

The Communicator October 15, 2024

We are so fortunate to be blessed by wonderful and beloved former priests, Gillian and Tamara, covering for **Father Doug** during his extended recovery from open heart surgery. We have also been gifted the services of **Father Victor Hugo and Mother Naty**. For your information, on scheduling for the next few weeks. **Gillian** will be with us October 20th, **Tamara** October 27th, Victor Hugo November 3rd, Gillian November 10th. I believe we also have coverage for the following two weeks in November. Father Doug hopes and believes he may be able to resume his responsibilities in November and certainly by December. We will celebrate his return to good health. Doug continues to thank all of you for your prayers, notes and good wishes.

This past Sunday morning I was concerned we were going to have a mostly empty church but true to almost every Sunday, the many late arrivals filled the pews with a joyous noise - at least in time for the Gradual and the sermon. It has long been this parishioners belief that perhaps if we moved the service to 11 we might have a full congregation for the processional. We'd love to hear your thoughts.

None of our faithful photographers attended church on Sunday so sadly we won't have many photos in this edition.

A number in our church are ill, many more are traveling. Let us keep all of them in our prayers.

Gillian's sermon Sunday was extraordinary. It may have been the best I have heard from human lips. I have attached it and the Gospel reading for Sunday to the end of this Communicator. I urge even those of you who were present on Sunday to take the time to read it.

The Divine Dogs Calendar is promised to be ready this week. If it is we will have it for sale at church on Sunday. It is the hope of the Vestry that this could be a major fund raiser for the SMAAA outreach program. Do you still have contacts with a church in the US that might be willing to sell these calendars to help us out? Please see Judy and talk to her about it.

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Addressing the problem of *Recurrent Chisme*. Saint Michael's and San Pablo are **not** merging. There has been absolutely no discussion of this happening. Saint Michael's is a self-supporting Parish church run by its Vestry. San Pablo is a mission church in the Diocese of Morelos and supported by the Diocese. *Chisme* is not helpful to anyone and is contrary to the values of following in the path of Christ. It hurts us all. Truth, kindness and love must be our guides when we speak. If our words do not fit those categories best not to utter them. We will probably never rid ourselves of *chisme* but hopefully it will diminish.

We have a new program starting this Wednesday at 11 in the Parish Hall. Rosie Land will be presenting a class in the Alexander Technique. According to Wikipedia, **The Alexander technique teaches improved posture and movement, which is believed to help reduce and prevent problems caused by unhelpful habits. During a number of lessons you're taught to be more aware of your body, how to improve poor posture and move more efficiently.** We could all benefit from this instruction. We are hopeful it will be a valuable addition to the programs being offered at Saint Mike's.

SMAAA continues to support Father Victor Hugo and San Pablo in its mission to the homeless and extremely poor of Morelos. This past Sunday **Helen Millan** and others helped serve a full meal to approximately 100 people. The meal is served monthly at our tiny downtown Cathedral church. SMAAA's support in the form of donations of money, non-perishable food items, cleaning supplies and toiletries is very, very important to this continuing mission. Happily, some members of Saint Michael's have become deeply involved in this worthy Mission. Father Victor Hugo never ceases thanking all of you who so faithfully bring these items on Sunday and put them in the basket at the back of the church. If you would like to become more involved in this program please talk to **Pat Manners, Amanda Hooten, Helen Millan or Father Victor Hugo**. Pat has asked that as the cold begins to come to Cuernavaca we go through our closets looking for clean, warm clothing to donate. Thank you.

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Thursday Yoga with Ann Moxey continues to be one of our most popular programs. Have you been yet? The exercise in this photo is a wonderful visual demonstration of the trust that has developed as our skills have improved.

Newcomers are always welcome and will quickly catch up. It has also become a sweet social group. Pictured below are a few participants gathered after class for a goodbye hug with visiting participant **Sherry Thoreson**. Come back soon Sherry. We hope you will let Cuernavaca become your home away from home.

