

## Here's The Point!

Life Lessons from Mother Lynn

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### "250 Years!"

Originally delivered June 27-28, 2009

Epistle: I John 3.13 - 24 & Gospel: Luke 14.16 - 24

On this 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary weekend, instead of our usual readings, I have chosen the Epistle and Gospel from the *1549* and *1662 Book of Common Prayer*. Those exact readings were heard by our forebears on this Sunday in June, 250 years ago.

As a God-incidence, on this party weekend for our parish -- the Gospel is about a party given by God. Most importantly, it's about God's desire to have a full house for the festive celebration we call Holy Eucharist.

250 years ago, on June 24, 1759, the Rev. Ebenezer Dibble recorded that: "*I preached in the lower district of Salem to .... between three and four hundred people old and young, who behaved very decently and attentively.*"\*

This weekend, 250 years later, we gather to share the same festive meal at which Christ Himself is both our Host and our sustenance. However, in true St. John's/St. Paul's fashion, we've added a picnic and the Baptism of *Ainsley Ellen Graham!*

Baptism is the perfect way to begin the next 250 years because Baptism is the sacrament of *belonging to Christ, to His body - the church - and to one another*. By virtue of our Baptism, we're joined to one another here - and to all of our forebears.

We're joined to Mrs. Alice Poor who remembers picking wild strawberries in the fields around St. Paul's Chapel in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. She writes:

*"It was all clear land....as I recall, there was a gathering for the replacement of the cornerstone, because it had been broken into. For the few coins inside - I guess. We went marching around the foundation singing, 'The Church's One Foundation.'"*

For those unfamiliar with that great hymn, the Church's One Foundation is Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom we are all joined in Baptism.

The Rev. Ebenezer Dibble, Alice Poor and a great cloud of witnesses who we'll hear more about as the year unfolds - have all left a legacy of *fortitude* and *faithful service*. My question now is - "*What about you?*" Me? *What legacy will we leave?* Notice that the legacy left by our forebears is one that resulted in action - *but it began in the heart*. Therefore, I'd like to spend a moment examining our *inner lives* - a.k.a. - *our souls*.

As some of you know, I spent last week at Yale studying iconography. (*Icons are religious paintings done on wood in a style developed in by the Eastern Orthodox Church beginning in the 4<sup>th</sup> century*). The idea is that “writing” an icon is a spiritual practice that opens a person up to the image of God *in them*.

Since *we all have the image of God in us*, here’s a story from my class.

(As background, icons are done with egg tempera - you crack an egg, mix the yolk with wine and color pigments, then you paint).

Last year, a student took his piece home and put it on the windowsill to dry. His dog, smelling the egg in the egg tempera, licked the icon right back to its wooden base. *The dog literally ate his icon!* The devastated student called the professor and was told, “No problem - *you’re the icon* - the icon is in you!”

**Here’s the point: no matter what happens - you can’t lose the image of God! That’s because *the image of God is in you and me and Ainsley Ellen who we’re baptizing*. The candles given at Baptism symbolize the *light of Christ* to which we’re joined in the sacrament. *It is the light of Christ - who by His dying and rising restored the image of God in us.***

Our lifelong task is to nurture that image of God, not only in the newly baptized *but also in ourselves*. We do that by developing our souls. Father Alan Jones calls this “*soul making*.”\*\* Soul making involves the discipline of *daily prayer, weekly worship, and sacrificial giving*. Those disciplines open up the divine image in us. They develop our souls. They deepen our faith and strengthen our fortitude.

**Here’s what you need to remember.** My teacher says that “*we become what we look at*.” I say - *if you want a well developed soul - watch what you look at*. Watch what your children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews look at!

Look at the *Church’s One Foundation, Jesus*. He’s present here weekly in the Eucharistic party that He hosts just for you. **The good news is: *if you look at Jesus often enough, you will become like Him - which is our life’s goal.***

Look at *little children, the poor and those in need* - they too bear the image of God. Look at our forbears for the last 250 years - *the face of Christ is imprinted on their lives and in their witness*.

If you look at their faith and at their fortitude, I guarantee that like them - *you’ll leave a legacy that lasts*.

Amen.

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\*Bolton, *History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the County of Westchester*

\*\*\*Alan W. Jones, *Soul Making* (New York: Harper& Row, 1985)

For more information on St. John’s Episcopal Parish of South Salem, NY, please contact the church office at 914-763-8273.