

Upcoming Book Studies and Lectures with Pot-luck

The Education and Formation Committee of St. Peter's will be featuring two book studies and one lecture series:

Beginning this Sunday, February 12 at 9:30 Conversations with Scripture: The Gospel of Mark by Marcus Borg (meets in the Library on office level)

On Thursday Evenings 6:30-7:30 pm. during Lent we will read *Love and Death* by Forest Church (meets either in the Library on office level or parish hall, depending on our group size) March 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30.

Estill Curtis Pennington will lead us in three sessions ***On Seeing & Praying with Angels***. The first session will be held at the home of Jim and Priscilla Potter on Saturday evening, March 4 at 6 pm. We are invited to bring food and have a pot-luck dinner before Estill's presentation. Then we will have 2 more presentations on Sunday, March 12 and March 26 at 9:30 am between services. These presentations will be held in the Parish Hall.

Recommended Books for St. Peter's from the Ed. Committee

- 1) *An Altar in the World* by Barbara Brown Taylor
In the *New York Times* bestseller *An Altar in the World*, acclaimed author Barbara Brown Taylor continues her spiritual journey by building upon where she left off in *Leaving Church*. With the honesty of Elizabeth Gilbert (*Eat, Pray, Love*) and the spiritual depth of Anne Lamott (*Grace, Eventually*), Taylor shares how she learned to find God beyond the church walls by embracing the sacred as a natural part of everyday life. In *An Altar in the World*, Taylor shows us how to discover altars everywhere we go and in nearly everything we do as we learn to live with purpose, pay attention, slow down, and revere the world we live in.
- 2) *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy and Fairy Tale* by Frederick Buechner
A sermon arises out of silence, preacher and writer Frederick Buechner reminds us, and that silence is both an opportunity and a warning. An audience sits in the pews waiting, and each of those who sit there bring with them a long and complicated history. How will you reach them? How will you awaken them? "Tell them the truth," Buechner says in this brief and powerful book. The Gospel begins here, out of this silence: "It is life with the sound turned off so that for a moment or two you can experience it not in terms of the words you make it bearable by but for the unutterable mystery that it is." Out of this silence, he writes, the "real news comes, which is sad news before it is glad news and that is fairy tale last of all."

This series of lectures explores these three ways of seeing the Gospel: first as tragedy, as honest sorrow and suffering--this must be faced before anything else becomes possible. From this comes the comedy of new life: a child born to Abraham and Sarah in old age, Lazarus raised from the dead. This is the folly of the Gospel--

what Buechner will ultimately call the fairy tale. Drawing deeply from the well of *The Wizard of Oz* and other stories, he reminds us in this final chapter that "there is a child in all of us," a child in touch with a truth deeper than the logic of tragedy. --Doug Thorpe

3) *Walking on Water* by Anthony De Mello

Drawing on stories of monks, rabbis, and soldiers; fairy tales and legends; gentle jokes and Zen sayings; Anthony de Mello awakens us to a practical, direct connection with the divine. His exercises encourage a relinquishing of the ego, an acceptance of people as they are, and a freedom from fear and anxiety. De Mello's words strengthen our faith. Upheld by the divine love all around us we feel that we too are "walking on water."

4) *Love and Death* by Forest Church

As pastor of New York's All Souls Unitarian Church, Church is perhaps most comfortable speaking in sermons, which may also be especially comforting, now that he has received a veritable death sentence via terminal cancer, to his congregants and the readers of his many books. The famously liberal minister-son of Idaho's storied mid-twentieth-century liberal senator Frank Church here uses several sermons delivered during the span of his career to explore the bond humans have with death in relation to love, a topic he has addressed often when congregants or their loved ones have died. He concludes that to live is to love, that without love there can be no life. Thus the terms life and love become interchangeable, and life-love is a risk we all must take. Church speaks directly to the heart with a message of certain solace to virtually anyone facing the loss of a loved one. --Donna Chavez

5) *The Path: What Chinese Philosophy Can Teach Us About the Good Life* by Michael Puett & Christine Gross-Loh

"This is a book that turns the notion of help—and the self, for that matter—on its head. Puett and Gross-Loh bring seemingly esoteric concepts down to Earth, where we can see them more clearly. The result is a philosophy book grounded in the here and now, and brimming with nuggets of insight. No fortune-cookie this, *The Path* serves up a buffet of meaty life lessons. I found myself reading and re-reading sections, letting the wisdom steep like a good cup of tea." (Eric Weiner, author of *The Geography of Bliss* and *The Geography of Genius*)

6) *Thoughts in Solitude* by Thomas Merton

Thoughtful and eloquent, as timely (or timeless) now as when it was originally published in 1956, *Thoughts in Solitude* addresses the pleasure of a solitary life, as well as the necessity for quiet reflection in an age when so little is private. Thomas Merton writes: "When society is made up of men who know no interior solitude it can no longer be held together by love: and consequently it is held together by a violent and abusive authority. But when men are violently deprived of the solitude and freedom which are their due, the society in which they live becomes putrid, it festers with servility, resentment and hate."