Friday Senior Club, 10-12, with **Lorena Molina** and volunteers is a marvelous opportunity for seniors to socialize. Last month the Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Vivek Murthy,



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released an advisory describing the effects of loneliness as ***“far more than a bad feeling – it harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety and premature death.”*** ***Sep 19, 2024***

Church itself, the Friday group, Yoga, and the many other community activities of SMAAA, the Library, and many other groups are all intended to create community and mitigate loneliness. Do you know someone who could benefit from one or more of these activities? Do you have a talent to share to form a group that would bring people together. Anita Gottschalk has resumed her once a month quilting group and we have the lecture series. There has been a request for a game board afternoon? Does organizing that or something else appeal to you? Please let us know!

Upcoming schedule of SMAAA Campus activities.

Weekly: Tuesday: Meditation 10AM, Library Tea 11-1.
Wednesday: Alexander Method 11AM
Thursday: Yoga with Ann 11-12:30
Friday: ESL with Catherine 4PM
Sunday: Church 10:45 followed by Hospitality Hour

Monthly: Quilting, Monday 11
Vestry Meeting Monday, October 28, 10AM

Non-campus activities: Wednesdays 5-6:30 : Mexican Current Events at Cemanahuac, San Juan 4, Colonia las Palmas.

The Reverend Gillian Ball’s Sermon from Sunday.

Pentecost 21 brings us the familiar story of a young wealthy man approaching Jesus because he is searching for something fulfilling. Jesus understands what is holding him prisoner and suggests that he sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. Sadly, this is too much for someone beholden to his wealth and belongings. The man leaves and returns to his riches.

Here is a lesson for us to free ourselves from any possessions that we hold onto tightly. In doing so, we become unencumbered from the material

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belongings that sometimes prevent us from focusing on good causes and helping those in despair.

SERVICE October 13, 2024 Mark 10:17-31 Pent 21 Mission of St. Francis, Tepoztlan

The Rev. Gillian Neville-Ball

(Celtic) **O God, who called all life into being, the earth, sea and sky are yours.**

Your presence is all around us, every atom is full of your energy.

Your Spirit enlivens all who walk the earth, with her we yearn for justice to be done.

For creation to be freed from bondage, for the hungry to be fed.

For captives to be released, for your Kingdom of peace to come on earth.

Reflection: As Jesus was setting out on his journey to Jerusalem, an eager young man approached him. He knelt before Jesus and asked, “*Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*” His question showed great respect. Indeed, the phrase “*knelt before Jesus*” is significant because it was unusual for a Jew to kneel before another Jew. It was also rare when the young man called Jesus “*Good teacher*”, for “good” could only refer to God. Hence, Jesus responded that “*No one is good but God alone.*”

This man appeared to be an ideal candidate for discipleship for he displayed an interest in eternal matters and had achieved success in religious circles. The young man’s idea about inheriting eternal life reflected the Jewish tradition that this was something obtained by being born in the right way. For the Jews, belonging to the people of God was a matter of race. For Jesus, belonging to the people of God was a matter of grace. Tradition meant that obedience to Mosaic Law was imperative. The man kept all the commandments which was, indeed, commendable. But there was something missing - something elusive - something yet to be attained. And so he approached Jesus as he sought answers and craved a sense of fulfillment.

Mark gives us a touching insight into Christ’s feelings in this moment when the young man approached him. There was an immediate understanding of what he was seeking. The man’s words drew Jesus’ sympathy and interest. He instinctively knew that this searching was serious. “*Jesus, looking at him, loved him*” Mark says. This fellow may have had all the attributes to be a disciple but Jesus knew that one thing was missing. And so he asked that the young man sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. Then he would be able to follow Jesus and be led to the eternal life that he sought.

Christ’s prescription to empty out a multitude of possessions would free the man up and present him with a totally different way of being. I read a statement recently saying: “The opposite of rich is not poor. The opposite of rich is free.” But in this case, the man’s love of belongings prevented him from following Christ. He was chained to what he owned. The thought of selling everything off was anathema to him. In the end, his material and personal effects were more important than any search for meaning in his empty life. He soon lost his enthusiasm about Christ’s proposal. He was actually shocked about this suggestion. After all, wealth was seen as a blessing from God. The cost of ‘eternal life’ was too much. He sadly departed.

