



The Cloister

*Parish Newsletter of
Saint Mary's Church, Castleton
February 2009*



From Fr. John:

The Night is Darkest Before the Dawn

"In a dark time, the eye begins to see" (Theodore Roethke, 1964).

The longest darkest night of the year (the winter solstice) was only a few weeks ago. Since then, we have celebrated Christmas, Epiphany, our Parish Annual Meeting, the installation of a new Parish Vestry, and the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the USA. Moreover, during January, there are all the meetings, decisions, and various budgeting processes which come at this time of the year. What a burst of energy! The year 2009 has begun with a big bang.

On behalf of the whole parish, may I express gratitude to all who made the services of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany so beautiful. Thanks also to those who served in the 2008 Parish Vestry, with particular note of those who are not continuing for one reason or another – Churchwarden Joe DiGiovanni, Karen Liedy, and of course, Greg Orlick. Thanks also to those who are serving in the 2009 Parish Vestry, taking particular note of the changes: Cathy Carlson in her new role of churchwarden; Claire Oyelaja as treasurer; and as Vestry members, Marcia Farrell, Rose Myslicki, and Arlene Weiss. The Vestry began its year of service with a prayer retreat at Mt Manresa. Let us all join in and hold the Vestry regularly in our prayers during their period of service ahead, and the very important decisions they will be making.

The Vestry is unanimous in a decision to share this beautiful church building of St Mary's with the Mar Thoma congregation. The Episcopal Church is in communion with this South India denomination, and Staten Island has had a long history of cordial relations with our brothers and sisters of Mar Thoma. Let's each go out of our way to express a warm welcome.

The inauguration of the President was replete with many impressive images. In the background, there was the brooding statue of Abraham Lincoln, and Lincoln's own bible figured in the Presidential Oath. I understand there were about 2 million people present. Looking at what has happened in so many nations throughout history, we can certainly all be grateful for the peaceful transfer of leadership from one president to the next. We continue to pray for those in authority, as we always do.

When one looks back over church history, it is striking how often the best moments of Christian history have come through the darkest moments. The darkest moments contained and even nurtured the seeds of the light of dawn. For example, the awful persecution during the first and second centuries formed and nurtured the Body of Christ in a number of ways – including

phenomenal growth, a cloud of amazing witnesses, the Christian scriptures, creeds, hymns, and the monastic movement.

Perhaps the seeds of the best moments of the history of nations also arise through or are nurtured through periods of darkness. Perhaps it was true of Britain, recalling for example the Spanish Armada in the 16th Century; and the Battle of Britain. It may be true also of the United States, if one thinks of Lincoln's Gettysburg address, or of the leadership of F. D. Roosevelt. Mandela's 27 years in jail in South Africa may be like that as well -- the seed of that country's freedom grew through darkness.

At the moment, the world faces extremely difficult and almost desperate challenges on a number of fronts – including the economy, energy, global warming, and the constant threat of grave acts of terrorism. The dark waters of this flood may nurture some amazing new era in human affairs. The darkness may be nurturing and spawning the seeds of a new dawn, or some very different new social or economic order.

So perhaps among the nations, the night is darkest just before the dawn. Perhaps the darkness actually precipitates and nurtures the seeds of the dawn.

If it is true among the nations, then it may be true at the personal level as well. Are you struggling through some very difficult and dark moment in your life? As hard as it may be to see, perhaps the seeds of light, of a new dream or vision, or the dawn of some great new chapter in your life is taking shape or growing in that dense, fertile soil.

Jesus said, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

With much love,

Fr John

Celebrate



February Birthdays

February 1 – Susan Smith; 5– Fr. John Walsted; 7 – John Carlson, Laura Cunningham; 19 – Shirley Smith; 28 – Jayne Lamarche

If your special day is not in our records, call the Parish Office at 718-442-1527, or send an e-mail to administrator@stmarysi.com so it can be added.

If you know of anyone who is feeling poorly, or is a shut-in and would like a pastoral visit, please contact Fr. John Stubbs at 347-844-2402 or the parish office, 718-442-1527.

From the Vestry

The Annual meeting was held on Sunday, January 11, 2009 following a united service at 9:00 a.m. In the absence of a rector, a motion was made to have Joe DiGiovanni act as the presiding officer of the meeting. Reports were given by; the Wardens, Fr. John (interim priest), the Treasurer and all Organizations and Committees of St. Mary's Church. If you would like to read a copy of the minutes from this meeting, please speak with Pat Cunningham, Clerk of the Vestry.

2009 VESTRY

WARDENS: Mr. Herbert Smith III and Mrs. Cathy Carlson

VESTRY: Mr. Robert Campbell, Mr. David Carnegie, Mr. Jay DiGiovanni, Mrs. Marcia Farrell, Mr. Ernesto Figueroa, Mrs. Rose Myslicki, Ms. Sally Rizzo, Ms. Arlene Weiss, and Mr. Joseph Zagami.

Officers: Mr. Patrick Cunningham (*Clerk*), Mrs. Claire Oyelaja (*Treasurer*)

Bishop's Visit

The Vestry has invited The Rt. Rev. Catherine S. Roskam, Bishop Suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, to worship with us on Wednesday, February 18, 2009, inasmuch as her schedule did not permit a Sunday visit for the next 18 months. The service begins at 9:30 a.m. in the church and will be followed by bible study and discussion. Light refreshments will be served. We look forward to welcoming the bishop to St. Mary's, and invite you all to attend.

The Search Committee

Cathy Carlson

Once the profile is completed and the position listed as open with Church Deployment Office (CDO), the next step is to prepare for interviewing. Prior to the interview process the search committee and vestry will again meet with The Rev, Canon Thomas R. Orso, Canon for Deployment, for guidance.

If you have any questions regarding the search process please speak with any member of the Search Committee. Committee members are: Cathy Carlson, chair person; Rupert Blanchette, Robert Bohnenberger, Sylvia Campbell, Patrick Cunningham, Sue Peterson, Sally Rizzo and Mary Logan Zagami.

Our Parish Family

The Rev. James Gusweller, beloved father of Ernie Figueroa passed away on January 18, 2009. Our Condolences go out to Ernie and Lindy, and to their family.

Fundraising Events

We are in need of a fundraising coordinator to help organize our fundraising events throughout the year. If you would like to help with any of the activities listed below, or would like to chair or co-chair the fundraising committee, please speak with Fr. John, or any member of the vestry.

If you have an idea for an event, please speak with the vestry.

Planned events for 2009:

Shrove Tuesday Dinner, February 24 at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish House (Marcia Farrell, organizer)

Restaurant Dinner, spring,

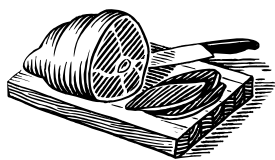
Summer Kick-off Event – Mid June

Fall Festival, Saturday, October (Robert Campbell, Organizer)

Fall Festival Dinner in the Parish House, Saturday, October

Turkey Shoot, November (Herb and Barbara Smith, Organizer)

Christmas Boutique, December (The Women of St. Mary's)



Shrove Tuesday Dinner *February 24 @ 7:00 p.m.*

Join us for an evening of fellowship

Spiral cut ham, potato cakes, salad and dessert

\$15 per person
children under 7 are free

Please include your name on the sign-up sheet located in the parish house.
You may also call the parish office at 718-442-1527 to reserve your dinner seat
