



Repentance is choosing oneself.

■ Kierkegaard

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St. Columba's Newsletter

OPEN IN SPIRIT ■ DEEP IN FAITH
RICH IN WORSHIP ■ ACTIVE IN SERVICE

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Captain Kirk, I presume?

We are receiving good feedback on the penitential rite that introduces three of our Sunday Eucharists during Lent. Bell chimes call us to worship and the organ leads us in singing two verses of the hymn *Detroit*. "Forgive our sins as we forgive, you taught us all to pray. But you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say." We recite the confession of sin and then, as the altar party approaches the platform, sing the remaining two verses: "In blazing light your cross reveals the truth we dimly knew, how small the debts men owe to us, how great our debt to you." It's a powerful beginning.

What has this to do with Captain Kirk, you mumble to no one in particular?

With apologies to non-trekkies and those who prefer the term "trekker," I'm thinking of the episode where the transporter has malfunctioned (again) and the intrepid captain of the starship Enterprise is divided into two bodies—the good Kirk and the shadow Kirk. The shadow Kirk has grown a goatee but otherwise looks pretty much like the good Kirk.

Beyond confusing the crew, the problem with having a captain with a split personality is that he can't make decisions. It turns out that the good Kirk isn't much good without his shadow side (apologies to Jung) and so the two Kirks are placed back on the transporter, their atoms shuffled around until only one Kirk remains in all of his complex glory. Kirk is returned to himself but with a new

understanding of and compassion for his whole being.

I find that when I pray I have to begin with a check-in to determine if the real Janet is making an appearance. Have I settled into my prayer space prepared to show God all of me or have I left my less admirable parts in another space?

Kierkegaard wrote: Repentance is choosing oneself.

He added some clarifying thoughts to this bold statement. To choose oneself is not to prefer oneself or simply accept oneself with some passive spirit of resignation. No, to choose oneself is to stand before God admitting to all that we are, withholding nothing, confessing the demons as well as the light. To choose oneself is to be naked and unafraid.

Lent continues and we continue the work of showing our true selves to God and to each other. The very good news is that God is also showing us God's true self. In Jesus we see God's great love for humanity and the divine preference for the poor in spirit and material goods. On Sundays and other times we don't show up to impress God or each other. We show up to be loved into the new creation that Easter proclaims.

I have a Mr. Spock bobblehead doll at home, and when the slightest movement disturbs it a recording lets me know that I'm "essentially irrational." Guilty. Like you, I'm also essentially good. Let's confess it all!

■ Janet

Worship Services

Sundays

8 am Eucharist

With homily and without music.

9 am Eucharist

In the church nave, with sermon, choirs, hymns and the healing rite. Child care is available for children 4 and under, 8:45 am to 12:30 pm.

9:15 and 11:15 am Eucharist for families with preschool children

In the Great Hall, with story-style telling of the gospel and songs children can sing.

10:15 am Education Hour

Sunday School, youth programs, forum, Bible study and refreshments. (Coffee follows all morning services.)

11:15 am Eucharist

In the church nave, with sermon, choirs, hymns and the healing rite.

5 pm Eucharist

A smaller service in the church nave with sermon, hymns and the healing rite.

Weekdays (in the chapel)

Morning Prayer

8:45 am Monday–Friday

Eucharist

7 am Monday through Thursday, with homilies by parishioners and clergy. Followed by breakfast on Wednesday.
10 am Thursday, with the healing rite.

Holy Baptism

For information on baptismal preparation and registration, contact the Rev. Rose Duncan (202-363-4119, ext. 212; rduncan@columba.org;). Forms are due six weeks prior to baptism. Upcoming date: April 8, 5 pm (church nave). Classes: March 20 and 27.

Here for a limited engagement!

Don't miss your chance to see the Son of God!

Get your palms now!