Thoughts in Solitude stands alongside *The Seven Story Mountain* as one of Merton's most popular works. Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, is perhaps the foremost spiritual thinker of the twentieth-century. His diaries, social commentary, and spiritual writings continue to be widely read after his untimely death in 1968.

- 7) *Sheer Grace: Living the Mystery of God* by Drasko Dizdar
SHEER GRACE is about doing liturgy as theology, and about a way of doing theology through liturgy as something that God does; and invites us to participate in as fully, consciously and actively as we are able.
- 8) *Monsignor Quixote* by Graham Greene
"Graham Greene's best novel." - *Spectator*

"A powerful late work... a mixture of entertainment and deep human awareness." - Malcolm Bradbury

"*Monsignor Quixote* is important in showing what may be the last stage of the novelist's long argument with himself about the needs, nature and effect of faith." - TLS
- 9) *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey Among the Christians of the Middle East* by William Dalrymple
In 587 a.d., two monks set off on an extraordinary journey that would take them in an arc across the entire Byzantine world, from the shores of the Bosphorus to the sand dunes of Egypt. On the way John Moschos and his pupil Sophronius the Sophist stayed in caves, monasteries, and remote hermitages, collecting the wisdom of the stylites and the desert fathers before their fragile world finally shattered under the great eruption of Islam. More than a thousand years later, using Moschos's writings as his guide, William Dalrymple sets off to retrace their footsteps and composes "an evensong for a dying civilization" --*Kirkus Reviews*
- 10) *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* by Amy-Jill Levine
The renowned biblical scholar, author of *The Misunderstood Jew*, and general editor for *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* interweaves history and spiritual analysis to explore Jesus' most popular teaching parables, exposing their misinterpretations and making them lively and relevant for modern readers.

Jesus was a skilled storyteller and perceptive teacher who used parables from everyday life to effectively convey his message and meaning. Life in first-century Palestine was very different from our world today, and many traditional interpretations of Jesus' stories ignore this disparity and have often allowed anti-Semitism and misogyny to color their perspectives.

In this wise, entertaining, and educational book, Amy-Jill Levine offers a fresh, timely reinterpretation of Jesus' narratives. In *Short Stories by Jesus*, she analyzes these "problems with parables," taking readers back in time to understand how their original Jewish audience understood them. Levine reveals the parables' connections to first-century economic and agricultural life, social customs and morality, Jewish scriptures and Roman culture. With this revitalized understanding, she interprets these moving stories for the contemporary reader, showing how the parables are not just about Jesus, but are also about us—and when read rightly, still challenge and provoke us two thousand years later.
- 11) *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit* by Parker J. Palmer

"He bravely takes on the current political climate, and this book provides therapy for the American body politic. His insights are heart-deep: America gains by living with tension and differences; we can help reclaim public life by actions as simple as walking down the street instead of driving. Hope's hardly cheap, but history is made up of what Palmer calls 'a million invisible acts of courage and the incremental gains that came with them.' This beautifully written book deserves a wide audience that will benefit from discussing it." (A "Starred Review" from Publishers Weekly, 8 August 2011)

"Healing the Heart of Democracy is a hopeful book that lifts up and hallows the heart as a source of inner sight. Inspired by the efforts to understand and undergird democracy by Abraham Lincoln, Alexis de Tocqueville, Rosa Parks, and others; the author sends us on our way rejoicing with the small portion of hope that he has planted in our minds and souls."
—Spirituality & Practice

"There is a deep and disturbing cloud hanging over the United States. It is a malaise that is leading to cynicism and self-centeredness. The antidote is to be found in the healing of the heart of our democracy, so that we might emerge from this private focus to a public one, which recognizes our interdependence. I know of no better guide to discerning the problem and the solutions, than this book by Parker Palmer. It is a prophetic book, one that needs to be taken with all due seriousness, if we are to emerge from our malaise stronger and healthier than before." (*Englewood Review of Books*, 2011)

Recommended Blogs/Podcasts for Members to be check out:

- 1) Brain Pickings (reflections on all matter of things)
- 2) Pray as you go (Scottish Jesuit daily meditation)
- 3) Brother Give us a Word (SSJE, The Cowley Fathers, daily meditation)