

cEaster 2 ~ April 11, 2010 ~ A homily preached by The Rev'd Erl G. Purnell at Old St. Andrew's Church, Bloomfield, CT

Acts 5.27-32; Psalm 118.14-29; Revelation 1.4-8; John 20.19-31

You get two sermons today. Not to worry, two half sermons.

Yesterday was a special day. At 10 o'clock in the morning, I was at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in South Windsor for the confirmation and reception into the Episcopal Church of candidates from our deanery. Bishop Curry presided and the service was splendid. From Old St. Andrew's, Corby Coperthwaite and Diane Roth were presented and received into the Episcopal Church.

What a pleasure to celebrate the commitment of these two people—the reaffirmation of their baptismal vows and their embrace of the Episcopal Church as their spiritual home.

I don't want to put undue focus on them, but I do want to say something about who they are and how they found the Episcopal Church.

Diane lives in Plainville and she has the distinction of traveling the farthest of all of our regular worshippers to get to OSA on a Sunday morning. I met Diane when her beloved husband Chris was dying. Her friend, Joanne Mitchell, who's from Bloomfield and comes to OSA, brought Diane to church for some comfort during those trying days. I was blessed to visit with Chris several times before he died and Diane invited me to say prayers at Chris' wake.

Out of the pain of loss and the power of friendship and love, Diane began to wonder about her spiritual journey, her church affiliation, and how she wanted to have Christ in her life after Chris' death. She took my *Introduction to the Episcopal Tradition* course and was received into the Episcopal Church yesterday. I can only describe Diane when I hugged her afterwards by saying she was *glowing*.

I first came to know Corby via email. Somehow she had come upon our website and she sent an email to me. I was still recovering from my knee infection last fall. "Corby", now that's an interesting name. I wanted to know more.

Corby is a person who has been devoted to Christ her whole life and has demonstrated that devotion in myriad ways. Baptized a Roman Catholic, she probably would have been a priest if ... well, you know, the gender thing. In her faithfulness, Corby struggled to find comfort in the Catholic Church, to feel fully welcomed, to be without conflict and angst, and among people who see each other as God has made them.

I actually wasn't here when Corby first attended a service. So, it took a while for me finally to meet her. When I did, I saw that dedication to Christ and her joy in celebrating genuine equality and inclusiveness here in the Episcopal Church.

We are so fortunate to have these two new members of the Episcopal Church in our parish. They are here, like you, because they want to be here. They love our liturgy, the wonderful music we make, the teaching and fellowship. They continue to struggle, as most of us do, with what we know and understand, what we doubt and what we believe. Diane and Corby welcome and God bless.

Half sermon 2. This afternoon the Nutmeg Symphonic Pops Orchestra will perform a benefit concert at Yale's Battell Chapel. Now, that's a big deal! Orchestra Director Dino Ciaburri wanted to do something for Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake on January 12th. He began by gathering his musicians and auditioning singers who might bring the gravitas of their voices to the gravitas of Re-building Haiti. Among those singers chosen ... our own Liz Miller.

Liz brings to OSA, and to so many venues in Connecticut, her superlative soprano voice. I don't know if anyone appreciates her singing more than I. Yet, for as crystalline a voice as Liz has, as pure as she hits those descants, as well as she interprets beautiful librettos, as patient as she is in teaching me to sing, I am continually struck by the heart of this young woman.

Liz got the gig as soprano with Dino Ciaburri's benefit concert, and good for her. Then, she says to Dr. Director—I'll never question the brass of our beloved diva—"I know a charity that's involved with Haiti and I think you should consider giving some of the proceeds from the concert to Old St. Andrew's for the benefit of École le Bon Samaritain."

Because we have a pretty good website and a blog about what's been happening in Haiti, Dr. Ciaburri was impressed and he agreed to split the proceeds between OSA's Good Samaritain Rebuilding Fund and the

Catholic Relief Fund. I hope you're planning to come to New Haven this afternoon to hear the concert and to support our Good Samaritan Rebuilding Fund.

How can we possibly count the blessings that fill us all the time? Diane and Corby being received into the Episcopal Church. Liz's vocal talent and her commitment to having things continue to happen in Haiti. We are so fortunate. We are so fortunate to have them and to have each other. We ... we are the Alpha and Omega, we are the Body of Christ in the here and now, in the every day, we are the new covenant, we are the Peace Christ gives to the world.

Amen.

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