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Lent 2011



ARCTIC PASSION

by Anne S. Douglas

Quite late on a March evening in 1992 my telephone rang. It was my friend Rebecca from Arctic Bay requesting some items from Montreal. I was preparing to return to her Baffin Island community early the next morning. I said I'd happily oblige if I could get what she wanted at the airport. Her needs were a special kind of baby bottle, for which she gave me the specifics, and a crown of thorns. I said I'd see if I could get the bottle, but the crown of thorns wouldn't be possible.

I told the friend who drove me to the airport about my commissions. "Most Inuit don't know what a crown of thorns is" I explained. "They have to see something in order to understand it". As she dropped me off she said with a smile, "I wish I could help you!" I couldn't find the bottle and thus arrived in the High Arctic six hours later empty handed. It was extremely cold but the light was returning rapidly and would last for twelve hours by the time of the vernal equinox in two weeks. While Easter was over a month away, the community was already planning a Passion Play, hence the need for the crown of thorns. I was asked to join the choir that was to sing in Inuktitut and English. We began practising the mournful evangelical hymns that missionaries had taught the Inuit. I didn't know many of the words but I could read and pronounce the Inuktitut syllabics.

On Palm Sunday in All Saints' Anglican Church the congregation sang a jubilant "Ride on, ride on" in Inuktitut. Two days later, Tuesday in Holy Week, the post-mistress told me I had a package. It was flat and square and looked like a pizza box. And that's exactly what it was! My friend in Montreal had discovered some bramble bushes on a country weekend—in the box lay a crown of cruel thorns.

Not a chair was empty in the church for the Good Friday service. The half-dozen Catholics and the twenty or so members of the Full Gospel congregation came too, the usual custom on special occasions. A large wooden cross about eight feet long was lying against the chancel

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steps and a tin of nails and a hammer sat beside it. Jonas Allooloo, the priest in charge, gave a homily which I didn't fully understand but none the less grasped its gist. He asked us to come and hammer a nail in the cross if we believed Jesus had died for our sins. Some people leant forward and covered their faces with their hands. Others began to sob silently. Then one by one people went forward to the chancel, picked up a nail and hammered it in. I was drawn into the ritualistic momentum and was eventually moved to hammer in my own nail. The community was quiet for the rest of the day. The Passion Play was scheduled for the following night.

On Saturday evening at 7 we gathered in the school gym, which also served as the community hall. The choir sat near the front and started to sing while people came in. As Jonas read the Gospel account of Jesus' trial in Inuktitut the characters of the passion began to enter. First came Pilate who climbed up onto the gym stage and sat down on a chair in the centre. No one undertook the role of Jesus, but Kigitikarjuk Shappa was cast as Mary, his mother. She usually wore her hair braided up on her head, but this evening it flowed down over the shoulders of her blue gown. I was touched by the grace and dignity with which she undertook her role, particularly so as her husband was down in Iqaluit in the Baffin Correctional Centre. She entered from the side and climbing onto the stage, stood some distance to the right of Pilate.

Then came Joseph Okadluk as Judas, holding his bag of silver. He climbed the stage and put the small sack on a table to the left of Pilate. Next Naqitarvik marched down the centre aisle dressed in caribou clothing and carrying a powerful dog whip to represent the scourgers. He placed the whip beside the bag of silver. He was followed by an Inuk bearing the crown of thorns in its open box. This joined the other two items on the table. Once the reading had finished we all filed up onto the stage to view the two instruments of torture and the bag of betraying coins.

The Passion Play was not intended as entertainment. It was an immediate experience in which we all took part. I participated as a member of the Christian community. I experienced and understood the betrayal and shame as shared events. I, too, had betrayed because a member of my communal body had betrayed; the tragedy was our tragedy. But I also participated as a member of the Inuit community in which I had been living. I had discovered that people who live in community aren't afraid to be transparent to one another. Human limitations and frailties—one's own and those of others—are easier to accept when it's taken for granted that the community comes first.

