

Dragoneer

December 2007

An Advent Reflection on the Coming of Christ



In an amazingly wonderful and challenging Christmas sermon, *Not to Condemn the World*, Rowan Williams writes about God coming to us as a baby – wordless, unable to speak. Williams wonders if it's easy to assign warm feelings (Jesus came not to condemn the world) to the one who, lying in a manger surrounded by a herd of hungry cows, somehow remains silent – “The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, yet little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.” “What has condemnation to do with this?” Williams asks.

But Williams reminds us that God indeed came to us an infant, as one who most definitely cried, and that babies, as a rule, are not passive – “They make their presence felt, they alter lives. Their dependence is a mat-

ter of fingers clutching at ours when we'd like to be getting on with something... If God is with us as a child, he is certainly with us as one who calls out our tenderness and compassion, but does so by an insistent presence without shame or restraint, crying and clutching.”

“And all that crying,” Williams writes, “as every parent knows, can be alarming precisely because we don't understand what the baby wants. What is the matter? Pain? Hunger? Loneliness? ...Ask a baby about the ordination of women, about divorce legislation, violence on television, who will win the election: it is not a fruitful experience,” says Williams. In the first few pages of Elie Wiesel's autobiographical and Nobel Peace Prize winning book *Night*, twelve year-old Elie meets a man known as Moshe the Beadle, who becomes Elie's master guide for his study of the cabbala. Moshe the Beadle 'explained with great insistence' to young Elie that “every question possesses a power that does not lie in the answer.” “Man raises himself to God by the questions he asks him,” Moshe was fond of repeating. In the Zen Buddhist tradition when a disciple raises a speculative question – a question not connected to enlightenment, not coming from the person's heart and guts – the master simply replies “Mu!”, “no.” So too with God and us, according to Williams: Our questions to God about theory and policy get the same answer - “Mu!”

Williams' sermon attempts to show us that in Christ's “silence” (cry?) we are reminded that “God so loved the world” – *not* the church, not the moral majority, not the ministry of defense or the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, not Iran or Iraq but the world... God condemns not the world but rather the fantasies of absolute rightness that torture and disfigure the world. A God who condemns any less is a “silent, passive, swaddled doll, glass-eyed and wax-limbed.”

I think William's sermon captures the spirit of the people of St. George's Episcopal Church and the spirit of our God. What shall we ask of God this Christmas? What does the wordless Word made flesh, the baby Jesus, ask of us this year?

Blessings for a Holy Advent and for a Christmas morning that will alter our lives...

Jim

Christmas Open House and A Service of Advent Lesson & Carols

**You are Invited... All are welcome.
Please join us for some Christmas cheer
at the rectory, home of Jim, Ellen, and Morgan Quigley
(1500 Cadiz St- directly behind St. George's)
on Sunday, December 9 from 4-6pm.**

**A Service of Advent Lessons & Carols
will follow at 6:30 pm
St. George's Episcopal Church**

Celebration of a New Ministry

Sunday, December 16
5:00 pm

The Rt. Rev Charles E. Jenkins
will institute
The Rev. James E. Quigley
Rector of
St. George's Episcopal Church
4600 St. Charles Ave
New Orleans, LA

Followed by a reception
in the undercroft



Christmas Service Schedule

Christmas Eve- Monday, December 24

5:00 pm Holy Eucharist, Rite II
Family Service with Children's Pageant

11:00 pm Holy Eucharist, Rite II (with choir)

Christmas Day- Tuesday, December 25

10:00 am Holy Eucharist, Rite II (no choir)

January 2008

Feast of the Epiphany
Sun, Jan 6

Mardi Gras Spirits Cook Days
Sat, Jan 12 and Sat, Jan. 19
Come help us cook food for our annual fundraiser, Mardi Gras Spirits.

Stallings Baptism
Sun, Jan 13 at 10:30 am

**Photo sessions with Lifetouch Church
Directories and Portraits**
Tue, Jan 15 from 2:30 - 9 pm
Wed, Jan 16 from 2:30 - 9 pm
Thurs, Jan 17 from 2:30 - 9 pm
Fri, Jan 18 from 2:30 - 9 pm
Sat, Jan 19 from 10 am - 5 pm

Annual Meeting
Sun, Jan 20 during the 10:30 service

February 2008

Mardi Gras Spirits
Thurs, Jan 31 in the evening
Fri, Feb 1 in the evening
Sat, Feb 2 all day
Sun, Feb 3 all day
Mon, Feb 4 in the evening
Tue, Feb 5 all day

Join us for our annual fundraiser as we turn the undercroft into a place where the public can buy food, use the bathroom (for free), and rest before, during, and after the uptown Carnival parades. Volunteers are needed. Sign up will begin in January.

Ash Wednesday Services
Wed, Feb 6 at noon and 7 pm

Vestry Retreat
Fri, Feb 8 - Sat, Feb 9

Newcomers Brunch
Sun, Feb 17 after the 10:30 Service

Annual Giving: “Where your Treasure is, there your heart will be.”