I'm not above shameless gimmicks to draw your attention to and participation in the observance of Holy Week and Easter. Each year our challenge is to hear the Passion/Easter narrative in new ways—to go deeper into our faith by mining our worship for every last nugget of grace and power. Here is what you can expect this year:

Palm Sunday (April 1) ■ Which procession are you in? Biblical scholarship has long known that there were two processions on the day we call Palm Sunday. Pilate and his soldiers, escorted by the rich and powerful, arrived in Jerusalem from the west in order to display Roman might during the Passover festival. Jesus, riding on a donkey and escorted by the poor of Judea and Galilee, entered from the east. Which crowd are you in? New this year will be our emphasis on the whole narrative in Mark's gospel and a slightly different division of parts for our readers. Who really cried CRUCIFY HIM? Pick up your palms and enter our Jerusalem.

Maundy Thursday (April 5), Good Friday (April 6) and the Great Vigil of Easter (April 7), all at 7 pm in the church nave ■ On Thursday evening we'll have a community supper from 5:30 to 6:30 and on Saturday we conclude the Great Vigil with a reception in the Common. There is something comforting in beginning and ending these three holy days with food and drink. We are the companions of Jesus, which is to say, we share the same bread. During these services the gospel narrative is our bread and our guidebook for living. What is more important than remembering who we are and to whom we belong? Come to church on this Thursday, Friday and Saturday and have your sacred memory restored through ritual, drama, touch and smell.

Because we love our children we also have age-appropriate services on Thursday and Friday. Check out the full schedule online or on the special card sent to all members and friends.

■ Janet

Transitions

Welcome those who have completed newcomer cards:

Elaine Arndt, Potomac; San Luisa Barnes-Mosaid, D.C.; Greg and Jeanne Christ, D.C.; Ana Maria Espinoza, Bethesda; Olivia Franken, D.C.; Rachel Skip, Oliver and Jacob Holmes, D.C.; Jessica Holzer and Nichols Hans; and Lynn Turner, Alexandria.

Welcome new members: Beatrice Laps Hamman, D.C.; Ethan McIntosh, Bethesda; Isabel and Sam Milborrow, D.C.; and Rhonda, John, Anna and Julia Schmidteen, D.C.

Rejoice with the newly married: Sarah Mengers and Jeff Skinner, Feb. 17.

Pray for those who have died:

Phil Dickson, husband of Suzzi Dickson, Feb. 13; Eric Fisher, uncle of Rosemary Ryan, Feb. 13; Mary K. Cooney, mother of Catherine Cooney, Feb. 23.

We encourage any parishioners who are ill, injured or hospitalized, or who have a joyous event to send an e-mail to pastoral@columba.org if they would like their names listed for prayer in this newsletter intercession list.

The path will be revealed



WAYNE C. FOWLER

The following is excerpted from a talk given by Bishop Mariann Budde during her March 7 visit to St. C's, in which she spoke about the work of a bishop, her own work in the Diocese of Washington, the core values of the Episcopal Church and the task of re-committing ourselves to Christ, ourselves and others. Audio of the hour-long conversation can be found on the Recent Forums page (under Education and Formation) on Columba.org.

We're here to learn what it means to be Christians—active, practicing Christians in the world, in the 21st century—and to learn how to take the core gifts of the Episcopal Church and strengthen them, and strengthen the capacity of our congregations so that we can live more fully into the mission and ministry that God has given us.

Often what happens in an Episcopal church and to people who have a real, fervent faith and a really fervent, exciting relationship with God and begin to manifest that in their congregation, one of the first things that people around them say is, "Oh! You ought to be a priest." As if it would be just the most

unheard of thing in the world for a lay person to be comfortable praying or offering grace.

Often when people are exploring vocation in Christian community and they have a passionate faith, our collective tendency is to raise them up as clergy. And there's nothing wrong with that. That's how I was raised up. That's how, I would guess, many of the priests in this room were raised up. But the idea that we could be equally fervent Christians and serving God in other ways and that we could develop lives as Christians that were as committed and as grounded in what it means to be a baptized Christian . . . we could explore that more deeply.