Today we see certain denominations professing the belief of the young man that wealth is a gift from God. We see many pastors of Mega Churches and religious cult figures living in luxury and exhorting their faithful to donate to their cause. But there is nothing wrong in being wealthy. It is how people use their wealth that is all important. Jesus basically pointed out the danger of wealth. It can do a lot of good in the world but it needs guidelines. Many have no idea how to handle money properly. It has been too easy for the world to become corrupted by money and the power that accompanies it. As we watch political divisions throughout the world, we become deeply aware of how money and greed have become primary in societal values. This is nothing new. It has happened throughout history. The careless use of wealth tends to contaminate the use of money everywhere.

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Many people have the motivation to achieve things in life. It seems that the young man achieved a great deal for he was wealthy and had many material possessions. Yet his life was empty. It is a reality repeated far too often in the world. There are those who have achieved riches and success but are left craving something more substantial. Sadly, some seem to be miserable amid their treasures. There is a sense of loss and dissatisfaction. We wonder if they have any perception about attaining a life of true values with a spiritual foundation.

Some people take the matter of riches seriously. Others fail to do so. Many of the wealthy give generously to ease hardships. Thanks to their kindness - medical needs, food for the hungry, clothes for impoverished, jobs

for the desperate, environment concerns, the arts, charities, and education profit. I think of the wonderful enterprise of 'Habitat for Humanity' sponsored by President Jimmy Carter and supported by wealthy donors, along with fund-raising by conscientious community groups. There are many other such undertakings that have brought inestimable help to many. It is never too late to contribute to such ventures.

But as I recorded in a sermon recently, there are some billionaires who spend everything on themselves. They have no interest in aiding those who have nothing. They, like the young man, have an aversion toward selling off possessions. Their belongings have taken on such mistaken value that one wonders how empty their lives truly are. Could the continuing accumulation of goods be a sign of unrest and boredom and emptiness? One item is bought after another. The excitement soon wears off. One is left wondering what will bring the next moment of excitement and novelty. We are all guilty of this to a greater or lesser degree.

Perhaps this passage leads us to realize that the significance of 'rich' has less to do with money than the attitude toward it. There are wealthy people who are not enslaved by money. But there are those who have little and cling to what they have in desperation. It speaks of the grasping who reach into a hole to seize riches but are unable to pull their hands back without letting them go. It is a parable on how some put greater value on riches than freedom. I often think of the tragedy of young cartel members who strive for power and money only to lose their lives in violence. If one has to live life perpetually looking over one's shoulder - is it really worth living that way? The money won't save them. It is of no use to them once they have gone.

Of course, all of us will eventually be letting go of our things. When we die, our possessions are no longer of any value to us. And it might be too late by the time some of us decide to sell up to help others. If so, we sadly lose the opportunity of eternal life by ridding ourselves of accumulated belongings to find greater fulfillment in relieving those in need.

Jesus is not asking us to give away everything we have. It is not practical for most of us. We are simply asked to put our money and our possessions into a proper perspective. The majority of us do what we can within our capacity. Most of us give to various charities, support valuable initiatives, donate to churches, sort out clothes that others might be able to wear, contribute provisions to feed the homeless, meet local needs. But when one considers the enormous wealth of some people that could do so much good, and yet is clasped zealously for selfish reasons, one cannot help but despair.

We could contrast the young man with the disciples who followed Christ. Mind you, they were rather taken aback when Jesus implied that poverty is an entry into the Kingdom. "*Many who are first will be last and the last will be first*", Jesus said. None of them had anything like the wealth of the young man but they had been willing to give up what little they had to find a purpose in their lives beyond fishing or tax collecting. They had all walked away from what they possessed because they became caught up in a mission offered by a compelling person. It is an echo of the disciples heading out with just a pair of sandals, one robe and a staff. There was nothing to impede them on their journey or complicate their

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assignments. Somehow their few possessions didn't seem important in view of what Christ was offering them. Since they had given up everything for the cause - did that guarantee their entry?

