfather would often show me his shoebox full of photographs taken on Tinian Island where he was stationed during World War II. Yet in my imagination, the stories of our nation, whether they told of great battles of the Revolutionary War or of my great-grandmother's journey or my grandfather's war service, have always been colored by the glow of romance that often overlays events which happened in the distant past. I will always remain grateful for the sacrifices others have made that enable me to enjoy opportunities unavailable to women in other centuries and countries. But despite this feeling of gratitude, July 4th has never seemed to be a holiday rooted much in the present, rather, it requires a backward glance to events that happened a long time ago. I confess that over time, I have come to welcome the July 4th holiday as no more than an extra vacation day, instead of a time of reflection or a celebration of personal significance.

As the St. John's Worship Committee sat down to discuss the new and unique liturgy for today's service, I wondered aloud if there might be a way of linking the July 4th holiday more closely to the issues facing America in the twenty-first century. Might there be a way of bringing my notions of Independence Day out of the distant past and into the present? Is there a way of making July 4th a "spiritual" holiday in addition to a political and historical one? In our Prayers of the People, we ask for the grace to "affirm the dignity of every human being." This phrase echoes loosely that famous one from the Declaration of Independence: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*" By adopting the UN's Millennium Development Goals, the Episcopal Church has committed to finding ways to affirm the dignity of peoples around the world and to work towards justice and equality. We might therefore ask ourselves: How can we use this special time of year to reflect on those goals as individuals and as a congregation? While I have no definite answers to these questions, I would like to offer two examples from my own experience that lend opportunity for reflection.

The first example involves a recent visit to see my sister in Southern California. On the way from LAX to Santa Barbara, I sat on an airport shuttle on Highway 101 and found myself looking out over the vineyards and orchards that extend across the fields and hillsides surrounding Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara. As my eyes adjusted to the scene, I noticed that hundreds of human forms dotted the landscape, blending in almost unnoticed among the shrubs and plants. They were the migrant workers who harvested lemons, avocados, strawberries, and other produce that would arrive in the following days in farmer's markets and grocery stores across the United States. Most were heavily veiled in low-brimmed hats and scarves that they had wrapped around their heads and necks as protection against long hours in the hot sun. I would learn later that these coverings can also mask the age of a worker, enabling underage children to work alongside their parents. I asked my sister how many of these workers were undocumented. She didn't know. Perhaps half of them, maybe more. Activists call the migrant workforce America's new slavery of the twenty-first century, as thousands labor for sometimes less than minimum wage, with no health insurance, and with no protection from employers who have no accountability beyond their own consciences. These migrant workers are a more local example of a world-wide phenomenon in which the world's poorest, many of them children, labor on plantations and in sweatshops to harvest and manufacture goods for the world's richest consumers. Rick Nahmias's collection of photographs, "The Migrant Project," gives an identity to some of these workers and affirms their humanity, thus raising the individual above political rhetoric and above arguments about immigration, globalization, or the economics of supply and demand.

My second example is drawn from an experience closer to home. On a chilly Sunday morning in April, I stepped out onto Sixth Street after the eight o'clock service and coffee hour. A man in tattered jeans and coat stopped me to ask if I had a dollar or two to spare. I shook my head and told him that I had no loose change in my wallet. Then, I looked away and made my way quickly to my car, not wanting to engage him further or attract unwanted attention. Living in New York City for nine years, I learned how to nod politely at the homeless who spent their days on my street, but also how to disengage and move on. As a single woman in the city, it was safer that way. But I still wonder about my reaction to the man on Sixth Street. Should I have been friendlier and pointed him towards resources in the vicinity? As a church we do much to assist those in need in our community, through the Food Pantry, the Community Lunch, Jubilee Christmas, and our relationship with Lafayette Urban Ministry. But on a personal level, I struggle with my instinct to look away, an act which affirms the other's role as the unacknowledged and unseen, an act that denies the dignity of another.

How do our daily habits, attitudes, and lifestyles contribute to the repression, the slavery, or the invisibility of others in our own country and around the world? Do we take the time to learn where our clothes, coffee, and produce come from, and do we let ourselves become educated in the systems of structural injustice through which we benefit in acquiring these "commodities"? How do our actions encourage inequality and prevent others from achieving their full potential as global citizens and spiritual persons made in the image of God? How will our environmental choices affect future generations and their ability to sustain the best values of our society? How can we ask questions and find answers in a way that is apolitical and personal (given that we find ourselves in a nation, if not a church, that is increasingly partisan)? These are questions worth considering during Ordinary Time, that stretch of the liturgical year which extends from Pentecost through Advent. While I do not wish to disparage the significant achievements of our country in realizing the values stated in the Declaration of Independence, I would suggest that the liturgy we celebrate on this weekend of July 4th could propel us to think in new ways about how we extend the rights and privileges we value to others.

To affirm the dignity of every human being, to strive for justice and equality within our own community and beyond, is to fulfill the second great commandment—to love one's neighbor as one's self.

In this, the celebrations of this weekend can become spiritual acts that encourage us to reconsider how our faith commitments might transform our role as the inheritors and creators of our nation's history and traditions.

Adrienne Hanson

Rick Nahmias, "The Migrant Project"

http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/radio.nsf/stable/wvradiostory_062208_migrantphotos