The Inuit have always put the community first because group cooperation was essential for their survival. That practical necessity continues to hold moral value for Inuit. Events like the Passion Play, similar to classical Greek tragedies, provide opportunities for people to experience in community those human passions that harm the social fabric when they happen in every-day life. The authentic pain of shared shame and sorrow paves the way for the absolution of compassion and forgiveness, and the restoration of the community to wholeness. ∞

Anne S. Douglas has a doctorate in educational anthropology. She spent extensive periods of time in Arctic Bay between 1990 and 1994 learning how Inuit families accommodate school into their lives. She continues to visit the community as frequently as possible.

THE BOOK SHELF *by Duncan Shaddick*

Three books from my recent reading may interest Cathedral members. The first *Empire of Illusion—the End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* by Chris Hedges and published in 2009 I found excellent; a penetrating analysis of some of the many things that are wrong with the world today. Two of the chapter headings give a bit of the flavour of the book “The Illusion of Wisdom” & “The Illusion of America”. The author has a theology degree from Yale and a Pulitzer prize and his latest book, *The Death of the Liberal Class* has attracted favourable reviews.

The Spirit Level—Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better by Richard Wilkinson & Kate Pickett, two British academics has also made a bit of a splash. Their thesis is that the countries that are most equal in terms of income distribution (the Scandinavians plus Japan) are also the healthiest, happiest, best educated etc as shown by the multiple graphs illustrating the book. I think I may have read a dissenting piece in the *Globe & Mail* by Margaret Wentz but the authors convinced me.

And finally *The Little Book of Economics - How the Economy Works in the Real World* by Greg Ip is indeed a small book by a Canadian graduate of Carleton University in Ottawa but it packs a lot of good information. He is U.S. economics editor for the Economist magazine based in Washington, D.C. He writes well and explains complicated issues clearly.

All three are relatively short and well worth your reading time. ∞

QUE FAIT UN BEDEAU ?

by Janet King

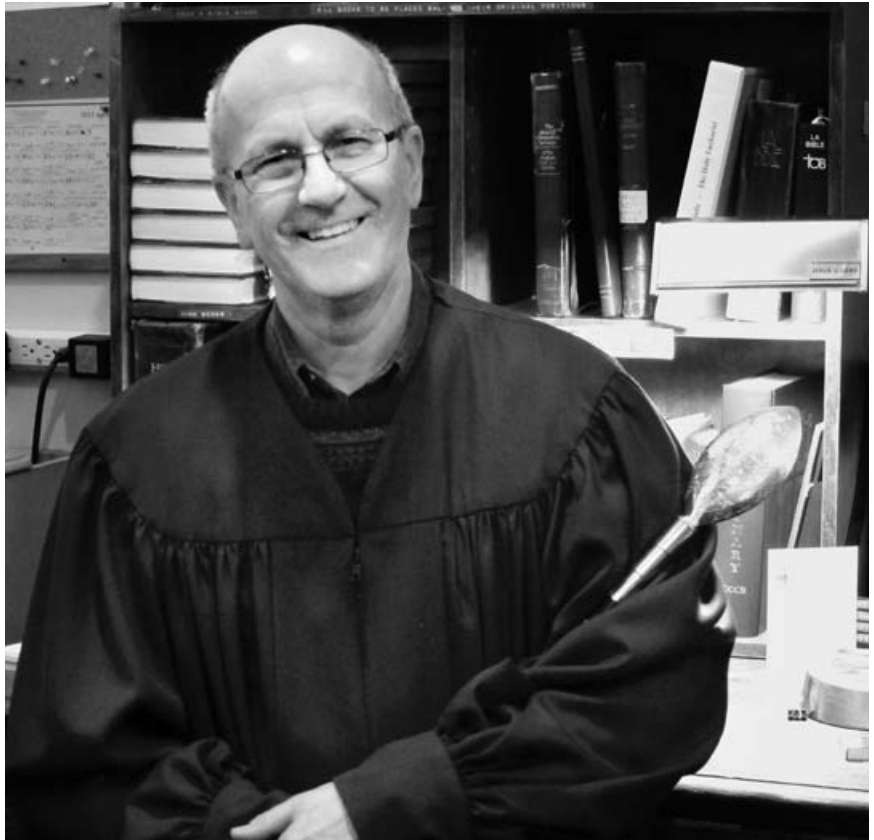
Il est un “employé laïque proposé au service matériel et au bon ordre dans une église”.

