



The Epistle

All Saints Episcopal Church

79 Central Street, Stoneham, MA 02180

781.438.2776

www.allsaintsstoneham.com

The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Acting, Priest-in-Charge

A Message from Christian+ **Luke 13:1-9**

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Two people had been friends for years. They had once been choir members together in a great Episcopal choir where they shared in magnificent music oftentimes accompanied by brass and other instruments. They each moved away but continued to be in communication. They were good friends. They shared their faith and its importance in their lives for years.

Finally, they decided that one would visit the other, and with great anticipation, they proceeded to set up the reunion complete with several parties for the visitor. The visitor's popularity was immediately evident and caused a great rift between the two. They parted amidst anger and hostility and didn't talk again for some time.

Finally, the visitor broke the ice and called, profusely apologized for any wrong doing, but was roundly 'not' forgiven. Hurt and tears passed but the wound would never heal. No forgiveness. No opportunity for reconciliation, understanding, reconnection. Life would be forever changed because forgiveness simply wasn't in the cards. There was no 'second chance.'

The Gospel of Luke 13: 1-9 is really about a second chance. It is the parable of the fig tree, a parable that seemingly overshadows the first half of the passage. The images are easily grasped but they are not insignificant in light of the previous verses.

In the verses, it is clear that Jesus is confronted by those who believed that bad things happen to people for a reason, that there is some kind of just connection, that some suffer a much worse fate than others because they are greater sinners and deserve it. Indeed, that was the prevailing belief of the time, but Jesus said that all people are equal in the sight of God and share equally in the need to repent and ask for forgiveness whether they are great sinners or not.

Paul tells us that "no testing has overtaken anyone that is not common to everyone. God is faithful and will not let us be tested beyond our strength." Well, I wonder if all our sisters and brothers in Haiti and Chili would agree with that.

In the most recent Episcopal Monthly, the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti had profound words to say. Trinity Cathedral and many if not all the Episcopal churches in Port au Prince were either destroyed or significantly damaged. There's a powerful photo in the edition with Bishop Jean Zache Duracin and Bishop Katherine Jefferts Shore standing in front of a great pile of stone rubble, the former magnificent Episcopal Cathedral of Haiti.

I don't normally quote so extensively in a homily but I found Bishop Duracin's comments truly amazing in the article he wrote entitled, Lenten Reflection:

"As for resources, we have next to nothing. The wreckage is beyond imagination. However, this situation delivers us into faith. I look at this as a baptism. We who are still alive have had the blessing of survival, but in many ways we have died to the ways of the past. We have the opportunity to rise up and start anew. In this moment of grief and mourning, life must continue."

He goes on to say:

"During this Lenten season, it is important for us in Haiti to turn inward and rediscover all that is just within us. It is imperative that we be reborn in this moment. We will live without the physical trappings of the church because we still have the same spiritual guidance, the confessions, the conversations, the reflection. We look forward to Easter...We give glory to God. We sing within the

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Altar at All Saints, Lent 2010



KIDS' COCOA HOUSE

Saturday, March 20 at 3:00 pm

All Saints' Parish Hall

79 Central Street, Stoneham

info:781.438.2776 or www.allsaintsstoneham.com

\$5 per child ~ includes pizza and juice!!

Watch and be a part of the play 'Stone Soup'

Songs to sing ~ Crafts to make

Treats to nibble ~ Frolicking to be done

Suitable for ages 2-6

M.O.S.H.

Saturday, March 13 at 5:00 pm
Saturday, April 10 at 5:00 pm

Please, plan to be with us for our next youth rock celebration. All youth and young at heart are invited for this service of praise through contemporary music and prayer.

Spring Recycling Event Saturday, April 10

Mark your calendar for All Saints Spring Recycling Event

We will be able to dispose of small appliances, electronic equipment and car batteries.

The collection will take place in
All Saints parking lot
Watch for more details

'Grace in Giving' Stewardship/Pledge Campaign

If you have not already done so, please consider making a pledge for 2010. We are pleased to announce that we are only a few hundred dollars away from the needed amount that we have budgeted for pledges for 2010. Many thanks to all those who have pledged and for the increase in pledge amounts of an average of 8.2% over last year. Your pledge is extremely important to us and guarantees that the Parish can meet its financial needs for 2010. It is our sincere hope that everyone will pledge whatever you can for the vitality of All Saints and ministry in 2010. Many thanks.

Confirmation and Reception in the Episcopal Church: April 24, 2010

If you have not been baptized, confirmed or formally received into the Episcopal Church and would like more information about that process, please see our priest, Christian, for more information. One of the Diocesan Bishops will confirm and receive new members at a Eucharistic Celebration to be held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Malden on April 24.

Mystic Valley Deanery Lenten Program The series continues on Wednesday, March 17 at Emmanuel Church, Wakefield, and then at All Saints on Wednesday, March 24 with the Rev. Edgar Gutierrez, Vicar of St. Luke's/San Lucas in Chelsea presenting. Please, consider these discussions on healing through stories of the New Testament as part of your Lenten observance. Evenings starts with supper at 6:45 pm.

A prayer for the People of Haiti & Chile

Loving God of creation, at this time of devastation we hold before you the people of Haiti and Chile.

When the damage is unimaginable, and the suffering seems overwhelming, remind us that every person affected is loved, honored and precious in your sight.

We remember all those who have been hurt; all who have lost their homes, livelihoods and loved ones.

Work through us to bring healing to broken and distorted lives, peace to those who have been thrown into despair, light to those in darkness, and hope to those who fear.

