

St. John's Good News

Lent, Ash Wednesday—and Short Shrift

I don't know about you, but Lent has taken me somewhat by surprise this year. I suppose it's like the New England Springtime: it kind of sneaks up on a person. One minute, everything is covered in snow, and seemingly the next, I'm walking about in shirtsleeves. The very word "Lent" in fact comes from a very old word for "spring." And it's fitting, at least in our part of the world. Lent is a time of new beginnings, of spiritual growth and change. This is a season of nurturing our spirits, and of coming back. Returning to God, to our best selves, to other people.

Some of you may know that I love words and the origins of words. Anyhow, a while back, I was talking with a friend and she mentioned that Shrove Tuesday is right around the corner, and that her family always eats loads of pancakes and bacon on Shrove Tuesday. Lots of churches celebrate the night before Ash Wednesday that way too, and it got me wondering about it. "Shrove," in particular, is such a funny word. Turns out "shrove" is the simple past tense of "shrive." Now, "shrive" is an archaic verb for two distinct acts. It means hearing the confession of a penitent and then pronouncing absolution. That is to say, to shrive someone is to hear a confession and to give a penance and pronounce absolution.

Have you heard the phrase "short shrift"? As in, "to give short shrift" in the sense of doing something quickly or without too much attention. Well, that has the same origin as Shrove Tuesday, the night before Lent. A "short shrift" was a quick confession and quick absolution. Prisoners were encouraged to make them before execution. Shakespeare coined the phrase first in Richard III, suggesting that a duke make "short shrift" before execution. But people during Lent also have made use of short shrift. A few sources I read said that penitents made use of that last day of confessions before Lent to get in line. Feeling that it would be good to "make short shrift" and not have time to sin again before Lent, they would make a confession. But other folks realized that the priests were very busy and would give quick confessions and small penance; having heard many sins that day, penance would be light. The penitents realized that a short shrift would be beneficial during Lent.

I both understand this idea and like it a lot. Wait until the last moment to confess and get an absolution so that I can't mess thing up again. I am willing to do this. Or do it quickly and hope for not much pain. Today I regaled my spiritual director with this. A quick, Shrove Tuesday confession was what I wanted. I told her so. I joked about Shrove Tuesday and short shrift. I knew she was busy. Distract her with what the words mean, since she loves words as much as I. Having none of it, she said: (cont)



March 2017

Worship Schedule

Sundays

8am ~ Rite I

10am ~ Rite II

Ash Wednesday

Worship

March 1st

12pm & 7pm

Phone: 781-233-1242

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“Well, I think we shouldn’t give short shrift to short shrift. It isn’t necessarily trying to get out of something. What if maybe when you have a kind of deadline, when you are at the end of a season, you might just want to give it up? Just let go? Might that be ‘Short Shrift?’”

Lent offers a new beginning, a time of trying something new. We might take on new things or let go of old things. Little things or big things. How about being intentional about trying to let go of old ideas, old behaviors, old resentments or pain? How about looking at ourselves and thinking of releasing the things that separate us from God and other people? One idea is to think of these spiritual hindrances (recovery folks call them “character defects,” and I have a friend who calls them “old coping mechanisms”—but the Church uses the word “sins”), and to try to practice the opposite. For instance, the opposite of judgment is compassion. So if, for example, I tend to be judgmental of others, instead of judging, I might try to recognize that I may not have all the facts, or I may try to be compassionate.

So this Lent, I invite you to let go quickly—give a short shrift—to the things that make you feel less whole and less joyful. I invite you to a holy Lent. Don’t give short shrift to this. We have the time and space for a holy period. It isn’t as if we are “making shrift” before an execution. But we don’t have forever, either. Maybe we could imagine for a moment some urgency, and say, as we do in our Ash Wednesday worship, “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

~ Mary Scott Wagner

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### From the Senior Warden...

As we enter March the transition to spring begins, and we start to put the thoughts of winter behind us. As we all know, St. John’s is also in a time of transition as we seek to discern our role in Saugus, and decide which path to take in choosing our next rector.

Fr. Kevin’s departure was both a happy and sad event – sad for the St. John’s family to lose a loved rector; happy, knowing that the Olds family will be closer to loved ones, and have greater security. We are more than fortunate, however, to have Rev. Scottie as our interim rector. She is more than familiar with the St. John’s family, and brings to us a lot of experience working with the diocese. She will be a wonderful guide in helping us to navigate our transition.