Nouveau Petit Larousse, p. 199

That is a very succinct description of what our vergers do: the more modern term is “multitasking”, and they are very good at it. Rob Wells is the senior verger, Scott Williamson and John Cavacece his assistants. Matthew Peris did valuable duty for some 18 months until he left recently for the west.

According to the Wikipedia, the modern-day verger is a combination of the verger who assists at services and the sexton, whose job of gravedigging is fortunately not one of our vergers’ responsibilities.

Our Cathedral’s doors are open from 7.30 till 5.45 Sunday to Friday, and from 10.30 till 6.30 on Saturdays. During that time the vergers are the people responsible for the outward and visible signs of the church as well as for the inward needs. They are responsible for security, which often involves balancing the needs of transient or homeless individuals in varying degrees of health against the needs of those who come in to pray, to worship, to absorb music, to taste the tradition and atmosphere of our building. In their job description is also control over parking and some snowclearing. Inside, they are responsible for cleanliness, which varies from washing the floors several times a day in this weather, to cleaning out the dust of ages from, for example, the drawers where the vestments are kept : recently, the entire vestry has been cleaned—walls, ceiling and cupboards—plus the sacristy, and after the Chapter House comes The Pit: ask one of them where and what that is. Also, in their ‘spare time’, they do security, from ensuring the safety of the Sunday School children and the cash of collections to interacting with visitors—but who has noticed that the cross on the altar of the Childrens’ Chapel has been missing for a while? They have to change the altar cloths and frontals, in appropriate colours for the various seasons of the church year, and keep track of the fair linens—which are washed carefully by a roster of volunteers—as they set up for three services daily. The public part of the job is to process, formally, carrying the virge—“in former



Rob Wells, Senior Verger

times the verger might have used his virge to keep back animals or an overenthusiastic crowd from the person he was escorting or even to discipline unruly choristers.” (Wikipedia again)

Rob took over the job of senior verger last Fall, after years in pharmaceutical research (sorry, Harvey, he was not quite an executive) and is doing a fantastic job. Rob grew up in the United Church, singing in the choir, but became an Anglican after he met Patrick and discovered the vast rich musical tradition of Anglican church music. Scott is the quiet shaggy young man who is always in control. John, missing his workshop in BC, has already eschewed the quick fix to repair chapel chairs by taking them apart and rebuilding from scratch our marvellous needlepoint kneelers, much better attached than before. The vergers occasionally get help from other parishioners, too: right now Armen Keuchgerian is undertaking the repair of a pair of Roman soldiers for the Easter garden—remaking joints and maybe an arm for the figures made in the 1930’s. ~

“It could be argued that a verger’s main pride during service lies in his or her inconspicuousness; vergers often play a prominent role ‘behind the scenes’, helping to plan the logistical details of a service and discreetly shepherding the clergy through it.” Nous sommes fiers de nos bedeaux.

