



CROSSWAYS

"Making Christ Visible in His Community."

The Reverend Michael P. Flanagan, Rector of Holy Cross Episcopal Church, Simpsonville, SC 864-967-7470

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CONTENTS

Father Mike

Congregational Response 1-2
on the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions

Practicing the Faith -

Sermon Reflections on Love 2-4

Our Lord's Resources

4

Christian Formation

5

Miscellaneous

Holy Cross Contacts 6
Food for the Journey 6

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE ON THE BLESSING OF SAME-SEX UNIONS

As most of you know, our parish held five weeks of dialogue on the blessing of same-sex unions during the season of Lent. The facilitators at your tables during discussions were the members of our Vestry. The purpose of this arrangement was that our Vestry might have a clear picture of the will of the parish on this matter.

Our conversations centered around our bishop's letter to the diocese, the traditions of the church, the nature of marriage, and scripture. On the final night, we experienced the liturgy first hand and discussed our reactions to it.

Your Vestry heard a clear message from our dialogues that this parish believes that we are ready to move forward as a community to request permission to utilize this rite here at Holy Cross. With unanimous consent from the Vestry, we will be making application to the bishop for permission to use this rite.

Any couple requesting a blessing will be expected to follow the same guidelines as any heterosexual couple requesting a marriage or blessing of a union (six hours of contact time with the priest or a professional counselor, a bishop's judgement on any relationship where a divorce has occurred and a signed declaration of consent that clearly states the church's understanding of marriage and lifelong relationships). Furthermore, the canons of the church clearly indicate that the clergy has the right to refuse to do a marriage or blessing ceremony for any reason. Thus, there is no case under which I will be "forced" to do this ceremony or any marriage ceremony regardless of sexual identity.

I know that some of the reactions you will hear from friends and relatives will be something like "but the bible says ..." and usually the word "abomination" will pop up. The reactions are understandable, especially in those circles wherein the historical-critical method of scripture interpretation is not used or is even frowned upon. There are passages that appear to indicate that same-sex activity is "intrinsically disordered," as our bishop said in his letter to the diocese, "In Dialogue with Sacred Tradition." (Full text available at www.edusc.org)

Regarding the citations in Leviticus he goes on to say the following: "Personal holiness is a core value in these passages and we can't simply dismiss them as relics based on our non-observance of other Levitical laws. At a minimum, these passages address an idolatrous desire for 'sex any way a person can get it.' They remain a viable commentary on the sins and temptations of modern life and point to the offenses as being rooted in idolatry of the flesh."

Also in 1 Corinthians and Romans, the primary issue is one of idol worship and pagan practices as well as promiscuity and licentiousness. The bishop goes on to say, "Strangely, none [of the current writers on this issue] discusses the list of the fruits of idolatry in Romans 1:28-32. Each seems to assume, as does Paul, that these evil fruits are and will be the inevitable result of all homosexual behavior because all homosexual behavior is idolatrous. The assumption is a critical basis for the received tradition's conclusion that homosexual behavior is intrinsically disordered.

This severe conclusion is, however, deeply dissonant in the manifest evidence and presence of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the relationship of a monogamous, lifelong, Christian same-sex couple. It is true that such fruits may not be abundant in all covenanted same-sex relationships. It can equally be said that such fruits may not be abundant in all heterosexual marriages." He concludes, "What the tradition has declared 'intrinsically disordered' – especially via Leviticus 18 and 20, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, and Romans 1 – must be carefully reevaluated in light of relationships that are discerned by the community as 'manifestly good', bearing the fruits of the Spirit."

It is important to us as a community of faith to understand that we are not talking in abstracts here at Holy Cross. We are talking about members of our parish family with whom we worship and minister together. These are our friends and neighbors, some of whom are leaders in this parish.

My understanding and acceptance of those who identify as LGBTQ comes from personal experience. Again and again I have heard personal stories from those who have prayed for God to "change" their identity, and it was only when they could accept themselves as they are that life began to be full. This being the case, the church's role is to determine under what circumstances sexual expression is appropriate. Our tradition has been that sexual expression is only appropriate within the boundaries of a lifelong, monogamous relationship.