For example, if you go to the diocesan website and you look at the ordination process or the ministry page, there's a page about lay ministries in the church. And you know what it talks about? It talks about all of the institutional things you can do as a lay person in the church. You can be a lector. You can be a chalice bearer. You can be a member of whatever . . . And it is the most narrow, prescribed, church-defined view of lay ministry you would ever want to read. And

it's pathetic, because it says nothing about what it means to be a person of faith living our lives in the vocations and passions that God has given us. So that's what I'd like to explore more deeply.

[One] thing I noticed when I was a young person trying to find my way in the world: Other denominations had more vocational opportunities for young people that didn't include ordination, and we [in the Episcopal Church] just don't. I mean, it's very rare. You [at St. Columba's] have a couple of professional lay people on your staff, I know. We finally did at [my former parish] St. John's.

We realized that sometimes lay leadership on staff is actually more helpful than an ordained person for a given particular passion. And so, just again, to open up the possibilities that significant ministry doesn't always need to be linked to ordination, both within and outside the church. Not everyone has to have a collar to represent the Episcopal Church.

I'd love for all of us to be a little bit clearer about where our passions are and where God has spoken to us and what we feel we are called to do and to be in this world, and to practice living the Christian life together: a life of prayer and of service and joy, hospitality, all the things that Jesus embodies and lives inside us. And then, I think the rest will—it won't take care of itself, but the path will be revealed to us.

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Just one SPARK can light a fire

For some time now, an idea has been brewing at St. Columba's. There has been talk in the halls, in committee meetings, in groups big and small. We as a church community are ready for the challenge to be active in service in a whole new way. It's an initiative that we are calling "Light the Fire!" We aren't sure where the challenge will lead us—but we know with some certainty that as we seek to be more active in service, we will learn much about being open in spirit, deep in faith and rich in worship.

This year we are taking the first step on this journey. For a full year, we are forming into small groups for the express purpose of engaging in a service commitment and sharing and reflecting on that experience with one another.

As the theme of "Light the Fire!" was developed, the idea emerged of forming small groups for fellowship and shared opportunities for service. From that came the image of each small group as a spark growing together into a larger flame of service in our community. The acronym SPARK (service, prayer, advocacy, relationships and koinonia, or community) draws on this original concept of the small flame.

Here's how it works: Members of a SPARK group will gather in community, spend time together in prayer and service or advocacy and end up with wonderful relationships. Other than that, there are almost no rules about how a SPARK group functions. It's up to the group. You can meet as often or not often as you decide. You can gather for meals or walks or drinks. You can include only adults or expand to families. You can decide on a regular service opportunity or a one-shot experience sometime during the year. No matter what kind of service we do or how groups are structured, we will deepen our ties to

one another and will gain a collective understanding of the transformative experience of serving others.

In short, there's no excuse for not being part of the fun, because everyone has time for at least one service event during the year. At the end of 2012 we will see where we are.

We have the hope—the expectation, really—that all in our community will be renewed and refreshed in our commitment and our enthusiasm to be active in service in the world around us.

A number of people have already offered to be SPARK leaders, but there's plenty of room for more. Some of the Lenten Book Group leaders will, after Lent, become SPARK group leaders. Some SPARK leaders have an idea of the sort of service opportunities they would like to explore. Other leaders have talked about leaving it up to group members to discern where they feel called to serve. That's why you see TBD peppered among the listings of SPARK groups at right.

If you want to join one of these groups, please contact the individual leaders directly. We have also begun compiling a list of volunteer opportunities in case you need help getting started; this will soon be posted on the SPARK page under "Service and Outreach" on Columba.org. For other information or questions, please contact lightthefire@columba.org.

There is so much need around us, in our neighborhood, in our city and in our world. If you're nervous about how you can possibly make a difference, remember that 90 percent of the job of ministering to others is just showing up. The rest will follow—or, as Bishop Mariann remarked during her recent visit, "the path will be revealed to us."