This Gospel leads us to ask ourselves if we wish to live life grasping at riches through a hole which entraps us? Or are we willing to let go of some things to help others? Can we put our priorities in their proper place? There are no clear cut answers about 'eternal life' - no bright road to show us the way. It all comes down to faithfully following Christ by his example

C.S. Lewis wrote that Christian life prepares us for a journey with a compass rather than a map. The young man who approached Jesus with his question really wanted a map. But he was given a compass. We are also given a compass to chart our way. This demands initiative and effort on our part but the end is worthwhile. So I pray that we can "*Run with perseverance the race that is set before us*" as in the Letter to the Hebrews and follow Christ's instructions for a worthwhile journey imbued with generosity, kindness, altruism and love. **Amen**

(Methodist) **Great God of Heaven and Earth, you call us to leave behind our preoccupations and to follow you into the future. Sometimes we find your call challenging. We are comfortable, maybe even complacent, in our present. May this act of giving be a gesture of our willingness to follow where you lead. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.**

Affirmation: *(Celtic – Christian Aid)* **We believe that God hopes and works for a world where all shall be included in the feast of life, and that in Christ we see how costly it is to bring that world about.**

We believe that God's strategy for a new world is to put the poorest first, and that nothing is more important for God's people than to bring the poor good news.

We believe that rich and poor alike can be generous, wise and creative because all are made in God's image, and that all are made poorer when they are left out.

We confess that we use our strength to protect ourselves and order the world to benefit the rich and not the poor, and that none of us can be trusted with too much power over others.

We believe that loving our neighbours means working for justice, so that all can have a say in what happens to them.

We believe that God made the good earth to sustain and delight us, and that we are called to take care of it and enjoy it.

We believe that the God of all the earth is at work beyond the churches as well as within them, making common cause with all who want the poor to be included.

We long for the time when the meek shall inherit the earth and all who hunger and thirst after justice shall be satisfied, and we believe that, despite the persistence of evil, now is always the time when more good can be done and we can make a difference. Amen

Intercessions: *(Celtic – Iona)* *It is in this mystery of communion with Christ that we pray for the Church throughout the world.*

We pray for the people and communities of faith from whom we have come and to whom we shall return. We pray for the sick, the bereaved, the oppressed and the homeless. We pray for the broken and torn fabric of the earth as it yearns for healing. And because you are one with us, O Christ, enable us to share your life with the world by sharing our own lives with the world. We ask this in your name. Amen.

(Ministry Matters) **God of infinite patience and wisdom, we come to you with so many things that claim our time, our energy, our resources, our very lives. We are easily drawn away from serving you by the enticements of the world for wealth, ease, and comfort. Just like the young man in the scriptures, we are owned by our possessions, held captive by our treasures. You continue to offer to**

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us healing and hope. You seek to transform our lives from captivity to freedom in witness and service. We look at the world in which there is so very much warfare and strife, anger and hatred, and we easily become overwhelmed by the needs and the stresses. Help us to place our lives and our trust in you, knowing that with your help, many wonderful things can be accomplished which will provide hope and peace for others and ourselves. Give us courage and strength to truly be your disciples. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Poem: (*Malcolm Guite*) To whom, exactly, are you speaking Lord? I take it you're not saying this to me,
But just to this rich man, or to some saint like Francis,
or to some community, the Benedictines maybe, their restraint sustains so much.
But I can't bear this word! I bought the deal, the whole consumer thing,
Signed up and filled my life with all this stuff,
And now you come, when I've got everything, And tell me everything is not enough!
But that one thing I lack, I cannot get. Sell everything I have?
That's far too hard. I can't just sell it all... at least not yet,
To whom exactly, are you speaking Lord?

Blessing: (*Celtic*) Bless to us O God, the earth beneath our feet.
Bless to us O God, the path on which we go.
Bless to us O God, the people whom I meet.
O God of all gods, bless to us our life.

+And the blessing of our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of Life be with us now and always. **Amen.**