

Partners In Ministry

Eastern Convocation of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas Newsletter for September 2009

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Partner Churches

Cuero Grace
Edna Trinity
Goliad St. Stephens
Hallettsville St. James
Kenedy St. Matthews
Port Lavaca Grace
Refugio Ascension
Yoakum Holy Communion

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Is it hot and dry enough for you? It seems like we've been in a drought forever. But, in Victoria, we've had two showers in the last week—about 10 minutes each. Could that be a sign? While worrying about the drought, the Anglican Communion, and health care, I picked up the spring issue of the publication of the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest in Austin. I read the article by Dean Douglas Travis and then read it again and again for the next month. I want to share some of it with you.

Dean Travis is writing about lectures of Gil Ballie "which was his first exposure to the function scapegoating plays in human culture. . . Much of the cohesion of any human culture is provided by having a common enemy—an 'other.' We invariably do two things to our scapegoat. First we deny him his humanity. We think that the scapegoat is essentially different from us. Secondly we assign to our scapegoat those flaws we most yearn to be free from ourselves. This works because we are all sinners, and in any human being there will be a defect adequate to sustain our projection.

This worked until Jesus. The problem with our projecting our evil onto Jesus was that in his character there was no defect adequate to the case. In effect, our projection bounced back. Having vanquished the 'other'—the perceived enemy—rather than being relieved, the witnesses to the crucifixion knew that they had participated in something very, very wrong. "And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts." (Luke 23:48)

To complicate matters, this innocent man whom we killed was resurrected. He returned from the dead and said, in effect, "You've done your worst to me and tried everything you can to be rid of me, but I'm still here and, what's more, I love you. Your challenge now is to see yourself in the light of my love." The 'other' turns out to be anything but the enemy. Indeed he shows himself to be my truest friend.

Gil taught me that if, as a Christian (or simply as a human being), I think the problem is 'you', I've missed the point. I'm scapegoating. The problem is me. Certainly the only place I can hope to affect significant change is in my own soul, at least initially.

Father John's letter continued

In the simplest manner this lesson was reinforced for me when I made a pilgrimage to the monastery of Taize in France in the spring of 2002. In the shadow of 9/11, I was acutely conscious of just how fragile peace is, and so I was very much taken with the story of the monastery's abbot, Brother Roger, who during and after World War II, aided Jewish refugees escaping the Nazis. Immediately following the war, he devoted his attentions to ministering to German prisoners of war. In each case he reached out to the person most at risk and most hated—in short, the scapegoat.

Upon returning from France, deeply changed by my experience, when people asked me what I had learned, I invariably responded, "Have no enemies." And I have come to understand that to have no enemies is to have no 'other' onto whom I can project my own flaws. To have no enemies is to have no scapegoat."

Thank you Dean Travis. I've been reflecting on that. But scapegoats are so handy. We know the problem with the drought is God, the problem with the Anglican Communion is the Presiding Bishop, and the problem with healthcare is the insurance companies. That's so easy. I don't even have to think about any responsibility that I might have. I forget that finding out 'whose fault it is' is just another form of denial. Instead we are called to turn to Jesus, confess any role that we may have played in the 'problem', and ask for his help in finding a just and loving solution. No scapegoats, no enemies, just the grace of God.

Yours in Christ,

John

Departed in June through August:

May their souls and the souls of
all the departed rest in peace.

Jean Naylor – Refugio

Olive Wren – Port Lavaca

Lorraine Rigby – Port Lavaca

Dr. Pat G. Hedgcoxe – Cuero

Calendars were sent out earlier, but if you need a copy of the September or October calendar, they can be viewed and/or downloaded from our web site - www.pimeast.org

It is time to think of PIM Directory. Any ideas for improvement, information updates, or suggestions WILL BE appreciated! (This is one time you can suggest changes and not get stuck with the job..... TAKE ADVANTAGE! It is a limited offer!) Email: pimdirectory@cableone.net or bheard@cableone.net