■ Schroeder Stribling
and Elizabeth Taylor
lightthefire@columba.org

Participate in "Light the Fire!"

by joining a SPARK group, or a small group of parishioners who will gather in the coming weeks and months for the simple purpose of collective service and intentional reflection on the meaning of that experience.

The following SPARK groups are already forming:

Tom Bauder (tbauder@juno.com) ■ Focus: TBD

Inga Blust (iblust@usa.net) ■ Focus: Tutoring

Mary Beth Campbell (mascmbc@earthlink.net) ■ Focus: TBD

Phil Corcoran (pecorcoran@gmail.com) ■ For fathers (may include children in service work) ■ Focus: TBD

Nick Roosevelt (20s-30s@columba.org) ■ For those in their 20s and 30s ■ Focus: TBD

Schroeder Stribling (sstribling@nstreetvillage.org) ■ Focus: TBD

Elizabeth Taylor (etaylor4312@gmail.com) ■ Focus: TBD

Peggy Treadwell (peggymcdt@gmail.com) ■ Focus: Jubilee Jobs

Elizabeth Vaden (vadenfamily@verizon.net) ■ Focus: South Africa

John Wickham (johndwickham@gmail.com) ■ Focus: Environment

Ron Wisor and Keri Piester (ron.wisor@hoganlovells.com) ■ Focus: Education

To join one of these groups, contact the individual leaders.

To start your own SPARK group, send details and contact information to lightthefire@columba.org.

For information or questions, e-mail lightthefire@columba.org.

Building homes, community and relationships

Spring is a time of rebirth and in a few short weeks we will celebrate the resurrection of Christ. As Christians, we know that we live into our Baptismal Covenant and our relationship with God when we serve others. On the last two Saturdays in April, you have a chance to do just that by volunteering with Rebuilding Together, D.C. (RTDC). This organization started at St. Columba's in 1983. Since then it has grown into a national entity, with affiliates in almost every county in the country.

It is typical of St. Columba's to take on a big project, appearing in the morning with a large group of people and working miracles. With big hearts, some skill, a lot of luck and an even larger supply of energy, we have transformed houses that otherwise seemed ready to be torn down. Homes with little or no plumbing, little or no electricity, leaky roofs and massive water damage are given new life. And homeowners' lives are made new. We are not just rebuilding homes for those less fortunate. We are also building a foundation for a more secure life for those we serve.

Financial donations by individuals, local corporations and churches—including St. C's—allow us to pay for materials and hire roofers, electricians and plumbers. We do almost everything else ourselves. We have replaced kitchens, bathrooms, ceilings, interior walls and porches. We have built ramps so housebound people can leave their homes with comparable ease. We have repaired porches and doors.

Janice Stango, Executive Director of RTDC and a parishioner at St. C's, tells about the transformation that took place last year in the home of a disabled American veteran who had fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. RTDC worked to make his kitchen,

bathroom, stairs and front entrance-way accessible, and volunteers built a deck on the back of his house with a Jacuzzi so that he could receive physical therapy at home. Thanks to their efforts, he has been able to remain in his home. Says Janice, "Many people think God will provide and this is the way that He really does. The volunteers truly have that feeling that they have changed someone's life forever."

But just as important as the physical changes to the houses are the emotional and spiritual transformations that occur within the volunteers and the homeowners themselves.

Long-time participant Fletcher Jones says, "When my wife Heather and I came to St. Columba's in 1995, she was looking for spirituality and I was looking to just fit in. I immediately gravitated to Rebuilding Together. It seemed a good fit for my DIY skills without being so overtly religious as to betray my lack of spiritual upbringing. My weekends with Rebuilding Together led to Habitat for Humanity during graduate school and, more recently, to St. Columba's mission trips in North Dakota and West Virginia. While I still love getting my hands dirty, the greatest gift I've received is an appreciation for the human side of the work. I've met some amazing homeowners, and I've discovered a passion for working with the youth of the church—and along with them, discovering my own spirituality."