A New Dean for Christ Church Cathedral

Photographs by Jonathan Sa'adah

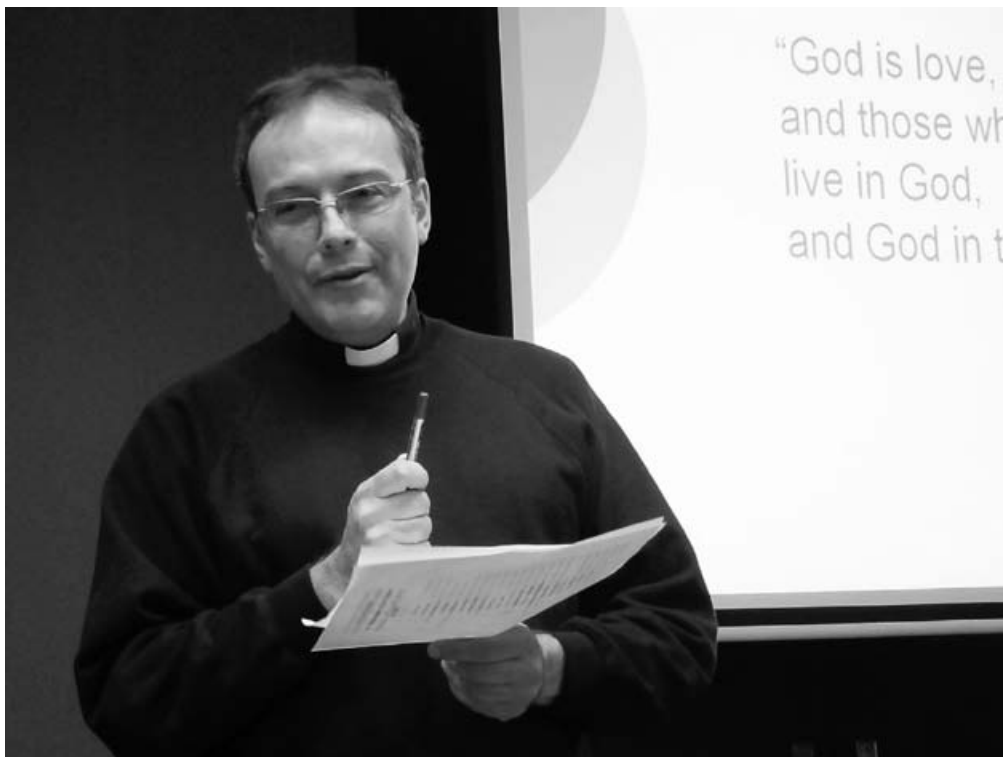


The newly-installed Dean makes his first remarks. Beside him are the Rev. Canon Alan Perry and Bishop Barry Clarke

The Very Rev'd J. Paul Kennington was installed as Rector of Christ Church Cathedral and Dean of Montreal on January 9, 2011.



At the rehearsal before his induction, Paul greets music director Patrick Wedd, our Trebles and Cathedral Singers, and the choir singers from around the diocese who joined us to make memorable music that day.



And jumping right into it: the Dean addressed his first General Vestry at the Annual Meeting on March 6, 2011.

HOLDING STEADFAST

by Krish Dasgupta

The 40 day period between Pancakes and Palm Leaves has always been a puzzle for me. For the first three hundred years of Christianity, Lent didn't exist. It was Cyril, the 1st Bishop of Jerusalem who formalized the present-day practice.



Painting of a monk with Christ, from the Monastery of Saint Apollo at Bawit, in Egypt's eastern desert. (The panel is in the Louvre.)

Lent is generally associated with some sort of fasting. Last year, I had the privilege of taking a Lenten retreat with the brothers of the SSJE in Cambridge, Massachusetts thanks to the Montreal Diocesan Theological College. On the first day of the retreat, Father Curtis Almquist explored the meaning of Fasting. The origin of the word "Fast" is from the German word "Faesten" which means "to hold fast to a decision or principle" He suggested that in Fasting less emphasis should be placed on abstinence and giving up stuff, and more on claiming something.

He also spoke of John Cassian, a fifth century monk who wrote about fasting under the new (Christian) law as being voluntary, not obligatory, and an "efficacious sign of detachment" from the world and an "attachment to God alone."

Inspired by these words, my Lenten reading became a book which drew from the wisdom of Cassian's teacher Evagrius, a fourth-century desert father: Kathleen

Norris' *A Marriage, Monks and A Writers Life*. Norris discusses Acedia, and explores the understanding of sin. She notes, "the early monks' profound understanding of the common temptations that people suffer lost ground to a concept of SIN as an individual commission of a bad act or the omission of a good one."

In Evagrius's time, the monks were concerned more about bad thoughts than acts. There were eight deadly thoughts: "Gluttony, Lust, Greed, Sadness, Anger, Vainglory, Pride and Acedia". The monks' understanding of temptation as thoughts that an individual may identify and resist before they turn into harmful actions was largely lost when Pope Gregory 'codified' the seven deadly sins. Acedia was simply understood as sloth and over the centuries, the word Acedia became obsolete, leading even the Oxford Dictionary to drop it for many years.

In Greek Acedia translates as "a lack of care" but it isn't being slothful. Even highly active people can suffer from Acedia. It is more a "profound weariness of the soul". For the early monks, Acedia, was the most dangerous of the capital sins. They called it the "noonday devil" responsible for spiritual torpor, and restlessness which prevented them from loving God.

Acedia is when we realise that something is good for us; however we cannot be bothered to care. A personal example would perhaps be avoiding the 15 minutes of silent meditation which I know is able to transform my day. Though God is important for me, I don't make the time to be with Him.