We ask this in the name of Jesus in whom all life and grace is found. Amen.

LENT - Path of Blessing

- Fast from pessimism; feast on optimism.
- Fast from criticism; feast on praise.
- Fast from self-pity; feast on joy.
- Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.
- Fast from idle gossip; feast on purposeful silence.
- Fast from jealousy; feast on love.
- Fast from discouragement; feast on hope.
- Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation.
- Fast from selfishness; feast on service.
- Fast from fear; feast on faith.
- Fast from anger; feast on patience.
- Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.
- Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude.

Aren't they beautiful suggestions?

What an improvement if we would find in our day to day living a way to follow these fasts and feasts. A thought for reflection.

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the church of the world. We celebrate life with the same spirit we were given it. In the middle of all the death, there is a God of love and of life, and we must shout 'Alleluia' with the living." *The Episcopal Monthly*, 3/2010.

There is no blame of God. There is no accusing God of unjust treatment of the already poor Haitian people. There is no sense whatsoever that Bishop Duracin believes that his people were treated any differently than any other people anywhere else in the world. What remarkable faith! What remarkable forgiveness! What remarkable love of God, a God who most surely wept on January 12 and continues to weep for the suffering of the people of Haiti and elsewhere in the world.

The Bishop declared that those who are "still alive have had the blessing of survival." They have been given another chance, a second chance. They could choose to blame God and feel sorry for themselves, or they can embrace "the opportunity to rise up and start anew." Isn't that what happens in our relationships with one another and with God when we confess that we are in need of forgiveness, the need for a second chance, the need to be allowed to start again, pull ourselves up, rise and begin again?

Can you see examples of this in your own life? Can you see past brokenness, past inability to forgive even though we have been forgiven by God over and over again? I certainly can. I certainly can spot too many times in my life when I have been unable to forgive, unable to see beyond my own brokenness, unable to let go and unable to forgive.

Some of us carry the weight of harboring anger, hostility, jealousy, or an inability to forgive throughout our entire lives. How terrible! What a burden! What an unnecessary cross when there are so many other challenges in life that are so much more deserving of our energy and attention!

How can we learn to forgive others and to forgive ourselves? We need to rise up and begin again, so that we can be like Jesus, the one who gave his life for the forgiveness of sins? Jesus truly believed that sins can be and are forgiven by God and that we are to do the same.

Our lives are like the fig tree that was given another chance, another chance to grow and thrive. God gives us that chance over and over again. Our challenge is to say that we're sorry, ask for forgiveness, and start again. May God open our eyes to the forgiveness and reconciliation that is ours so that we can forgive others and be reconciled with them and with God. Amen

The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato

Outreach Ministry

First Sunday Food Collections

As part of our outreach ministry, we will collect non-perishable food for a local food pantry every first Sunday of the month. On alternating months, our collections will benefit the food pantries at the First Congregational Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church to help feed those in need in Stoneham.

Please, be as generous as you are able.

Second Sunday Collections

As part of our outreach ministry, we will collect a monetary contribution on the Second Sunday of each month for the purpose of supporting a charity. Our collections have alternated between the First Congregational Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church for their food pantries, but last month we sent \$200 to the Sisters of St. Margaret in Roxbury for their mission which was destroyed in Haiti. Thank you for your generous contributions.

Haiti Earthquake Relief:

Episcopal Relief and Development

Our sisters and brothers in Haiti are still trying to recover from the devastating earthquake. Episcopal Relief and Development is an organization we know we can trust. Here is the website for ERD to give on line: <http://www.ER-D.org> May God guide and protect the people of Haiti during these extremely difficult and painful days. Let us continue to remember them in our prayers and be as generous as we are able to help in the relief efforts.

The free-will offering that was received during the March 6, *Concert of Hope*, that will be sent to Episcopal Relief & Development, was \$445.00. We are grateful to God for the generosity of those in attendance and are delighted to be able to send this amazing amount to ERD for continued relief efforts in Haiti.

A Prayer for Others

O God, I ask you to bless my friends, relatives and those for whom I care deeply, who are reading this right now. Show them a new revelation of your love and power.

Holy Spirit, I ask you to minister to their spirit. At this very moment where there is pain, give them your peace and mercy.

Where there is self-doubt, release a renewed confidence through your grace.

Where there is need, I ask you to fulfill their needs. Bless their homes, families, finances, their goings and their comings.

I ask all these things in Jesus' precious name.

Amen.

Artwork in Sanctuary: Head of Christ

We are grateful to Jeff and Sandy Conlon for sharing the beautiful image of Christ which is in the Sanctuary of the church for the Season of Lent. Jeff's father is the artist who created this work which hangs in the Conlon home here in Stoneham. We hope it will be a source of inspiration for all of us in our worship during Lent.

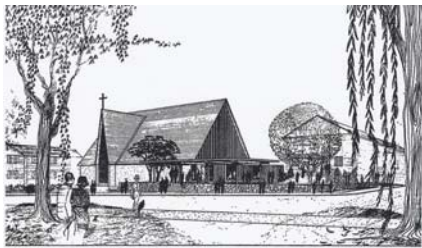
Thanks, Jeff and Sandy



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Holy Week Schedule

Sunday, March 28:	Palm/Passion Sunday Processional and Holy Eucharist	10:00 am
Wednesday, March 31:	Stations of the Cross and Potluck Supper	6:45 pm
Thursday, April 1:	Maundy Thursday Holy Eucharist and Foot Washing	7:00 pm
Friday, April 2:	Solemn Good Friday Service	7:00 pm
Sunday, April 4:	Festival of the Resurrection,	10:00 am