Participant Margaret Drake notes that: "One of the ways I have chosen to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ and to respect the dignity of every human being is to work with Rebuilding Together each year. I find that I am transformed in this process. Imagine inviting total strangers into your home and trusting them to change it! That trust and willingness

to invite strangers in can't help but change those of us who paint, nail, saw and landscape. During and after the work experience, I find that I am more open with myself, with others and with God. So while I show up ready to help someone, I leave feeling far more connected to God's world, and I have the sense that I may have ended up with the better part of the deal—building homes, community and my relationship with God."

This year, the team from St. C's will be working to make a house safer, warmer and more liveable for a 97-year-old homeowner and his family (a daughter, son-in-law and great-granddaughter). The owner is a disabled veteran who served during World War II, transporting equipment in Africa, Italy and Germany. He has lived in this house for more 30 years and now needs a walker to get around. He has not been able to work on his house for quite some time, nor does he have the money to make the necessary repairs.

Some parishioners have extraordinary fix-it skills, others can paint like pros and even more barely know a hammer from a screwdriver. No matter where you fall on this spectrum, you are invited to join the efforts of this important ministry. Please consider helping us on April 21 and 28. Your life will be changed as you learn how your hands can help rebuild this broken city and dramatically improve the lives of those in need. Sign up later this month in the Common or by e-mailing rebuildingtogether@columba.org. We hope to see you for another amazing April resurrection.

■ The Rebuilding Together Team
rebuildingtogether@columba.org



Gladly the cross I bear

"Faith is not about belief in something irrational or about a blind connection to something unreal. It's about a gathering, an accumulation of events and experiences of a different order." My "soul has a longing to find its shape in the world."

■ Nora Gallagher,
Things Seen and Unseen, page 78

"If anyone would come after me, let her deny herself and take up her cross and follow me."

■ Mark 8:34,
The New Oxford Bible,
Revised Standard Version

Before I had my first positive experience of the cross, I had always seen it as a burden to carry.

First a little background. Last March, my wife Barbara was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a bone cancer. In December, and again this February, she had aggressive attacks of the cancer. She is unable to drive and is dependent on me to take her to doctors' appointments, treatments, to visit friends, to shop. I am helping her to live her life as comfortably as possible.

In early March we had tickets to attend the Studio Theatre. I dropped Barbara off at the theater entrance and went to park the car at a garage farther down P Street. But after the

play, when I suggested that I get the car, she said, "No, I am walking." And so we walked, along with two friends who were to ride home with us. Halfway to the parking lot, Barbara had to stop and rest. She had been walking bent over in severe pain. I suggested she sit on a nearby bench while I brought the car. Once again she said, "No, I am walking." That's when it dawned on me that my role at this time in our lives together is simply to suggest and support.

The moment felt like a flash of grace. This time around is Barbara's life—her choices. God has given me the gift to carry the cross of her life. It is not a burden. This cross is all about love.

I think about Jesus dying on the cross, which, in the Scripture, was not a burden for him. I read of his love for all humankind. I have been chosen by God to carry Barbara as long as she needs me.

I remember two word pictures: The Native American saying, "He not heavy, he my brother." And the hymn from the Southern Baptist hymnal "Gladly the Cross I bear."

What Jesus asks of each of us is to give the gift of love, God's love, given to all. No burden intended, none required.

■ Anne Jarman
anne.jarman@verizon.net

Upcoming Sunday Forums

**10:15 to 11:05 am
in the Great Hall**

March 18

The United States and International Development

Sean Carroll, Chief Operating Officer of the U.S. Agency for International Development, will join us to talk about the work the United States is doing in the developing world to intervene in disasters, build capacity and ease the suffering in the poorest places on earth.

