



St. Thomas the Apostle Newsletter
“Faith, Seeking Understanding”
May 22, 2020 (Feria in the Octave of Ascension)

The first lesson in Morning Prayer on May 14 was from Numbers chapter 13.

This is the account of Moses sending 12 men (one from each tribe of Israel) into Canaan for 40 days to spy out the land, bring some of its fruits back and give a report on the people and cities they found.

The spies brought back an amazing sampling of the land’s food supply and testified “...It truly flows with milk and honey...” The land was everything God said it would be and yet only Caleb and Joshua said they should form a battle plan, attack and take the land. The other ten men said “Nevertheless, the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large...” They were afraid to go forward. They did not trust God’s Word!

Even when Caleb pushed back saying, “No, but let us go up at once and take possession of it, for we are able to overcome them.”, the response was “We are not going up, for we are unable to go up against them, because they are stronger than we.” That fearful response gripped the camp of the Israelites and they lost heart. Ultimately they wandered in the desert forty more years (one for each day the men spied the land) because of their unbelief and unwillingness to act.

We need to ask ourselves “Am I a Caleb or Joshua, or am I one of the ten other spies?”

Do we, taking God at His Word and seeing the proof of His grace and mercy towards His people, take action? Or do we (seeing this same evidence) reason it away and become paralyzed into inaction because hey, ministry isn’t easy and often people don’t respond to it? Do either of these two ways of thinking have an effect upon the ministry of our parish?

We may not be an actual Caleb or Joshua (I know I’m not), but we can strive to be like them by being confident enough in God’s Word to act upon it. We need to believe all authority has been given to our Lord Jesus and that He has given us a Commission to fulfill (St. Matthew 28:18-20). We need to remember that through Holy Baptism and Confirmation He has imparted and sealed us with His Holy Spirit (St. John 3:5, 6 and Acts 1:8) to lead us and support us as we accomplish our part of that Commission. We need to always remember what God has brought us through and gain a tangible sense that He is always with us (Psalm 139).

Fortified with this knowledge, why would we not act upon it? Why would we not “Go” as Jesus has said we must?

Will we make mistakes? Sure we will. Will we get tired spiritually and physically? Most likely, yes. Will we accumulate our share of spiritual bumps and bruises? Possibly.

But Scripture tells us all these will happen! It happened to the Apostles and has happened to every faithful man and woman who has acted upon the Word by faith since. They are the price, and the blessing, of being Jesus’ disciples (2 Corinthians 4:5-18).

So then, let us go! Nothing should prevent us from taking what God has set before us!

Fr. Paul

We had a very nice mass last evening for the Feast of the Ascension. It was a blessing to be able to gather as a parish to close out Eastertide. Going forward, mass will be offered on most, if not all, Prayer Book Holy Days and a few others too. If you do not have a Church kalendar (proper spelling), you can find most of the feasts to be celebrated at the bottom of page I (Roman numeral) in the front of the Prayer Book. They will also be announced in advance in this newsletter.

Are you aware the office of Morning Prayer is prayed at the church everyday (except Tuesday)? It is! On Monday, Thursday and Friday the time is 8:00 a.m. On Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday the time is 10:00 a.m. All who would like to assist (attend) are welcome. Please contact Fr. Paul and let him know which day(s) you'd like to come.

Peggy Wilkinson has resigned from the Vestry and a replacement is needed. Her term concludes at the end of 2021. Please see Fr. Paul or a member of the Vestry if you are willing to serve the parish in this office.

A deep cleaning of the "soft surfaces" of the church (carpets, pews, kneelers), Sunday school building and parish house (carpets) will be done this coming Tuesday, May 26. Please do not go into any of the buildings on that day to allow for everything to dry. There will be Morning Prayer and noon mass on Wednesday the 23rd.

Have you read the book For the Life of the World by (the late) Fr. Alexander Schmemmann? If not, it is highly recommended. Fr. Schmemmann was a priest in the Orthodox Church in America and the dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary in New York. Though he died in 1983, his writings continue to have a profound impact on Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical Christians. In this book, he makes the case there should be no distinction between 'spiritual' and 'secular' in the life of a Christian. In Christ, both are fully integrated, for Christ is the Redeemer of the world. It is a good devotional-type read. The book is available in paperback and in Kindle formats.

Wisdom from the Church Fathers:

"For if according to the Lord's saying, that which two shall have agreed upon on earth concerning anything which they shall ask, shall be done for them, as He says, by My Father, Who is in heaven, for: Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them (Matthew 18:21), how much less, where the full congregation is gathered in the Name of the Lord. Where the demand of all is unanimous, ought we to doubt that the Lord Jesus is there as the Author of that desire, and the Hearer of the petition, the Presider over the ordination, and the Giver of the grace? Make yourselves then to appear worthy that Christ should be in your midst. For where peace is, there is Christ, for Christ is Peace; and where righteousness is, there is Christ, for Christ is Righteousness. Let Him be in the midst of you, that you may see Him, lest it be said to you also: There stands One in the midst of you, Whom you see not (John 1:26). The Jews saw not Him in Whom they believed not; we look upon Him by devotion, and behold Him by faith. Let Him therefore stand in your midst, that the heavens, which declare the glory of God, may be opened to you, that you may do His will, and work His works."

- St. Ambrose of Milan (4th century) Bishop and Doctor of the Church

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