

The Bells of Saint Mary

March, 2010

With My Hand on the Plow:
Looking for Light

Light...what a concept. The Bible starts with it ... in Genesis 1:3: "Let there be *light*." And it goes from there...all the way to Revelation 22:5...when we are told that "God will be their *light*." In between, we have the *light* of your face, the Lord is my *light*, a *light* to my path, walk in the *light* of the Lord, a *light* to the nations, your *light* has come, you are the *light* of the world, you are a *light* to all in this house, a *light* shines in the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it, a *light* for the Gentiles, I saw a *light* from heaven, the armor of *light*, what fellowship is there between *light* and darkness, Father of *Light*, into his marvelous *light*; and *light*, and in him there is no darkness at all.

We have *lights* on a hill, *lights* under bushel baskets. *Light* of the World, and a *light* to our soul. We find keepers of the *light*, seekers of the *light*, and those who live in the *light*.

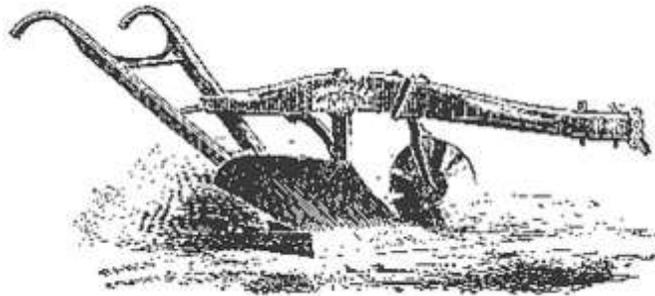
Okay! Enough already! I get it. Jesus is the Light! So, why are we looking for light? I mean, if **light is everywhere ... why can't we see it?** Ahhh ... so this is really about perception. Well, yes, in a way. Because light is such a feeling word. Some days, a smile can

"lighten" up your day, right? And sometimes, when things are pressing in on us, music can cause our shoulders to sort of lift, and we shake off a burden that is on us, and we feel "lighter".

On my recent drive to South Dakota, Deborah burned a C.D. for me (with considerable help from Sarah) to listen to while I was on the long drive. There are ten songs on the disk, and each one is different, but all of them are songs about how she feels about me. It is one of the great gifts I have ever received. Listen-

ing to it (which I do almost every day since I got it) makes me feel loved, special, warm, **embraced, complete ... all words that I associate with feeling light.**

There are times during our prayers at the announcements that I feel similar feelings of love, warmth, embrace, wholeness. I associate those feelings with being in prayer in community with a God who listens and cares for the needs and concerns of our community when we voice our desires and wants. This is one way I know that God is real, alive, and present ... I feel love. I am capable of feeling love. When I feel love, I see light. So, when I am looking for light, I am on the look-



out for love. And I see love most often in our church when I see you caring for one another. I see you loving one another with a hand on the shoulder when one is receiving Eucharist. I see you loving one another in the hugs of hello in the Narthex or at the Peace. I feel you loving one another when you sing together. I believe you love so much that you can light up the world. And that is exactly what our scriptures teach us. What the Gospel

gether. Let this Lent be a journey of Light for you. It will take you to the single greatest force for good that the world needs and has always needed: Love. And love is Jesus Christ, yesterday, today, and forever.

Fr. Michael



*To the right:
Patricia Middleton and
Cynthia LeRoy show us
what the prayer shawl
ministry is all about.
(One of the Pastoral
Care Projects.)*

is asking you to do is to take that love you have for one another, and give it away so that more people will feel loved, and experience the same lightness of being that you experience when you act in love and charity for one another. And I have to say, this is something at which you are very good. You have certainly loved me ... **and my family ... with a great and generous love** since we arrived here in 2007. And you can welcome others in the same way.

This Lent, as we continue on this journey of Light to the foot of the Cross and the empty tomb, remember that we do not travel in **darkness ... and we do not go it alone.** We have light-bearers among us and many who **are walking the same path. Don't be alone on the journey ... travel together** so you can comfort one another, reflect upon the light with one another, and say your prayers to-



Above: Anita McManigal at the Radical Hospitality booth.