March 25

Religion and the 2012 Presidential Race

Join us as Ray Suarez moderates an important discussion. Conversation partners are William Galston, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution whose scholarly specialty is the design of a new social contract, and Michael Gerson, former George W. Bush speechwriter and currently a columnist for *The Washington Post*.

April 1

No forum: Palm Sunday

April 8

No forum: Easter Day

April 15

No forum: Rite 13 Sunday

Join Rite 13 honorees and their families in the Common as we celebrate this important time of transition.



Come to Camp EDOW

Aug. 5–10, Leonardtown, Md.

This diocesan camp offers a week of summer fun for young people entering 4th through 8th grades. Campers will enjoy swimming, canoeing, playing outdoor games, doing drama, music, arts and crafts and learning about faith. The camp

costs \$500 and welcomes people of all faith traditions. Partial financial assistance is available (application online). The theme for the week is EpiscOlympics. For information, visit www.edow.org/camp or contact Pattie Ames (pames@columba.org; 202-363-4119, ext. 222).

Stewardship at St. Columba's

The rector and vestry wish to express their heartfelt gratitude to all who have pledged their financial support of the church in 2012.

Anonymous (17)

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John & Sarah Herren	Holly Joyner	Charles & Vi Lund	Tom & Pam Nelson
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Janie Hillis	Leo & Ellen Kennedy	John & Sara Machir	Angela Nugent
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Bob Hohl & Susan Absher	Brian & Jill Kettler	David & Anne Marsh	Matthew Olsen & Fern Shepard
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Parish Life

Columba Carnivale

When it comes to Carnivale, New Orleans has nothing on St. Columba's. While the parties in the Big Easy might be a bit wilder, they can't compete with the connections made or the peals of laughter heard during St. C's parties.

On the weekends of Feb. 17-19 and Feb. 24-25, St. Columba's parishioners hosted 14 parties allowing nearly 300 parishioners to reconnect, meet new or not-so-new parishioners and raise funds for St. Columba's programs.

The parties took on a variety of formats (cocktail, sit-down dinner, buffet) and themes (Mardi Gras, sustainable eating, God is . . . Alpha and Omega—appetizers and desserts—and even a pre-Oscar red carpet party). Fun was had by all:

"The company was perfect. We gathered around the fire to swap stories. Hilarity and good conversation ensued."

"We enjoyed being with close friends and new acquaintances and managed to raise a little money for St. Columba's at the same time."

"We had the wonderful opportunity to meet Great Hall parishioners whom we would normally not have the occasion to meet."

"I enjoyed talking with several people whom I had known very casually from other activities in the parish, and the party afforded me the opportunity to know them on a more personal level and to discover an outreach opportunity that I hope to try in the near future."

In addition to making and strengthening connections, parishioners raised \$17,676 for programs at St. C's. This includes \$51 donated by several enterprising young people at the Raisner party who baked

sweets and sold them to partygoers (see photo below).



LISA RAISNER

Thank you to all who attended the Carnivale parties or who have given time or money in support of this initiative. Thanks to party hosts Inga Blust; Debbie DuSault; Farleigh Earhart; Alice and John Goodman; Linda and Bob Haslach; Amy Howe and Polly Snyder; Ryan and Kristin McNavage; Sondra Mills, Jeanne McCann and John Wickham; Barry Parsons and John Clisham; Lisa and Bill Raisner; Elizabeth and Kirk Rankin and Thorne Rankin; Elizabeth Taylor and David DeBruin; Jennifer and Woody Turner; and Serena Wille and John Sides. Finally a big thank you to coordinator Margaret Drake.

Did you miss Carnivale this year? You can still make a donation. Just mail or place a check in the plate and write "Carnivale" in the memo line. Also keep watch for the next opportunity to participate in a St. C's event. (That's right, the "New to You" yard, bake, book and plant sale is coming soon. See page 11 for early details.)