Money tells us a lot about who we are. During a recent Presidential debate two candidates were challenging one another about where their priorities lay: My record stand for itself! Look at how I have voted! At one point a certain candidate looked at another and said, “Show me your budget and I’ll show you where your priorities are!”

While the senators and governors were talking about priorities, not hearts, the implication was that what we spend our money on reflects what we truly care about, where the priorities of our hearts lay. Does what we spend our money on now necessarily reflect who we want to become or where we’d prefer our hearts to be?

In The Gospel of Matthew Jesus tells us “where our treasure is, there our hearts *will* be.” This is a promise, not a threat. And notice the future tense. This is good news because what it means is that whoever my checkbook suggests I am now isn’t necessarily who I’d like to become. But it can.

It’s a well known fact that people who are spiritually mature give generously. But it is also true that spiritually speaking it’s easier to *act oneself into a new way of thinking than to think oneself into a new way of acting*. If we apply this wisdom to Jesus’ beautiful aphorism – Where your treasure is there your heart will be – we can logically come to the conclusion that what Jesus is telling us is that where we put our treasures our hearts are sure to follow! In other words, we can *give* our way into a new and more mature spirituality; giving generously of our treasures is a sure and certain path to gaining a generous heart. Don’t we want that for ourselves? For each other? For the church?

Indeed there is very good news here and there is also an invitation, because Jesus is not threatening us by telling us that how we spend our money reveals what sort of people we are but rather inviting us to realize that how we

spend our money can determine what sort of people we will become.

Our stewardship campaign is in its final stages. Please review the Stewardship update included in this Dragoneer; it will show us where we are and where we’d like to be. Give generously to the mission and ministry of St. George’s Episcopal Church and your heart will be sure to follow. God promises. Together we’ll show God how big our hearts yearn to be.

Blessings,

Jim

Episcopal Relief & Development Christmas Tree

Our Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) tree is now in the back of the church, and we need YOU to help decorate it!

Here's how the program works: You make a donation to ERD and get one ornament to put on the tree and one to take home or give to someone you wish to honor. Your donations will help to support ERD's extraordinary worldwide efforts to help those struggling with the effects of poverty, famine, war, disease, and disaster. Catalogs are available by the tree so that you may designate your gift to whatever program appeals to you.

We ask only that you turn in your donation here at the church so we can keep track of how much money has been raised through this effort. You may pay by check (payable to ERD), credit card, or cash. Donations of ANY size are welcome; however we ask that each pair of ornaments represent a donation of at least \$10.00.

The program will run through Epiphany, but get your donation in early. All gifts are fully tax-deductible, and can make a big difference in the lives of others. Furthermore, this is a great opportunity to give a truly memorable gift to someone in your life.

If you have any questions, please ask Deacon Lydia.

Annual Giving Update

Number of Families at St. George's: 153

Current Pledge Units: 43

Current Amount Pledged: \$117,348

2008 Budget Goal: \$250,000

Comparison to last year:

Amount Pledged 2007: \$192,962.37

Number of Pledge Units 2007: 72

As you can see, we are a long way from our goal. If you have not submitted your 2008 pledge, please do so by Friday, December 14. Extra pledge card can be found at the back of the church or you can go to our website www.stgeorge-nola.org/stewardship to make your pledge online. If you are unable to pledge this year, please let us know that too. Vestry members will begin calling those who have not submitted their 2008 pledge to ensure every intended pledge is counted.

Children's Christmas Pageant

All children are welcome to participate in the Christmas pageant during the 5:00 pm Christmas Eve Service. A rehearsal will take place on Wednesday, December 19 at 6:00 pm. Call Devin Tournillon at 891-3101 with any questions.

Children's Christmas Party

Kids, join us on Wednesday, December 19 at 6:30 pm for a festive Christmas party just for you. The party will be held at the home of Chris, Leslie, Hale, and Ali Martin (1723 Jena St). Call Leslie at 895-1803 with any questions or for directions.

Christmas Flowers and Greens

You are invited to share in making our church beautiful for Christmas. Your gift can be in memory of loved ones, a thank offering, or to remember a birthday or anniversary. Contributions forms can be found at the back of the church or by emailing Karen Mackey (karen@stgeorge-nola.org). The suggested donation is \$50 - \$75. Deadline is Sunday, December 16.

ST. GEORGE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
4600 St. Charles Ave
New Orleans, LA 70115

Address Service Requested
Dated Material Please Deliver by December 8, 2007

CLERGY

The Rev. James E. Quigley
Rector

The Rev. Lydia E. Hopkins
Deacon

STAFF

Karen Mackey
Parish Administrator

James Beazor Williams
Choir Director/Organist

Ronald Kelley
Sexton

Rennette Appel
Nursery Care Provider

Susan Ingber
Parish Parish Coordinator

VESTRY

Colette Raphael
Senior Warden

Allen Blow
Junior Warden

Stevan Dittman
Treasurer

Susan Ingber
Secretary

Jean Commander
Lee Crean

Tom Forbes
Scott Griffith

Les Kellum
Lyn Koppel

Mary Nass
Toddy Wobberma