

Getting Ready for the Big One

Millions of words have been written about hurricanes. What to do. Where to go. What to save. What to buy. (Consumer advice always tells us what we must stockpile.)

But what shall we collect for our spiritual lives? What mind-set can we prepare? What prayerful attitudes will ready us for coping with what some day must blow through this city that's almost surrounded by water? Is there a spiritual checklist for us?

Mattie Austin thinks about these things. She warehouses some water and canned goods. She thinks about a shelter and an escape plan. She urges us to get ready. Yet there are additional preparations also.

What will we see as the Lord's work at such a time? How will we love the Lord whose waves are battering our security? Now is the time to get our hearts prepared as well as our homes.

In a piece called "I am a homeless man," Roger Kamenetz writes about the Katrina debacle. "Now it is the looters I fear. I fear them, but I don't condemn them. ... most of them, are just me. They are just me. If I were there, I would be them. I would thirst as they thirst, and hunger as they hunger, and I would break any door, I would enter any store or home, I would steal, I would do whatever I needed to live and to make sure those I love would live. My wife, my children: Yes, for sure, for them I would do whatever I needed to do."

In such a time, will our values drive our action? Are we ready to be so compassionate? And what

do we do now to be ready in a crisis to rise to the occasion?

The same man writes, "I am homeless now, but I am one of the lucky ones. I am not abandoned on I-10 while politicians talk and generals dither. I am not lying in the hot sun with children dying in my arms."

Are we ready for this year's Katrina? What's on our spiritual checklist? How do we prepare to act as Christ's disciples?

When the hurricane comes, will St. Augustine's people be prepared?

Something Deserving Our

Attention: Our average attendance in March was 53; in April 56; in May 57.5. Every month a few more people worshiped with us. And in June we averaged 65. That looked really good in our pews.

And then came July. So far our average attendance is 45.

Vacations? Yes, of course. Illness? Yes to that reason also.

Jeff Jeffers and **Herman Woodburn** have been ailing all month and others of us have been ill a Sunday or two.

But maybe there are some less obvious reasons too. Try these.

Last summer we were invested in dismantling Holy Cross church and giving it new life at St. A's. Projects keep us intimately connected to church, to each other.

During last summer's months, a group of St. A's people ventured into new ways of experiencing spirituality. For them, church was more than only Sunday worship.

And at the end of summer, we partied, sang heartily and laughed easily. We called the event "Celebration!" We enjoyed being together, being church family.

Work, study, celebration. That combination kept us connected, invigorated, forward looking last summer. Maybe we need them again? Now?

Seeing Ourselves

Who, What We Are

Yes, we in this congregation are Christians, 80 or so people of some 77 million in 164 countries around the world.

In the U.S., we are known as *Episcopalian* -- a term interchangeable with Anglican, all part of a grand spiritual tradition that dates to the year 597 in England when another Saint Augustine (not our patron, St. Augustine of Hippo) arrived in Canterbury.

The U.S. Episcopal church dates to the early 1600s with the formation of an early colony in Jamestown.

Today the Episcopal church comprises some 2.4 million believers in 110 dioceses. We Episcopalians are in a time of rediscovering our heritage, listening and learning with our Anglican counterparts.



Key to last week's sermon from **Fr. Lee Jaster** was the expression illustrated above. He also reminded us how we overlook who is in charge. We are tempted to pray as if we already have the solution: "Okay, Lord, I've got it all worked out -- the details, the schedule, all of it."

Nearer Than You Knew

This past week, when **Jeff Jeffers** was feeling particularly poorly, **Fr. Whitlock** spent several hours with him at his home. Yes, Fr. Robin.

The Whitlock family, on summer leave from our church, had returned to St. Pete from their northern vacation to ready themselves for a trip to Europe. But when Fr. Robin heard of Jeff's long illness, our Priest-in-Charge made the pastoral visit.

Fr. Whitlock will return to St. Augustine's on Sunday, August 6th.

This newsletter is for members and friends of one courageous Episcopal Church in south St. Petersburg, FL. "... more* from St. Augustine's" is about candor, recognition, spiritual attitude, nixing hearsay and, yes, unashamed cheer leading. Members Judy and Tom Krug are the project's co-editors. Some 65 parishioners are essential to the effort. We think of this weekly as the first draft of our recent history. Every issue is available each Sunday after the service and also online at www.staugstpete.org, our web site for church-shoppers.