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Cathedral Retreating In Place

A retreat is always an opportunity to withdraw in time and space from daily activity. To take stock, share each others' fellowship in silence and worship, allow ourselves to be stretched a bit, and return nourished and refreshed.

This Lent, led by Dean Paul Kennington, we will offer our parish retreat to everyone who would like to experience it, by using different spaces in and around Cathedral Place. The theme, "Journey With Jacob: From Deception to Blessing" holds touchpoints for each of us: Identity. Heritage. Dishonesty. Career. Calling. Prayer. Loneliness. Heaven. Wrestling with the unknown.

During the shared worship, meals, addresses, guided meditations, and quiet time, and as we travel through the city to sleep in our own beds, rise separately to rejoin each other at breakfast, retreatants are invited to experience our Cathedral as a spiritual oasis and our community as one that nourishes, challenges, and refreshes.

The retreat will begin with a shared meal on Friday, April 1, and conclude on Sunday morning April 3. The cost is \$70.00, which includes all materials, snacks, and



Romanesque capital in the nave of Basilique Ste-Madeleine at Vézelay Abbey (France), c.1120-32

five meals. Reserve your place by March 27 through the Cathedral office or by contacting Ann Elbourne, the Registrar, and pay only the early bird rate of \$55.00. Bursaries are available, so don't let the cost prevent your joining this retreat! Plan now to attend: clear your schedule and please pray for all the retreatants. ~

Volunteers are invited to help plan and prepare the space; gather materials; organize meals; clear up afterwards. Speak to Vivian Lewin at 514 768-7807



We celebrated Catherine Riley's birthday on January 23rd. She turned 90 on Christmas Eve. Here she is with Asa Davidson and her two week old son Caleb. The flowers that celebrated Catherine are behind her on the altar steps.

Photo by Anne Douglas

Acedia therefore is not just a lack of care, but rather not caring enough about what is important. In secular vocabulary, “the noonday devil” would be understood as deliberately self-destructive thoughts and actions. For us, a spiritual director rather than a therapist would probably be of greater help with this malady of the soul. If, as the monks understood it, Acedia is actually the biggest sin because it is “lodged in the soul”, it affects us all in varying degrees. Norris notes, “Acedia has come so far with us that it easily attaches to our hectic and overburdened schedules. We appear to be anything but slothful, yet it is exactly what we are, as we do more and care less, and feel pressured to do more.”

The monks’ antidote for Acedia was through a steadfast keeping of the daily offices and doing their monastic chores. This is how they fought temptation and the restlessness that could beset them. By being fully present and treating our mundane daily tasks as meditative acts, whether they involve cooking a meal, doing the dishes, exercising, or keeping in touch with loved ones and making time for prayer, we can combat “the noonday devil”. Now, you may be wondering why am I writing about Acedia in relation to Lent?

On Ash Wednesday when we hear the words “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.” (Mark 1:15) we are perhaps asked to “fast” from what gorges our soul -- anger, jealousy, lust, revenge -- and, most importantly not to succumb to Acedia. It is not by abstinence but rather focussing on what is essential for us to be healthy physically, mentally and spiritually that we may have a deeper relationship with God.

Lent then could become a time to heal the soul by being more mindful about our own daily lives. Quoting Margaret Guenther from *The Practice of Prayer*, “whatever its characteristics, every one of us has a spirituality, what Augustine called an *ordo amoris*, an ordering of our loves. What do we most cherish? What do we most desire? What is the treasure hidden in the core of our being? Our spirituality is not what we profess to believe, but how we order our loves”. Perhaps Lent is then about “ordering our loves.” Father Almquist wisely said we could hold fast to something as simple as writing a love letter each day or to thank someone every day of Lent.

In doing so, we resist the “noonday devil” and then are able to be faithful to the Gospel - loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind, and loving our neighbours as ourselves. ~

Our Lenten Prayer



Send your Holy Spirit into our hearts.

*Beyond this world's temptations,
may we find our true calling.*

*Beyond this world's night,
may we be born again.*

*Beyond this world's blindness,
may we see your face.*

*Beyond this world's aridity,
may our souls' thirst be answered.*

*Beyond whatever binds us in this world,
may we come to new life.*