

Sermon, October 24, 2010

Deacon Ricky Brightman

Last Thursday I attended a Council of Churches breakfast that honored more than 40 Rhode Islanders who were named as “Partners in Faith”- working in nursing homes, churches, schools – at the Salvation Army and at the State Prison in Cranston; some building community gardens while others worked on neighborhood home repair ; one worked for justice for low income people and led a campaign to eliminate childhood poverty. Modesta Pellot, our friend from St George’s, was honored for the work she has done for the Hispanic communities of Central Falls and Pawtucket. These personal gifts of time, talent, and treasure serve to give thanks for all that these people have received.

Some of the readings today talk of richness and prosperity – and the good things that God has given to the people, the children of Zion. There are promises too – of abundant rain, fertile land for grazing, plenteous food. It is evident that there is a lot to be thankful for.

So it is too, here at St Luke’s, our church home. God has blessed us with a beautiful place to worship, committed leaders of a great diversity of programs, effective pastoral support, inspiring music, learning opportunities of various kinds, and spiritual

companions. As we listen to stewardship witnesses during the next few weeks, we realize that we are we are fortunate, indeed, to have found this parish home. And, as we give thanks, perhaps we also search for ways to share our gifts.

I found this intriguing mobile this past week – a ball made out of a cut up map of Rhode Island. I think we can even see where our own homes are – for living, and, yes, for worship. And, as we touch turn the ball we see - - - - a lot of space where there are no homes - - - - perhaps there are people searching for a place of comfort and safety, either physically or spiritually. It's sort of like one of those magnetic play boards where you shake it to get the little metal specks to settle around something solid – if we could just twist and turn our mobile so that all could find a safe home in neighborhood, in a church.

I return to you today from Diocesan Convention – from our larger church home where representatives of our more than our fifty Rhode Island parishes gather to worship together and do business. We are all very different – just look at our little globe. Some parishes have serious financial troubles, other are working hard to hold their deteriorating buildings together. Still others, like us, are moving through a period of clergy transition. The diocese itself --- “we” have had to make difficult financial decisions about supporting various diocesan ministries.

One ministry that has been lost to the Diocese is the Episcopal Chaplaincy at the Adult Correctional Institutions in Cranston – a ministry long supported by this parish and others more directly – Joyce Penfield, Father Craig, Robin Mooney. We do not know what will happen to the powerless people who have found a spiritual home there. How will they, like the tax collector, make their confession and seek mercy? One thing is certain – they – neighbors, friends, family – people who have made bad choices - people experiencing mental illness or addictive behaviors – people in the wrong place at the wrong time - neighbors, friends, family – all living on a hill in Cranston – it is certain that their spiritual needs can needs can not be forgotten – despite the economy.

As we appreciate our own physical and spiritual homes, let us think of the little globe – and the spaces to be filled by those of us who endeavor each day - to pass on the Light of Christ.

AMEN