

*The Lessons Appointed for Use on the*

**Sunday closest to July 20**

**Proper 11**

**Year B**

**RCL**



Deuteronomy 29:29

Psalms 23

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

#### The Collect

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Deuteronomy 29:29**

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children for ever, to observe all the words of this law.

## Psalm 23 Page 612, BCP

### *Dominus regit me*

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.
- 3 He revives my soul and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.
- 4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- 5 You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over.
- 6 Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

**Mark 6:30-34, 53-56**

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on

mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.



## SERMON

I am so grateful to you for the time you allowed me to attend St. Meinrad again this year. This year, Ryan went with me, just on the strength of my assurance that he would find the place a storehouse of spiritual energy, and he and I walked the halls and the property, studiously ignoring each other as men do, while enjoying each other's company. I wish I had the words to share that experience with you, so that you could experience the place as we did, but I do not. You would have to go there, yourself.

In a way, life at St. Meinrad is the opposite of life here where we live. Where we live, we go about the business of every day life, then, on Sunday, go to church for refreshment in the Spirit. At St. Meinrad, it is the reverse. At St. Meinrad, communing with the Spirit IS the business of everyday life. That is what I would like to

tell you about, but it's not possible. It really can't be spoken of – it must be experienced. That's the way it is with all really meaningful experiences in life. I could tell you that I was present at Kat's birth, but there's no way I could convey to you the feelings Kathy and I had when we welcomed her into the world.

There is one thing about St. Meinrad I might be able to describe, though, and that is the residence halls where we stay. They are named for saints, arranged around two gardens, and are interconnected in the most surprising ways. I sometimes call it Hogwart's. It's almost impossible not to get lost. Some elevators go to all floors. Some do not. Some do not work at all. St. Anselm's has four floors. St. Bennett's is connected to St. Anselm's, but St. Bennett's has two third floors. The halls are all very similar. What is one floor in one dorm is a different floor in another. Stairways stop in the middle. It's very



confusing.

On one of my earlier visits, I was walking the halls, enjoying the solitude and paying no attention to where I was going. I got on an elevator and thought I had called for the first floor. Noticing nothing unusual, I walked toward what I thought was the front of the building. A couple of turns and I realized I wasn't where I thought I was, and I was lost.

I don't want to sound like an old-time preacher and thunder, "Have you ever been LOST? LOST to the WORD?" but I want to tell you – lost in the bowels of St. Anselm's in the middle of the night, with thumps and bumps and shadowy forms about you is a pretty scary enterprise.

Just then, as I was beginning to panic a little, from the shadows an indistinct figure stepped forward. It was the Ghost of St. Anselm's, himself! I turned a corner,

and he was just THERE!

One of our number, who has been going to retreat at St. Meinrad even longer than I have, regularly wanders the halls with his camera. He is looking for unusual perspectives. He has even visited the attics, and I don't think the monks do that. His knowledge of the shortcuts means he shows up in the most unusual places, and he has been dubbed "The Ghost of St. Anselm's". That's who confronted me, in the basement. In the middle of the night. Right when I needed him. Scared the britches off me, he did.

That was the memory that came to me this year as we began our studies. The subject of the retreat was "The Forgotten God", a book by Francis Chan. Rev. Chan believes that contemporary churches have forgotten about the indwelling Holy Ghost in favor of the other two persons of the Trinity – God the Father and God

the Son. We pray “Father God, I am afraid”, or “Help me, Jesus, to overcome this situation”, or “Jesus, heal me of this disease”, but we do not turn our attention to the Holy Ghost much at all except during our recitation of the Creed. Rev. Chan thinks that’s a shame and a pity.

Since the end of the Fourth Century, the church has understood God as the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. We relate to God the Father, addressing prayers to Him. We look to Jesus for our Redemption, but how do we relate to God, the Holy Ghost? More properly we might ask, DO we relate to God, the Holy Ghost? How do we understand the benediction we often close with:

May the love of God the Father, the Grace of  
God the Son and the Communion of God the  
Holy Spirit abide with you.

What is this Holy Ghost, anyway, and how is an understanding of it important to Christians? John reports,

in Jesus' Farewell Discourse, the following interesting conversation between Jesus and His Disciples. Jesus tells them:

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate [or Helper] will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

This is a difficult transition which Jesus was addressing. It is to our advantage that the Helper come and that Jesus leave, yet we don't want to let go of Jesus. Why is that, do you suppose? However great our commitment to Jesus and God the Father is, Jesus Himself tells us that the Third Person of the Godhead is present and that recognition of Him is to our advantage. Odd, don't you think, that we should pay so little attention to these words of Jesus?