Calendar items

Please contact Jeanne Johnston to place an item on the website calendar; it would be good to hear from all M.D.T. leaders.

Please don't assume that I know more than I do; I'm new to this!

Spring Cleaning

St Mary's attics and storage rooms contain many items that seem to have outlived their usefulness. The problem is that it is hard to tell what is still needed. **Please** see the list below, and contact Jeanne Johnston by the end of March if you know why we have these items on hand. She needs to know if the listed items are:

- A. Still needed in a ministry?
- B. Donated by you and you'd like it returned if it is not being used?
- C. If neither A nor B apply, would you like to have this item for your own use?

Wheelchairs - 4 Walker with seat - 1 Walker , standard - 1
Cane -1 Bedside commode - 1 Ceiling fans - 2
Bean bag chairs - 6 and floor pillows - 5 Christmas trees - 2, full size, artificial
(These are NOT the Chrismon or Angel Trees - I know to keep those)

Next month: the Tool/Gardening Shed.

Jeanne Johnston jeannewellsjohnston@mac.com 805-688-3192

LENT

Trudy Ardizzone
Missioner for Christian Formation

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on the Saturday before Easter, covering 40 days. Since every Sunday is a "Little Easter" celebrating the resurrection, Sundays remain as feast-days, even during the solemn Lenten Season; they do not "count" in the 40 days. The five Lenten Sundays are followed by the Sunday of the Passion, Palm Sunday, which begins Holy Week, when we relive the events of Jesus Christ's suffering and death.

In the early church, Lent was the time of preparation for Easter baptism of converts to the faith. Persons who were to receive the sacrament of baptism – "new birth," "death to sin" – were expected to fast and prepare for baptism.

Lent is:

- A time for looking at the things we do that are wrong or that tempt us, asking God's and other people's forgiveness;
- A time for giving up things that keep us from being loving people;
- A time for doing extra things that will help us grow closer to God;
- A time to be more aware of what it means to love as God loves us;
- A time to ask God to help us to be more loving, remembering that God is always ready to strengthen us.

Sunday Morning Learning Circles in Lent

Reflections on the Lord's Prayer lead by Tom Gerald, from thethoughtfulchristian.com

9:10 to 10:00 in the "Little Worship" area

Confirmation/Newcomers/Inquirers Class begins February 28 from 9:00 to 10:00 AM in the Library. The class runs for ten weeks, skipping Easter. The bishop will be at St. Mary's May 2. The class will be using *My Faith My Life* [teens] and *Your Faith Your Life* [adults]. The cost of the books is \$15 and can be obtained from Church Publisher or Amazon.com



Ministry Fair photo by John Beeler



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
UNITED BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
LOMPOC CLUBHOUSE

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Fed. Tax ID # 23-7087814

December 4th, 2009

St Mary's Episcopal Church
c/o Fr. Michael Cunningham
2800 Harris Grade Road
Lompoc, CA. 93436

Dear Fr. Michael Cunningham,

The United Boys & Girls Clubs, "Lompoc Clubhouse" would like to express our gratitude for your generous contribution toward our, 2nd Annual Community Breakfast, held November 19, 2009. Your attendance and participation for this event has helped raise funds for our local Club and is making a difference in a child's life.

Thank you for your continuous support towards the Club and your assistance in helping us remain the "*The Positive Place for Kids*" in the Lompoc Valley.

Sincerely,

Dena Lara
Dena Lara
Unit Director

The Bat in the Belfry

Hello, everyone. It's me, Bede. Once again the theme for The Bells is "Light." I wrote about light for my Advent letter, so I guess I'm ahead of the game. I wrote about waiting for the Light during Advent and, in a stable in Bethlehem, it appeared.

Now, I know, that to some people, Lent is a dark and gloomy time, and I'm the first to admit that the events we talk about, read about, and learn about in Lent can be very sad and terrible, but like our current "theme" directs we must "look for light", and I'm here to tell you that finding light in Lent is not that hard.