As recently as the year 2000, our General Convention stated that "we expect such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God; and be it further resolved that we denounce promiscuity, exploitation, and abusiveness in the relationships of any of our members..." (Resolution D039)

For those of you who are pleased with the outcome of our dialogue, I thank you for your support and encourage us not to be too exuberant or celebratory. For those of you who are disappointed or even upset with the outcome, I invite you to come talk with me or any member of our staff or Vestry, and I urge you to stay with us at the table. Stay here until Christmas and see if we do not continue to do the good, faithful ministry we have always done in Christ's name.

Mike+

rector@holycrossep.org



Comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

2 Corinthians 1:4

REFLECTIONS ON FAITH AND LIFE

THE REVEREND LINDA GOSNELL,
ASSOCIATE RECTOR FOR PASTORAL CARE

PRACTICING THE FAITH – SERMON REFLECTIONS ON LOVE

1 John 3.1, 3: See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.... Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed.

Fr. Greg Boyle is a Jesuit priest who has worked for more than 20 years in the most gang-filled neighborhood in Los Angeles, a city with some 1,100 gangs. He established and runs Homeboy Industries, a program that employs former gang members in a growing number of businesses: Homeboy Bakery, Homeboy Tortillas, Homeboy Silk Screen, Homegirl Cafe, Homeboy Maintenance, and Homeboy/ Homegirl Merchandise. In addition, Fr. Boyle's organization offers tattoo removal, educational opportunities, and job-skills training.

“G,” as the homies call him, hangs out on the corners with the guys, offers mass in the prisons, detention centers, and camps for incarcerated youth, and has presided at funerals for more than 180 kids. His ministry is all about relationships, about healing, about love.

In an interview with Krista Tippett in April, Fr. Boyle said: “if you presume that God is compassionate loving-kindness, all we're asked to do in the world is to be in the world who God is. And so you're always trying to imitate the kind of God you believe in. You want to move away from whatever is tiny-spirited and judgmental And love is all there is, and love is all you are. You want people to recognize the truth of who they are, that they're exactly what God had in mind when God made them ... in the end, it is about imitating — trying to imitate the kind of God you believe in. And it's natural for us to push back on that. But the truth is, we're so used to ... a one-false-move God. And so we're not really accustomed to the no-matter-whatness of God, to the God who's just plain old too busy loving us to be disappointed in us. And that is, I think, the hardest thing to believe, but ... it's the truest thing you can say about God.”

There is a lot to unpack in that statement ... “all we're asked to do in the world is to be in the world who God is. And so you're always trying to imitate the kind of God you believe in.”

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God ...

That we are God's children is a potentially confusing statement. We think of our own parents and our relationships with them — some are/were loving and caring, but some are/were neglectful, abusive, and damaging. We think of our own children, if we have any, and of our love for them and of our relationships with them, and of our failure to always be the kind of parent we want to be. Neither relationship, with our parents or with our children, is a reliable indication of what it means to be God's child.

We read, we are told — “there is nothing you can do, nothing you can say, that will make God love you more; there is nothing you can do, nothing you can say, that will make God love you less” — and we want to believe it. Yet, because of our experiences we find this kind of love difficult to accept and live into. However, God's vision and God's hope for us is much clearer than our own vision can possibly be, and God's love for us is greater than we can imagine. Still, our belief and our intentions and behavior are linked. If we truly believe that God loves us with a generous love that sees through our selfish, self-focused, and destructive behaviors to the inner place in our being where God's likeness dwells, then we desire and are finally able to live from that inner place. And, if we truly believe God loves all others with that same generous love that sees through all their selfish, self-focused, and destructive behaviors to the inner place in their being where God's likeness dwells, then we are called to see and respond to them with that same kind of love.

...all we're asked to do in the world is to be in the world who God is.

We are God's beloved children — and, the scripture says, ‘when God is revealed, we shall be like God’— this hope, this understanding, invites/nudges us into a process of transformation. This hope helps transform our relationships and leads us to live our lives in love and with love for others. Accepting this amazing love that God has for us, we let ourselves be transformed into God's likeness.