Safety first

This is a gentle reminder that we need your help keeping children safe while they are at church. We can get lulled into a false sense of security

because St. C's is a loving and caring place, but we must be aware that we are a large church with many doors and many people. We ask your help in keeping an eye on your children and not letting them run in the building or wander unattended on church grounds. All children must be with an adult while they are in the building or on the playground.

Special flowers and music donations

Parishioners are invited to donate toward special flowers and music. Pick up a card in the Common on Sun., March 18 and 25, download a PDF from our website or pay online by logging in to the member portal at Columba.org. Donations and related thanksgivings or memorials are due Sun., March 25, for listing in the Easter bulletins. To donate one of the Paschal candles that will be blessed at the Easter Vigil and used throughout the year at baptisms and funerals in the church nave and the Great Hall, please contact Paul Barkett (202-363-4119, ext. 211; pbarkett@columba.org).

20s/30s group

We are excited to be reinvigorating this ministry by joining the "Light the Fire!" initiative currently underway in the parish (see page 4). Our seminarian Nicholas Roosevelt and parishioners Lisa Fadden and Dale Nelson are the leaders of this SPARK group. Join us as we become more open to the work God is already doing among us, in us and through us. For information or to get involved, please send an e-mail to 20s-30s@columba.org.

Calendar

"New to You" needs you!

We are looking for volunteers to help with the "New to You" yard, bake, book and plant sale on May 17-19. We also need donations of new or gently used clothes, toys, tools, housewares, sporting goods, furniture, collectibles, books and other items including higher quality designer clothing, jewelry and goods of a slightly greater value. Please note, we cannot accept electronics (except working lamps), car seats (boosters are okay) or drop-down cribs. Stop by our table in the Common on Sun., March 18 and 25 or visit Columba.org for full details or to sign up to help.

Nominations due Fri., March 30

We are currently seeking nominations for St. Columba's 2012 Senior Celebrations honoree, who must be 60 or older and have served this parish or the Washington community on behalf of St. C's. Please submit nominations, including a description of their service to the community, to olderadults@columba.org by Fri., March 30.

Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter: April 1-8

Maundy Thursday Community Supper in the Great Hall

Thurs., April 5, 5:30 to 6:45 pm
Suggested donations: \$12/adult or youth (over age 12); \$8/senior; \$6/child (ages 4 to 12); free for children 3 and under

Children's Holy Week Services

Thurs., April 5, 4:30 pm
Children's Walk Through Holy Week
Fri., April 6, 10:30 am
Children's Stations of the Cross

Parish office closings

We close at noon on Good Friday (April 6) and are closed Mon., April 9.

Treasures of the Library Book Group Tues., April 10, 2 pm

Join us on the second Tuesday of the month in the Craig Eder Library for the Treasures of the Library book group, which meets for book discussions and sharing of library gems. Questions? Send an e-mail to bookgroup@columba.org.

Spring Cleanup Day

Sat., April 14, 8:45 am to noon

Join the Environment Committee for a delightful morning picking up trash and caring for God's creation in Rock Creek Park. No special skills are needed, just some clothes you don't mind getting muddy. We will meet at the intersection of Nevada Avenue and 36th Street, NW. (Please park on nearby streets.) For details or to sign up, e-mail environmentleader@columba.org.

Spring Wildflower Nature Walks

Sun., April 15 and 29

With acclaimed naturalist and St. C's parishioner Brent Blackwelder. Meet in the Common at 12:30 pm to car-pool, or at 1 pm at Carderock Park, off the C&O Canal, north of Glen Echo near Cabin John. If driving, park in the farthest parking lot on the right end as one faces the river. For more information, contact environmentleader@columba.org.

Potting Parties, Sun., April 15 and 29 and May 13, 2-5 pm

Come help us prepare seedlings for the "New to You" yard, book, bake and plant sale in mid May. No green thumb or special skills needed. We will meet rain or shine at the greenhouse behind 4354 Warren St. NW. An RSVP is helpful but not required; contact Susan Beale (202-363-0976).

