

## The Two Big Questions

**O**n Saturday, May 22nd at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, Fred, Graham, Isabel, Katie, and Theresa were confirmed in the Church. There were a total of 70 mostly young people present with their families, sponsors and representatives of their parishes. It was a big, happy dressed-up crowd. In some parishes it is only after confirmation that young people are invited to the altar to receive Holy Communion, so it was a big day in many ways.

Bishop Catherine Roskam, always an engaging preacher, did not disappoint us on this day. She was gracious and welcoming and thoroughly delighted to see so many people come to renew their baptismal promises. In her unscripted homily, she took the opportunity to speak directly to her young audience and what she said I think is worthy of reflection.

“Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil?” the bishop asked the confirmation candidates. “I do”, came the polite reply. The bishop shook her head and said again, loudly this time, “Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil?” “I DO!” responded all the candidates- this time with conviction.

Somehow in all the many months of talking about God, and worship, and Church History, and faith and spirituality I had forgotten that the candidates only have to answer two questions: “Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil?” and “Do you renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?” Just two questions- but two very big questions whose answer, “I do”, requires more than just the action of our vocal chords and lips.

Evil. How often do we really think about what’s evil? Many of us have kind of an abstract notion of capital “E” Evil- generally a vision of hatred and violence taken to the extreme, but what about everyday evil? How often do we think carefully about the kinds of

things that might in some contexts seem benign, but in others could be rightly called “evil”?

The bishop told the young people that she worries about drugs and alcohol; she worries about sex too soon.

Drugs that are used for healing, taken to excess can rightly be called “evil”. Alcohol that is consumed too young, too often, and too much can easily be called evil. Sexual encounters that are devoid of understanding and mutuality, hook-ups that are absent the comprehension of emotional, physical and spiritual consequences can be evil. All of us who have reached the other side of some of these evils ourselves know their consequences- and we certainly would not wish

them on any children.

And Bp. Roskam named another thing — an everyday evil that I think about a lot. Meanness. Meanness in the form of character assassination, bullying, bigotry and shaming. This meanness, this everyday evil, has taken on new dimensions in the many opportunities for communication that do not require accountability. Text messages, wall posts and tweets that disrespect and dishonor one’s self and others are evil. They destroy spirits and they undermine community. This insidious meanness works against Jesus’ message of love for neighbor and self. Meanness is evil. I was very glad the bishop named it.

I want to thank Bp. Roskam for reminding all of us of the challenges we encounter- growing up or grown up- in a world that needs so much more love and understanding than it has. Encounters with evil happen every day to all of us. Our best “I DO” is not enough of a defense against them. But that is where the second confirmation question comes in:

“Do you renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?” said the bishop. And the response came, “I do, and with God’s grace I will follow him as my Savior and Lord.”

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From the  
Rector

# The Two Big Questions

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Yes. It is God's grace that makes it possible for us to turn away from the things that would draw the goodness from our lives. We really can't just say "I do" to the first question and then go off and resist temptation on our own. It requires us to access the power and grace that God has clearly shown to us in Jesus Christ. These questions are related and critically linked, and I believe it is the "I DO!" of assent to these two questions that is really the most powerful part of Confirmation.

Our young people will have many more opportunities to read and question the Creeds, to explore Holy Scripture, and to wonder and care about the past and the future of the church. Yet they will have exponentially more encounters with those things that would derail God's—and our—best hope for their lives. They have promised in their own words

now to keep their Baptismal Covenant. Let's be certain we keep our promise to uphold them in this. The adult recognition of the gift we were given at our baptisms, which is the grace of an indissoluble connection to God, is powerful indeed and will provide us with a way to make the choices that show forth God's glory and love to the world.

*Almighty God, we thank you that by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself, and that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit you have bound us to your service. Renew in your servants the covenant you made with them at their Baptism. Send them forth in the power of that Spirit to perform the service you set before them; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

—Nora †

## BULLETINS

A Memorial Service was held for Mary Elizabeth "Ibbets" Knapp, on Sunday, May 23rd.