We know what happened. (Remember, we've read The Book!) We know it was a tragedy beyond all telling, though some have tried to describe those days. Hundreds of books and millions of words have been set down in an effort to explain the horror of those final hours. Graphic movies have been screened, but none were able to fully capture the overwhelming sadness of those who witnessed those final hours. Priests may deliver impassioned and dramatic sermons detailing those events. All attempts are a pale shadow of what the women who gathered there witnessed.

And then there was the darkness. It settled over everything like a fine dust fills the air after a great wind stirs the land. But through the dust and the gloom, the morning came as mornings always do. When the women gathered to do the work for which they had prepared, the Light returned. He was gone and with His departure, a light that was all His own would chase the gloom, dry the tears and never be extinguished. "The Light of the World" would forever describe Him.

Everyone "keeps" Lent in his or her own way. I know this will seem strange to those of you who purport to know something of the nature and habits of Bats, but I must tell you (and it is not said in a boastful way), as I keep explaining to Mr. John Beeler, I am no run-of-the-mill Bat. I like light and lots of it! So the way I like to keep Lent is to love the Light and look for it everywhere. I believe the Light is so bright during Lent that we are blinded to the true meaning of the Season. Lent means "springtime" and, truly, it is the springtime of our Church, and with the spring comes renewal and regrowth. The Light is always there even in Lent. It leads us, guides us, lights our way to the "brightest and best" and a time of great joy. As the lovely Hymn, "Immortal, Invisible" tells us:

"Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight.
All laud we would render, O help us to see
'Tis only the splendor of Light hideth Thee."

You might have to squint because it's very bright. Here's to a Light-filled Lent!

Blessings from Bede,
The Bat in the St. Mary's Belfry



March Birthdays

Isla Hill	2
Sophia Smith	2
Boyd Bonnell	8
Scott Coe	9
Richard [Skipp] Frenk	9
Heidi Holdsambeck	9
Alexandria Adams	12
Kiara Ricci	12
Edythe Ortiz	15
Dan Unrue	15
Roger McConnell	17
Lara Schmeiser	19
Louise Larson	20
Jarret Richardson	22
Keith Wright	26
Kathleen Clarke	29
Nancy Faragan	31
Dylan Prothero	31

It is not our intent to miss any birthdays; if we have missed your birthday over the year, it means we don't have the information in our file. Drop a note in my mailbox outside the office and your record will be updated. Thanks!

Elizabeth

Above Right: Trudy Ardizzone and Mike Munson at the Christian Formation booth (John Beeler Photo)