Does this happen all at once? Certainly not for me. Scripture tells us, and we affirm it in our baptismal covenant, that we will fall short, we will sin. We will behave badly. We will fail to act in love toward ourselves, toward others, toward God. We will cause pain and create stumbling blocks for ourselves and others. We will need to turn to God again and again for forgiveness, for guidance, for encouragement, willing to be changed, and asking for transformation into Christ's likeness as we try to live in love with ourselves and with our neighbor. We hesitantly, oh so very hesitantly, accept God's love revealed to us in Jesus; we imperfectly, so very imperfectly, imitate Christ's love.

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.... Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed.

In the preface of his book, *Tattoos on the Heart*, Fr. Boyle quoted William Blake, who wrote, “We are put on earth for a little space that we might learn to bear the beams of love,” and then Fr. Boyle added: “Perhaps, together, we can teach each other how to bear the beams of love, persons becoming persons, right before our eyes.” “To bear” can mean “to hold up under” and “to bring forth.” We can help one another truly believe, accept, and bear-up under the amazing love that God has for each of us as we bear/bring forth that love in our interactions and relationships together.

Questions to ponder:

Can I accept that I am loved by God despite my faults and sinfulness? Can I look with God's loving eyes on others who are, in my eyes, as undeserving of God's love as I am? Can I share God's love with all others – those who have hurt me or someone I care about, those whose life style I disapprove of, those who disagree completely with my approach to life and theology? Can I witness to this love of God?

Hafiz, a 14th century Sufi poet, wrote this poem:

"With That Moon Language"

Admit something:
Everyone you see,
you say to them, "Love me."
Of course
you do not do this out loud,
otherwise someone would call the cops.

Still, though,
think about this,
this great pull in us to connect.

Why not become the one
who lives with a full moon in each eye
that is always saying,
with that sweet moon language,
what every other eye in this world is dying to hear?

... all we're asked to do in the world is to be in the world who God is.

Linda+
associaterector@holycrossep.org



LORD'S RESOURCES

ADMINISTRATION, STEWARDSHIP, BUILDING & GROUNDS

SENIOR WARDEN – SHARON PUTMAN

SRWARDEN@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

JUNIOR WARDEN – MIKE NICHOLS

JRWARDEN@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

STEWARDSHIP – JIM WEBB

STEWARDSHIP@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

BUILDING AND GROUNDS – TOM JONES

JONE63194@GMAIL.COM

COMMUNITY CANCER SCREENING

There will be a cancer screening conducted at the new St. Francis Cancer Center, 104 Innovation Drive on Sat., May 16 from 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.. The screenings will include: Skin, Prostate, Oral, Head and Neck. Wear a swimsuit. It is FREE to the public, but registration is required. Call 675-4101. If anyone wants to go with someone else or needs a ride, please contact Trish Ganner at 561-2348.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

CHRISTIAN FORMATION, ADULT, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH CHRISTIAN FORMATION –
SUSAN LOUITT HARDAWAY
YOUTH@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY MINISTRIES –
SHELLEY ALLEN
ACADEMYDIRECTOR@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

COORDINATOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES –
LESLIE DONAHUE
CHILDREN@HOLYCROSSEP.ORG

PROGRAM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE
ADULT – DRAYTON GAILLARD
WHDGAILLARD@CHARTER.NET

MAY YOUTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

There will be **NO** youth formation this Sunday, May 3.

CHAPERONES NEEDED

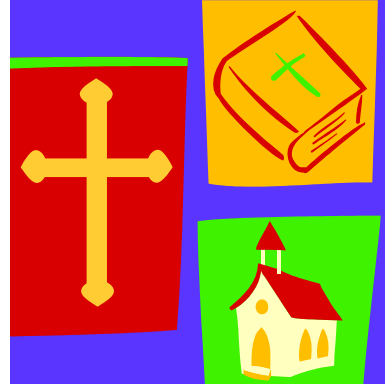
We need two male and one female Safe Church-trained chaperones for a Youth Ropes Course Weekend at Camp Gravatt in Aiken from Thursday, August 13 to Saturday, August 15. Please let Mother Susan know if you are willing to chaperone at 483-2250 or susanhardaway@gmail.com. We will complete a service project for Camp Gravatt and participate in the high ropes course.