The Vestry meets at 7:30 p.m. June 8th.



Elvina Schullere, soprano, will give a concert on Sunday, June 6th at 4:00 p.m. in Colwell Hall.



Midnight Run is Friday, June 11th.



Services will be held in Colwell Hall for the summer, beginning June 13th. We will go to one service at 9 a.m. beginning June 20th.



## Wedding:

Alyssa Petersen married John R. Ossenkop, Jr. on May 14th at 5:14 p.m.

## Our new Assistant Rector!

### The Reverend Lindsay Lunnum

Lindsay comes to us from St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Providence, RI, where she has been serving as Assistant Rector. At St. Martin's she directs ministries for children, youth and families, including Church School and parenting workshops.

Lindsay has many years of experience in communication and has served on the Episcopal Church Committee for Young Adult Ministry. St. Barnabas is indeed blessed to add her gifts to our community.

Along with her many talents, Lindsay brings her family: husband James McGeeran (pursuing a Master's in Social Work at NYU) and their two children, Seamus, age 2, and Maggie, who was born in April.

We will welcome Lindsay at the 9:00 a.m. service on Sunday, July 18th. Please join us!



## From the Music Department

### Canterbury Choir, Forces Depleted, Scores Success

Despite a serious shortage of singers, particularly in the bass section, the Canterbury Choir managed to pull off in April a glorious Service of Evensong and performance of Vaughan Williams' Five Mystical Songs.

At the initial planning of the date for the concert there were one or two people for whom the date was a problem. When taking into account the ordinary calendar and then the church calendar, I decided that there was not much choice other than to proceed with our already-

chosen date. Ah, to be able to predict the future...!

As the weeks and rehearsals progressed, there were a few more people who said that they could not attend, and these absences seemed particularly to affect the bass section. As we all know, things will happen, but why were they happening particularly to that section?

On the Sunday preceding the concert date David Snell told me that his father was just entering hospice, and he was not sure what to expect in the coming days. David was to be the bass soloist in the setting of the Nunc Dimittis that we were doing. On Tuesday of that week he called to say that his father had died and that he had to leave immediately for Rochester to be with his family. It was a sadness for all of us on many levels.

Onward! I thought that it wasn't as if this choir had only one Nunc in its repertoire. I explained the situation to the choir and told them that they should get ready for a plan B. And this announcement is at the rehearsal before the

concert! Need I say — that Thursday rehearsal and the dress rehearsal on Saturday morning were demanding and just a little frantic — at least for me.

When the going got tough, what do the tough do? Well, in this case the tough got going — in the best possible way.

The choir was just great, and Parker Scott did an absolutely superb job in the extended solos in the Vaughan Williams. He had worked hard, both with the music and with thoughtful consideration of the text of these pieces. It was a moving and thoroughly satisfying performance in every way by him. Diva Sandy Summer-Parks floated beautifully through her solo in the Magnificat. Well done!

And I have to offer special kudos to Jody Hansen for his single-handedly holding down the bass "section." Way to go, Jody!

All, beware! Come the fall the Canterbury Choir may want you! More would be merrier! †

—Donald

# InCommon

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**MISSION STATEMENT:** The Church of St. Barnabas, Irvington is a Christian community, grounded in the Episcopal tradition, which celebrates the love of Christ through regular worship, fellowship and music. Our goals are to grow in faith, both within ourselves as individuals and by welcoming others from a variety of backgrounds and stages of life, and to reach out and share God's abundant gifts with others.

## **Congratulations to this spring's confirmands!**

*Left to right:*  
Graham McAnney Hansen,  
Frederick Hamilton Jones,  
Theresa Rose Giglio,  
Kaitlin Mae Gardner and  
Isabel An-Mei Grieder.