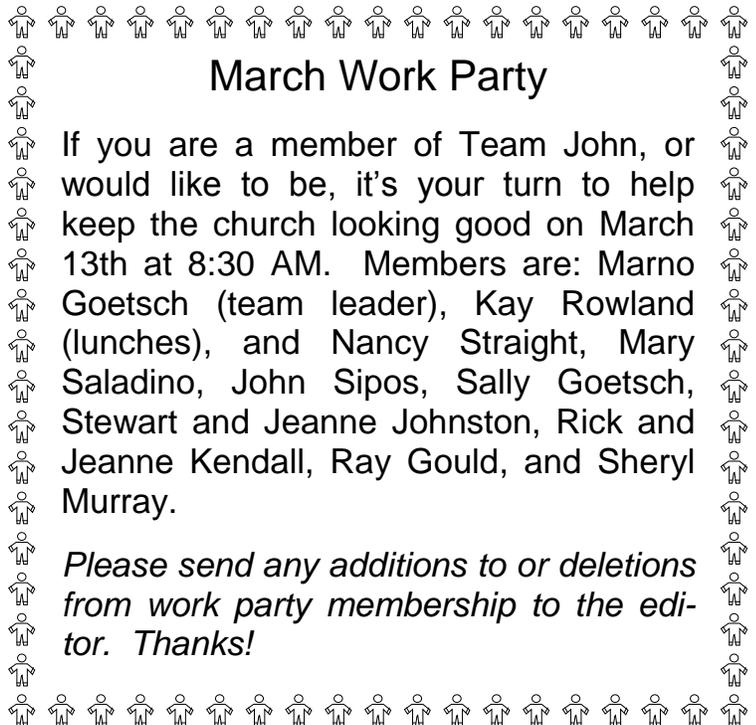
Request for Articles for *Planting*

During Lent, we all have moments to stop and contemplate what creative gifts we have been given, and what we might share. Do you have a short uplifting written piece, poems, photos or drawings that you would like to contribute to this spring's issue of Planting?

We plan to publish submissions from the congregations of St. Mark's, St. Mary's and St. Peter's. Please send your work by March 31 to me at john.beeler@verizon.net. (You may also use my mailbox just outside the Parish Office.) Please do not submit material previously published.

Thank you!

John Beeler



March Work Party

If you are a member of Team John, or would like to be, it's your turn to help keep the church looking good on March 13th at 8:30 AM. Members are: Marno Goetsch (team leader), Kay Rowland (lunches), and Nancy Straight, Mary Saladino, John Sipos, Sally Goetsch, Stewart and Jeanne Johnston, Rick and Jeanne Kendall, Ray Gould, and Sheryl Murray.

Please send any additions to or deletions from work party membership to the editor. Thanks!

What Good is God?

I have a camping buddy and close friend named Vic. Vic and I have had many conversations about the nature of God and religion over the glow of a campfire. And although I find Vic to be a loving and caring individual, it always surprises me when I hear Vic say he hates God. Why? Because Vic wants justice.

Life is difficult. One of the universal truths of the world is no one's life is without suffering. One of the fundamental questions all religions must seek to answer is "why do bad things happened to good people?" How can religion ease your pain? In the book of Job, Job's comforters are perplexed by three conflicting truths. They believe.

1. God is all powerful, all knowing, and controls all.
2. God is just, good and fair and people get what they deserve.
3. Job is a good person.

So even though they know Job to be righteous, they are unwilling to turn against their view of God. So they listen to Job's pain then accuse him of some unstated sin.

So why do the righteous suffer? Three arguments I often hear are

1. God is teaching us. That somehow God causes us pain so we or the people in contact with our suffering can learn a lesson. That God uses our pain to teach humility, **patience, perseverance, or compassion to others. My vision of God won't allow this. The price is too high. The end doesn't justify the means. God doesn't kill babies so he can teach lessons.**
2. **God is testing us. People say God doesn't give us more than we can handle and he wants us to build a spiritual strength. We all know this to be untrue. Lots of people crack under pressure; marriages fail, people have mental and emotional breakdowns that last years, they commit suicide, and seek revenge. And again the price is too high.**
3. God allows us to suffer. But if you keep faith he will make it right after you die.

All three of these arguments assumes that God causes or allows us to suffer. My vision of God is different. God is on the side of the sufferer. He wants to help us bear the pain. He wants us to be comforted by him.

So why do the righteous suffer?

1. Sometimes there is no reason. It is natural to want to find meaning or purpose in our suffering. That our pain is more bearable if we can understand it. But the fact is the **world is chaotic. Random events do not reflect God's choices. Hurricanes and tornadoes are not "Acts of God" They are the result of unplanned chaos. God created the world out of chaos and chaos still remains in the universe.**
2. There are no exceptions for nice people. God created the world and certain natural **laws apply. Natural laws treat everyone the same. God doesn't suspend these laws for nice people. Germs, gravity, a traveling bullet are morally blind. We can understand natural laws through science. But knowing "why" doesn't ease our pain.**
3. God gave us free will and allows us to be human. Often pain is caused by the choices we and others make. Yes pain is caused by our and others poor choices and sin, but it also includes righteous choices. Pain can come from knowledge and love. We can

Cont'd next page

suffer because we are aware outside ourselves, because we choose to extend ourselves to others. We suffer when our loved ones suffer.