UNITED THANK OFFERING

Youth volunteers needed to collect United Thank Offering at all four services on Sunday, May 10. UTO envelopes will be available at services that day. All money donated goes to fund domestic and foreign UTO ministry grants through the Episcopal Church.

2015 GRADUATES

Do you have a teen or young adult graduating this Spring? Please let us know who, when, where and what is next for them. We will recognize our high school and college graduates as part of Youth Sunday on May 17.



YOUTH SUNDAY REHEARSAL

Rehearsal for all youth with speaking parts is on Saturday, May 16 at 11 a.m. Youth Sunday will be at the 11:15 a.m. service on Sunday, May 17.

MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNION CLASS

Mother Linda will meet with Middle School teens for Communion Class after dinner on Wednesday, May 20 as part of Wednesday Night Youth. If you would like your Middle School teen to participate please email Mother Susan at susanhardaway@gmail.com or text her at 864-483-2250

SOUP KITCHEN

Youth and adult volunteers needed for Fifth Sunday Soup Kitchen Lunch on Sunday, May 31. Volunteers will prepare lunch for the homeless at Project Host Soup Kitchen in Greenville. Questions? Contact Lizzie Berry Clark at lizziebhat@live.com.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT YOUTH GROUP

Youth in grades 6-12 are invited to participate in Wednesday night Youth Group meetings every Wednesday night from 6 -8 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Dinner begins at 6 p.m., followed by Bible study and games. For more information, text or call Mother Susan at 483-2250 or email her at susanhardaway@gmail.com.

SUNDAY YOUTH FORMATION

Youth in grades 6-12 are invited to participate in Bible lessons/discussions during Youth Sunday School on Sunday mornings from 10:15-11am in the Meeting Hall. For more information, contact Bonnie Schmidt at 270-0341 or bonnie1870@gmail.com.



FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

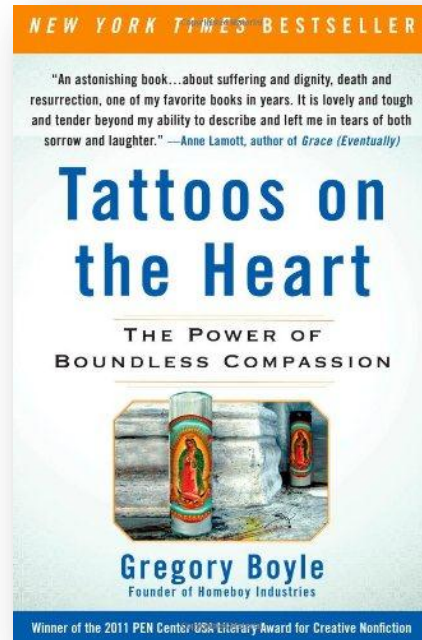
Tattoos on the Heart
by Father Gregory Boyle

"Destined to become a classic of both urban reportage and contemporary spirituality," (*Los Angeles Times*)—*Tattoos on the Heart* is a series of parables about kinship and redemption from pastor, activist, and renowned speaker, Father Gregory Boyle.

This is a motivating look at how to stay faithful in spite of failure, how to meet the world with a loving heart, and how to conquer shame with boundless, restorative love.

www.amazon.com

Send an email to kclconnor@gmail.com if you have a book, music, or movie that has been a special part of your spiritual journey.



HOLY CROSS CONTACT INFORMATION

Items for newsletter:	newsletter@holycrossep.org
Bulletin announcements:	secretary@holycrossep.org
Parish office	(864) 967-7470
Fax	(864) 967-0393
Mailing address	PO Box 187, Simpsonville, 29681
Holy Cross Academy	(864) 963-5986
Academy director	academydirector@holycrossep.org
Pastoral counseling	(888) 293-7585
Church website	www.holycrossep.org
Diocesan website	www.edusc.org
Office	secretary@holycrossep.org
Rector	rector@holycrossep.org
Associate rector	associaterector@holycrossep.org
Youth ministry	youth@holycrossep.org
Children's ministry	children@holycrossep.org
Senior warden	swarden@holycrossep.org