During the coming months, we, as St. John’s, must all think about, and be willing to express how we see ourselves as a valued member of the Saugus community - what is it about St. John’s that would make people want to come visit us? What is about St. John’s that contributes to the needs, both spiritual and otherwise, of the community? In short, what is our mission? These are difficult questions that the Vestry alone cannot answer. We need everyone to pray for wisdom and to contribute their thoughts, and yes, perhaps some effort.

The vestry plans on having a day long retreat to help us think through these questions. We will also contemplate our options and come to a decision as to how we should proceed in our transition to a new rector. Please keep us in your prayers.

Thank you for putting your trust in me to lead the Vestry, and St. John’s, through this time of transition. I know we have a lot ahead of us, but working collectively, and through prayer and with faith, we will work to see a lasting future for St. John’s in Saugus.

~ T.J. Martin

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A Few St. Patrick's Day Facts

- * St. Patrick was associated with the color blue, not green.
- * He was not born in Ireland, but 'Roman Britain'. While scholars are not in agreement about the exact location, it has narrowed to either Wales or Scotland.
- * Ireland's climate was too cold, and therefore inhospitable to reptiles—there were no snakes for Patrick to 'drive out'.
- * March 17th is St. Patrick's date of death, not birth.
- * About corned beef: Irish immigrants replaced their traditional 'Irish bacon' dish with affordable beef brisket, which they brined. Accompanied with cabbage and potatoes, the meal became a staple for the working class. On St. Patrick's Day alone, over 26 billion lbs. of beef and 2 billion pounds of cabbage are cooked and consumed in the U.S.
- * Nearly 35 million Americans claim Irish ancestry.

(Info courtesy of the USDA, Irish Central, and Catholic online)

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### Every Child Deserves to Smile



On February 12<sup>th</sup> we prepared and delivered 15 meals to the families at the motel. Many thanks to Cheryl Miller who helped prepare the meals.

**The next quarterly meeting will be March 2, 2017** at 9:30 in the Hurl Room. All are welcome as we explore how the ministry is changing.

~ Jeanne Seaboyer

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LAST CALL FOR LOBSTER ROLLS

Please get your orders in by noon this coming Wednesday.

Rolls are \$12 each ~ Also includes one bag of chips, and a brownie.



Bookkeeper Wanted

Our part-time bookkeeping position is still open. We are in need of someone one afternoon per week to enter deposits, bills, and print checks.

Knowledge of Quickbooks is helpful, but training will be provided. Please contact Paul Felci or the parish office if you are interested. Thanks!

Looking ahead...

We are planning for another plant sale in May. Details coming soon!

And, it's never too early to mention our annual yard sale in June—please keep it in mind if you wish to donate items.

As always, thank you!!

Word Search

P A T R I C K X V S Z S O A J T Z K
 D F Z X L Q L J G B C N W G E T W G
 R O F C L K Y E J V O L C T H I A C
 C B R O G U E U W I B V O G H Z V B
 Y B L A R N E Y T I J O A V U G K D
 F O U K C F W A A R C L E F E C S F
 J N U V Z C I L Y E E E O E I R S E
 Q E G F I C L K D L M O Q R X I H G
 H Z A T N X H L L A Z E E U R P A F
 R Y L U T N A I C N R M R D I Q M E
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 C Y U G R L O J L R J O K X O T D R
 D F L K P T S P R O U T N V M D H D
 X X H Z J Z G L Z U G M Q S R O M X
 L H B C D A F F O D I L U B M P H E

Annunciation ~ Blarney ~ Brogue ~ Celtic ~ Clover ~ Daffodil ~ Emerald
 Equinox ~ Gaelic ~ Harp ~ Ireland ~ Lent ~ Limerick ~ Patrick ~ Rebirth
 Shamrock ~ Shillelagh ~ Sprout ~ Vernal

Clergy & Officers: The Rev. Mary Scott Wagner, Priest ~ T. J. Martin, Sr. Warden ~ Fritz
 White, Jr. Warden ~ Phil Littlehale, Treasurer ~ Janet Lancaster, Asst. Treasurer ~ Sandy
 Mears, Clerk of the Vestry

Vestry: Nancy Belyea (2019) ~ Alison Coppola (2018) ~ Armand Couture (2018) ~ Paul
 Felci (2020) ~ Cheryl Miller (2019) ~ Sandy St. Clair (2019) ~ Jeanne Seaboyer (2020) ~
 Jenna Sharwood (2020) ~ Nick White (2018)