I've mentioned countless times that we use words and language to net concepts about which we would like

to speak without thinking of the limitations inherent in doing so. Whenever we use a word to describe such and such a thing, we say that the thing has the same characteristics as other things of that type. If I point to an object and describe it as a “CAR”, we immediately are aware that the thing being referred to probably does not have flippers and probably does not eat fish. In other words, we assume that a car and a harbor seal are different sorts of things.

When we try to speak about God, though, we’re immediately aware of how sticky is the mud our feet are stuck in. To use a word to describe God is to say that God shares some quality of other things described by that word, but there IS no other thing like God. Indeed, we’re in trouble immediately if we try to imagine God as a thing to which comparison may be made! God is unique. He is not like a baseball bat or a thunder storm

or a harbor seal. God is God. Nevertheless, we need words with which to communicate, and so we attach words like “Father” and “Son” and “Holy Ghost” to God so that we can begin to relate to Him.

One of the difficulties this presents is that we may forget that the words we are using are just helpful hand holds for us, not ultimate definitions of God. Addressing God as “Father” doesn't mean that God is just like our earthly fathers, only better. Earthly fathers might aspire to the boundless love that God lavishes on us, but God is not just like your earthly father. Likewise, earthly sons might aspire to serve their fathers as Jesus served God the Father, but Jesus is not just like an earthly son, only better. God is God. God is unique.

When we consider God the Holy Ghost, we are truly instructed on this difference, for we do not have any experience with ghosts, Holy or otherwise, outside of B

movies. The opportunity to relate to God apart from the metaphors we have attached to him as Father or Son strains us. We have no referent. How are we supposed to relate to the Holy Ghost if we don't even know if it has flippers or not? As a consequence, our awareness of God the Holy Ghost, has sort of slipped away from us. This is truly a shame and a pity, for our relationship with God is incomplete until we welcome the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost fulfills our relationship with God. We are privileged to speak in prayer to God the Father and God the Son. God the Holy Spirit speaks to us.

We tend to think of prayer as petition. Over the past few weeks, we have been praying for the recovery of young Kolten. He is the young boy with swelling of the brain resulting from a mosquito bite. That's a remarkable thing for us to do. We don't even know his last

name! We have had him on our prayer list. I have discussed him with you each Sunday. We now know that he is recovered and home. As his father told me, “The prayers worked”.

This is the way we are accustomed to think of our relationship with God, whether we direct our prayers to Father or Son — we come to God in petition. We pray for healing, or wholeness, just as did the people in Gennesaret

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

If healing results, then we think “the prayers



worked”, as if petition to our Father was a sort of alternative medicine. The real miracle isn't in the healing, it is in the impulse to hold another in love, to care for another. That impulse, I would submit, is the urging of the Holy Ghost within us.

Our relationship with the Holy Ghost is much different from our relationship with God the Father and God the Son, for we are told that the Holy Ghost abides with us. We are privileged to speak in petition to God the Father, in response to His Love for us. We are privileged to respond to the Grace of God the Son, knowing that in confession and prayer, our sins will be forgiven. God the Holy Ghost, though, speaks to us, from within us, as close as our own skin, and the Holy Ghost does not speak to us in petition. It speaks to us, as it spoke to Jesus and the Disciples, of the Father's Will for us. The Holy Ghost communes with us, sharing our daily disap-

pointments, fears, and sadness and urging us to mirror the Father's love and the Son's Grace in our relationship with His children.

I think a witness to my meeting with the Ghost of St. Anselm's would not have seen a single thing unusual about two insomniacs wandering the halls of an Abbey and meeting by chance in the basement. My experience was much different. There are just no words to describe what a surprising thing it was to find the Ghost of St. Anselm's just when I was most lost. If I tried to explain to you what that felt like, I'd fail. You really would have to experience it for yourself.

God the Holy Ghost is very like that, I think. Someone tells me of a very sick little boy, and I tell you. You join with me as we pray for the little boy's healing. It's all perfectly understandable, just as the meeting with the Ghost of St. Anselm's was, and yet...why should a

church of people who do not know this family or this boy pray for him? It is the work of the Holy Ghost to lead us to these places, if we will but listen.

In my experience, the world is just filled with people who have not yet learned how to attend to the Holy Spirit within them. They may do very good things indeed, but because they fail to recognize God's presence within them, as close as their own skin, they tend to take credit for their actions themselves. When that happens, they begin to understand themselves as “good persons”, and to cultivate a sense of entitlement — a sense of mission to create a world of like-minded people in their own image. Sometimes, such a person believes that such a world may be attained through the violent destruction of the “bad persons”. Did the thoughts of the young man in Aurora follow just such a path? Perhaps we will never know, but such a one is truly lost in the bowels of St.

Anselm's. It is only through recognition that they are lost, and with the assistance of the Holy Ghost that they will ever find their way out again.

AMEN

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*Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.*

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