

## Annual Rector's Report for 2024 - AGM Feb. 16th, 2025

"Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive."

The Annual Parish Meetings are special occasions and not just because of the culinary pleasures of a pot-luck! They are an important and crucial aspect of our corporate life as a Parish because they locate the temporal life of the Parish within the primacy of our spiritual mission and vocation. On the one hand, it is about 'taking care of business,' if you will pardon the commonplace expression, but, on the other hand, it is a profound moment of collective reflection about our life together in the body of Christ, a way of looking back on the year past and looking ahead to the year before us. It is a way of concentrating our attention on our life in Christ, recognising the various challenges that we have faced and continue to face.

*Septuagesima* is the first of the pre-Lenten Sundays that orient us towards Lent as the pilgrimage of love, charity, to use the older English word from the Latin, *caritas*. The 'gesima' Sundays point us to Easter by their very names. They signify the weeks and days before Easter: the weeks of the seventieth, sixtieth and fiftieth days. Lent itself is known as *quadragesima*, pertaining to the idea of forty days, symbolic of the forty years in the wilderness of the Exodus and the forty days of Christ fasting and praying in the wilderness. The 'gesimas' belong to the transition from Christmas and Epiphany to Lent and Easter and remind us of their crucial interrelation. Light and life are grounded ultimately in love, the charity without which "all our doings are nothing worth," as the *Quinquagesima* Collect so emphatically states. "If I have not charity, I am nothing," Paul reminds us.

The 'gesima' Sundays highlight the transformation of the classical or cardinal virtues of temperance, courage, prudence, and justice by love. They speak to a profound sense of the forms of the ethical that belong to the pilgrimage of our souls to its end in God, an end in which we participate now in our life together as a Parish through service and sacrifice, through word and sacrament, and in worship as penitential adoration.

In other words, these activities that belong to human character are perfected by the divine love, the charity of God, which as Paul says, "never faileth." That cannot be said about our human loves which are always incomplete, partial, and often in disarray. But God seeks something more for us than what belongs to human sin and experience. And as Holy Week shows, he makes a way for us out of our sin and evil. Tears of sorrow, and tears of joy. All because of the love of Christ.

In the spiritual pattern of the 'gesima' Sundays, we are bidden to think first about temperance and justice, and, secondly, about courage and prudence, and, thirdly, about the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity that belong to our going up to Jerusalem in the radical meaning of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. Charity, of course, is the greatest of these.

The theme of justice in the *Septuagesima* Gospel at first glance may seem puzzling and perhaps confusing; it doesn't seem right or fair that those who have borne the burden and heat of the day should be made equal to those who have laboured only a short time. But this is to miss the point of the parable that our lives and our labours are entirely

dependent upon the greater justice of God. "Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive" is predicated upon "whatsoever is right I will give you." This is the *justicia dei*, the justice of God that is greater than human justice. It belongs ultimately to what God seeks for us and provides for us by the grace which gathers the whole of our humanity to himself in his essential goodness. His justice *is* his mercy, come what may in the ups and downs of human experience, in the sadnesses and tragedies, the follies and mistakes, the sins and wickedness that we constantly confront to some extent or other. Divine justice cannot be taken captive by our human measures and concerns; rather they are taken up into the justice and mercy of God.

The challenge is always about discerning that mercy in the midst of the sorrows and sadnesses, darkness and evil of our world and day. Mercy reminds us of who we are in the sight of God which is always more and greater than simply what we experience. The grace of God is at once *transcendent* and *immanent*, at once beyond and above us as well as present and with us. The French writer, George Bernanos, wonderfully says "grace is everywhere." We forget this at our peril. Our struggle is to see it and to embrace it.

The past year has been remarkable, I think, in terms of your devotion and dedication and in the face of the various hurdles which we have faced together. The Liturgy remains central and primary. We have faced some considerable challenges about property maintenance, especially in terms of the roofing of the King Street side of the Church and Chancel. What a blessing to have been able to get that work done and done properly! My thanks to our wardens, Alex Jurgens and David Appleby for shepherding the maintenance and construction projects of the past year so well and ably.

There have been other challenges of a more personal nature dealing with people's health and healing, and, most sadly, with suffering and death. We have been deeply affected by the incredible hardships endured by our former treasurer, Kathy Cameron, and deeply saddened by her sudden passing after seeming to have made a remarkable recovery. Our hearts are broken as we endeavour to uphold her and Scottie and Nickie in our prayers. We are most grateful for Kathy's tremendous commitment to the treasury and to the life of the Parish in so many ways. She is greatly missed.

We have been greatly blessed with a new treasurer, Marion Mullins, who has stepped up so well and so ably into the office of Parish Treasurer and who brings a wealth of experience in business to the task at hand in keeping our finances in good working order. My thanks to Alex Jurgens and Rod Kershaw for helping out with the finances during the time of Kathy's illness and her passing and for assisting in the transition of things into Marion's hands. In all these things, the support and guidance of the Parish Council has been outstanding and I thank them for their wisdom and advice.

We have as a Parish continued with our patterns of worship and learning. It is becoming more difficult for parishioners to get out to evening services but we have still kept up as much of the teaching programme as possible especially in Lent and Advent. The Book Club still goes on. We were able once again to contribute to the Missions to Seafarers. We continue to provide some help and support to the residents of Windsor House who come to the Parish. Other forms of outreach are services that are held at the various nursing

homes, Windsor Elms, Dykeland Lodge, and Haliburton Place. The Ham Supper was once again a great success not just financially but in terms of fellowship and cooperation. We are most grateful for the support of so many both near and far away to the life and mission of the Parish. I thank our webmaster, Scott Gilbreath, for his labours in continuing to maintain the website and to monitor its activity and use. Thanks to Marilyn Curry and Judy Gilbreath the preparations of the altar for each Sunday have been maintained and we were able to have another church clean-up work day in the Fall.

I have continued to teach at King's-Edgehill and to write a weekly little chapel reflection for the school's e-newsletter which is also shared with the parish in the weekly Christ Church Connections e-newsletter. I have continued to contribute papers and addresses over the past year in a number of venues: a response to a paper at the Atlantic Theological Conference held in Charlottetown, an address to the St. John Vianney Branch of the SSC, a homily upon the occasion of my latest grandchild's baptism at St. Bartholomew's, Toronto, and contributions to the on-going project of the Works of Robert Crouse.

We are most grateful for the dedication of Owen Stephens, our organist, and to the choir for their labours and hard work. I am very grateful for the assistance at the altar of Fr. Todd Meaker, who was also able to take the services for me while we were away in Toronto. All of these things speak to the vitality and spiritual strength of the Parish in what are certainly difficult and trying times. Owing to the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury through a lapse of oversight about a matter of abuse in parts of the Communion, the Diocese has required that the various officers of the Parish undertake an online 'safe-church' course. My thanks to Deb Day for offering to lead some of the leadership through that task. We hope to complete this sometime in the near future. We remain committed to contributing to the Diocese as best we can but without compromise to the existence and well-being of the Parish.

All in all a busy year and one in which we have endeavoured to be faithful to the principles that define and govern our lives spiritually and to continue to grow in faith and understanding. It is about learning that "whatsoever is right, that shall we receive" in the mercies of Christ, provided we persevere in the race that is set before us with grace and determination. Perhaps the prayer of Sir Francis Drake conveys this best:

O Lord God, when thou givest to thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning, but the continuing of the same, until it be thoroughly finished, that yieldeth the true glory; through him who, for the finishing of thy work, laid down his life for us, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Humbly submitted,  
Fr. David Curry  
February 16th, 2025