

## From Father Nik

In reading through St Paul's Epistle to the Philippians in our lectionary lessons, we've begun to see how the Church is the means and medium of grace. Grace, of course, is the name we give to God's unearned, extravagant, and immeasurable love for us & for all He has made. Last Sunday's sermon focused on the Justifying Grace won for us by Christ through his life, death, and resurrection. And this Sunday, on the Sanctifying Grace that is the work of the Holy Spirit in us who have become members of Christ's body in baptism. While this grace is free, in that it is unearned, there is, nevertheless, a cost—our *self*.

October 4<sup>th</sup> is the day that we who are the members of Christ's body especially remember one who truly lost himself in the love and grace of God—St Francis of Assisi. As a young man, the son of a wealthy merchant, Francis defined himself by his possessions. He also made of himself a soldier and a troubadour. But all of that changed when God's grace broke in upon his life through both his encounters with the poor and a vision in the chapel of San Damiano. In that dilapidated sanctuary, Francis heard Christ say to him, "Repair my church," and he lost all that made him *himself*. Francis rejected the wealth and possessions of his inheritance, he renounced the life of a soldier, and he exchanged the troubadour's romantic songs for hymns of God's love.

Francis let go of his self and was grasped by grace so that his life *put on Christ* (Rom 13:14) like the simple brown rags that became his habit. To put on Christ is to abide in him whose Justifying work heals and reconciles this broken and divided world—an atonement Christ made in his own body, which was broken and restored for us. By the Sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, Francis' own life and *self* were more and more remade into the image and likeness of Christ, signified by the stories of his *stigmata*. Moreover, as he came to abide more fully in the body of Christ, and Christ in him, Francis' life witnessed to the healing and reconciliation of Christ's atonement—including the reconciliation between humanity and the rest of God's good creation. So, Francis is remembered as proclaiming the Word with birds and making peace with a particularly dangerous and violent wolf. And it is this witness to the grace of reconciliation in the Body of Christ, seen in the life of St Francis of Assisi, that we participate in when we bless the animals of this parish, as we will do this Sunday afternoon.

## Blessing of the Animals

In keeping with the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, we will have a short service and blessing of animals on Sunday, October 5 at 4:00pm. Bring your pets and scaly, furry, or feathered friends for a blessing.

## Christian Education

**Godly Play** is currently in session. Children are invited to hear the Word in a fun, learning environment in the Parish House during the first half of our Sunday morning worship; after which, they join their parents in church for Communion.

**J2A Youth Group** meets twice a month for fun, fellowship, food, & formation. The next meeting is later today (Sunday, Sept 28) from 5:00 to 7:00pm. We will meet at the Church for the first half and then go down the street to Janeway (11538 Old Ridge Road) for pizza and a bonfire.

**Adult Forum** meets Sunday mornings at 9am. Through Nov 23, Don Schubert and Fr Nik are co-leading a study exploring the question: “What is Church?” Come join us for coffee and good conversation.

## Christian Formation

**Baptism** – If you are seeking baptism or would like to reaffirm your baptismal covenant, please contact Fr Nik at [KNicholasForti@gmail.com](mailto:KNicholasForti@gmail.com).

**Confirmation & Reception** – If you are interested in being Confirmed or if you have been Confirmed in another Christian tradition but would like to be officially Received as a member of the Episcopal Church, Fr Nik will be leading a Confirmation Class to begin soon. Please be in contact with Fr Nik ([KNicholasForti@gmail.com](mailto:KNicholasForti@gmail.com)) for more info.

## **Cookbook**

The Fork Church cookbooks are in!

The cookbook committee will be selling them each Sunday.

You may also contact any committee member or contact

Alexia Miles - amiles6395@aol.com or tel. 252-7282 to arrange to get yours.

They will make wonderful Christmas gifts!

## **Sunday Morning Refreshments**

Thank You to all who have volunteered to help with this ministry of hospitality. Refreshments after the Church Service on Sunday mornings have become more and more popular with the congregation and the children. At this point, we still need volunteers to handle refreshments from now to the end of the year. Please, look at your calendars & sign up for one of the dates still open that is listed below.

October - 19, and 26.

November - 2, 16, 23, and 30.

December - 7, 14, 21, and 28.

PLEASE CONTACT MAC CHENAULT AT [MCHENAULT@CHENAULTLAWOFFICES.COM](mailto:MCHENAULT@CHENAULTLAWOFFICES.COM) OR CALL MAC AT 730-7175 OR USE SIGN UP SHEET IN CHURCH.

## **Dessert and Coffee Evenings with Nik – *There's still time to sign up!***

We are having a series of Dessert and Coffee gathers so that Nik and get to meet members of the congregation on a more one on one basis. All of the events will start at 7PM. Below are the remaining dates available, and who will be hosting.

October 8 - Scott & Lindsey Smythe

October 15 - Michael & Angela Woods

October 27 - John & Anne Rickman

Please select a date and let the office know. We will also be calling to confirm.

## **Nik's Calendar**

Tuesday, Sept 30 – RMC CMC Ecumenical Worship Planning; Noon-1pm

Wednesday, Oct 1 – Vestry Meeting; 7-9pm

Thursday, Oct 2 – Clergy Colleague Group; 10-11:30am

– RMC Campus Ministries Council; Noon-1pm

Monday, Oct 6 – Attend Dodson Dinner & Lecture @ St John's, Roanoke; 5-8pm

Tuesday, Oct 7 – Pastoral Visits

Thursday, Oct 9 – Fresh Start @ Trinity, Fredericksburg; 9am-5pm

## **Looking Ahead**

September 28 - J2A Youth Group – 5PM

October 2 & 3 – Office closed

October 5<sup>th</sup> – Blessing of the animals – 4PM

J2A Youth Group – 5PM

October 17, 18<sup>th</sup> - Wellness “event” @ St. James the Less

October 26<sup>th</sup> - Halloween Service , – 5PM

Outreach Dinner @ St. James the Less

Sunday, Nov 2 - All Saints Day (observed)

November 9<sup>th</sup> – Bishop's visit - Time - TBD