And that brings me to my vision of God. God loves us and he suffers with us. God doesn't cause the righteous to suffer. God is love and by having a closeness with him, we can ease our pain. He is outraged with us at the unfairness of tragedy and suffering. There will be events in our lives that are not in our control. Things we didn't choose. It is natural to be angry when you suffer. Be angry at the situation. But understand, God didn't cause the suffering either.

So what good is God then? Is saying God doesn't control our lives any better than Vic saying God is unjust? God helps us cope; guides us how to react; how to forgive; how to start again. It is shown and practiced through our relationships with others. We are all brothers and sisters in suffering. Prayer during suffering is our expression of love. I feel God's love. I am comforted by the love of others. I feel renewed when I pray for hope, courage and strength. I do not feel alone in my pain and I share in others' pain. God inspires us to help each other.

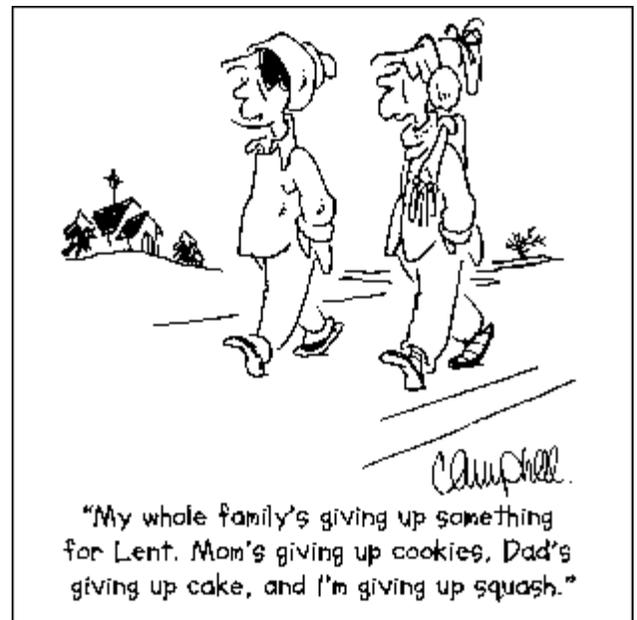
A lot of these ideas were from two books which profoundly affected my understanding of the nature of suffering. They are "When Bad Things Happen to Good People" by Harold S Kushner and "The Road Less Traveled" by Scott Peck.

Submitted by Mike Munson

In the daily round of life

In the daily round of life, dust and cobwebs accumulate in our souls. The hidden corners of our hearts become encrusted with grime or filled with forgotten debris. During the weeks of Lent, God's Spirit is given opportunity to clear away the clutter, sweep away the dust and wash us clean. We are invited to prepare ourselves heart, soul, mind, and body for the new life of Easter.

- *Marlene Kropt in The Mennonite, Christianity Today, February 2004*



SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROGRAMS IN LENT

Tuesday Evening Lenten Series

On Shrove Tuesday we renewed our Baptismal Covenant together as a congregation. This Lent our Tuesday evening programs will focus on giving us the tools we need to faithfully live in to these promises. The program will begin at 7:00PM following worship at 6:00 PM and a simple soup supper at 6:30. Each week we will follow a different saint and his particular spirituality and practices.

Week One, February 23: Saint Benedict-*“Will you continue in the Apostle’s teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?”*

Week Two March 2: Saint Ignatius-*“Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?”*

Week Three March 9: Saint Augustine-*“Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?”*

Week Four March 16: Saint Francis-*“Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?”*

Week Five March 23: Roland Allen-*“Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?”*



I wanted a perfect ending.
Now I've learned, the hard way,
that some poems don't rhyme,
and some stories don't have a clear
beginning, middle, and end.