For details on these and other events, visit Columba.org.

Vestry notes

At its meeting on Feb. 28, the vestry:

- Swore in newly elected members Courtney Hundley and John Wickham.
- Discussed the success of the second annual Carnivale parties, hosted by parishioners as social and fundraising events.
- Authorized the parish COO to negotiate another contract for the pre-purchase of renewably sourced energy, as part of an interfaith consortium.
- Saw plans for a new permanent sign for the church.
- Received a study conducted by an architectural firm of the costs associated with renovating or replacing a variety of items that are aging or in disrepair. The study will help inform parish decisions about how to use the money to be raised in the upcoming capital campaign.
- Reviewed the latest figures from the 2012 stewardship campaign, and discussed assignments for following up with members who had not yet renewed pledges.
- Was updated on new initiatives being carried out by the Welcome Team for welcoming visitors and new members.
- Discussed plans for the upcoming vestry workday.



A WELCOMING
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
THAT SEEKS TO BE
OPEN IN SPIRIT,
DEEP IN FAITH,
RICH IN WORSHIP,
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The work of the saints . . . and of us all

In childhood I had gotten the impression that the teachings of Jesus that we heard this morning, were a reference point, but were not actually actions that anyone expected me (or anyone else) to deliver on in any kind of sustained way. To act on the teachings of Jesus that we heard this morning was the work of saints. It had to be, because the teachings of Jesus that we heard this morning are too impractical, too disruptive, to really be embraced and lived by the rest of us. But I grew out of such childish thinking. I grew to learn how important this passage is to my identity as a Christian, and as a guide for my actions and attitudes as a Christian.

The reading from today's Gospel in Luke 6:27-38 is a central piece of teaching by Jesus to his disciples. It is the second part of a major teaching that begins with the blessing of the Beatitudes. In Luke it is called the Sermon on the Plains, and its corollary in Matthew we know as the Sermon on the Mount. This major teaching is describing a new way to be and act—in the Kingdom of God or the Reign of God—very different from the norms of the Roman Empire or our own societal norms: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you," and later on in the passage, "Do good and lend

expecting nothing in return."
"Forgive." "Do not judge."

There is a sense of hospitality and an etiquette of love for the poor in this teaching; and love being not an expression of personal affection, but an act of care in the context of economic and social relations that Jesus is outlining. There is a graciousness and lavishness of mercy. For the Jews hearing this, Jesus was calling them back to their identity as God's people, to their covenantal relationship with one another.

I am sure this teaching was as difficult to comprehend and live when Jesus delivered it to his contemporary disciples as it is today for us as disciples. It goes against the grain of our culture, just as it did for those living under the norms of the Roman Empire, where there was a culture of shame and honor at play and status was very important. A culture of shame and honor and the accompanying desire for status are alive and well in our world too. We can fill in our own examples here.

But Jesus is calling us to our true identity as children of God in God's family, and the model for the behavior He is teaching us is none other than the generous and gracious behavior of God, as Father and Mother, who loves us unconditionally and whose love extends mercy and forgiveness to everyone. In the Reign of God, the Kingdom of God,

everyone is welcome and of equal status in God's eyes. We are to treat everyone with respect and to care especially for the poor and the vulnerable, because we are children of God, infinitely precious in God's eyes, valuable beyond measure.

But to live in our world with such counter ideals seems impossible to me without God's help and in the concrete expression of our community. And then service and prophetic advocacy are not options or "add-ons" in the community, but integral to our life as Christians. When I reflect on my identity as a child of God, then, the teachings of Jesus that we heard this morning do not become easier, but with God's help and in God's community they become possible.

■ Mary Beth Campbell
masmbc@earthlink.net

This homily was delivered at the March 5 Lenten weekday Eucharist. To read other Lenten homilies or see a schedule of homilists, visit the Worship and Music section of Columba.org and click on Weekdays in Lent.