Life is about not knowing,
having to change,
taking the moment and
making the best of it,
without knowing what's going to
happen next.
– Gilda Radner, actor

Looking for Light

March 2010

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

8:00 AM - Holy Eucharist
9:00 AM - Learning Circles
- **Reflections on the Lord's**
Prayer &
Inquirers/Confirmation/
Newcomers Class
10:00 AM Choral Holy
Eucharist

7:00 PM - AA &
Alanon meetings

5:00 PM Communi-
cations Mtg
6:00 PM - 6:30
PM Holy
Eucharist
6:30 PM Soup
7:00 PM - 8:00
PM Living Out Our
Baptismal Prom-
ises-Will you per-
severe in resisting
evil...

9:00 AM - Holy
Eucharist
4:45 PM - Feed
the Homeless
7:00 PM - Choir
Rehearsal

8:00 AM - Holy Eucharist
9:00 AM - Learning Circles
- **Reflections on the Lord's**
Prayer &
Inquirers/Confirmation/
Newcomers Class
10:00 AM Choral Holy
Eucharist

8
7:00 PM - AA &
Alanon meetings

9
6:00 PM - 6:30
PM Holy
Eucharist
6:30 PM Soup
7:00 PM - 8:00
PM Living Out Our
Baptismal Prom-
ises- Will you pro-
claim by work and
example ...
7:00 PM - 8:00
PM Stephen Min-
isters Mtg

11
9:00 AM Holy
Eucharist
5:30 PM - Worship
MDT Meeting
7:00 PM Choir
Rehearsal

12
13
2:00 AM -Spring
Forward - Day-
light Savings
Begins
8:30 AM Team
John - Work Party

14
8:00 AM - Holy Eucharist
9:00 AM - Learning Circles
- **Reflections on the Lord's**
Prayer &
Inquirers/Confirmation/
Newcomers Class
10:00 AM Choral Holy
Eucharist

15
6:00 PM Vestry
Mtg
7:00 PM - AA &
Alanon meetings
Beware the Ides
of March

16
6:00 PM - Holy
Eucharist
6:30 PM Soup
7:00 PM - 8:00
PM Living Out Our
Baptismal Prom-
ises - Will you seek
and serve Christ in
all persons...

17
6:00 PM - EFM
18
9:00 AM Holy
Eucharist
7:00 PM Choir
Rehearsal

19
7:00 PM - Movie
Nite - Smoke
Signals

20

21
8:00 AM - Holy Eucharist
9:00 AM - **Children's**
Seder & Holy Week
Egg Hunt
Learning Circles -
Reflections on the Lord's
Prayer &
Inquirers/Confirmation/
Newcomers Class
10:00 AM Choral Holy
Eucharist

22
7:00 PM - AA &
Alanon meetings

23
6:00 PM - 6:30
PM Holy
Eucharist
6:30 PM Soup
7:00 PM - 8:00
PM Living Out Our
Baptismal Prom-
ises - Will you
strive for justice
and peace among..

24
6:00 PM - EFM
25
9:00 AM Holy
Eucharist
7:00 PM Choir
Rehearsal

26

27

28
8:00 AM - 9:00 AM Holy
Eucharist
10:00 AM - Choral Holy
Eucharist

29
7:00 PM - AA &
Alanon meetings
7:00 PM - Holy
Week Service

30
7:00 PM - 7:30
PM Holy Week
Service

31
7:00 PM - 7:30
PM Holy Week
Service

1
MAUNDY THURS-
DAY
9:00 AM - Holy
Eucharist
4:45 PM - Feed
the Homeless
7:00 PM - Holy
Week Service
Vigil at the Altar of
Repose All Night
8:00 PM - Choir
Rehearsal

2
GOOD FRIDAY
Vigil concludes
followed by
11:00 AM -
Good Friday
Service

3

For up to date information visit www.stmaryslompoc.org.

The Bells of Saint Mary's

St. Mary's Episcopal Church
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Lompoc, CA 93436
www.stmaryslompoc.org

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March, 2010
Next Issue:



Glory

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Sunday Eucharist
8:00 AM and 10:00AM

Church Office Hours
Mon - Fri 10 AM - 4 PM

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