

The Lion

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February 2017

REGARDING THE NEW PRESIDENCY

January 22, 2017

by Fr. George W. Rutler

DURING THESE DAYS OF TRANSITION IN GOVERNMENT, temperance in expectations is a wise policy based on experience. Calvin Coolidge said, "It is a great advantage to a president, and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know he is not a great man." The Yankee farmer was frugal with words, but they were not cheap. No fawning reporters claimed that his sober speeches sent a tingle up their legs. Magazines did not hail him as "The Second Coming," and he would have thought it absurd to promise that his presidency was "the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal." Thus, he did not disappoint.

In his own instance, Coolidge's competence was as great as his humility. True to his dictum that "One of the greatest favors that can be bestowed upon the American people is economy in government," the nation during his administration enjoyed unprecedented prosperity, decreased income tax (he thought that the national average income tax of \$300 was outrageous), a federal budget surplus, unemployment down to 3 per cent, a decline in racial strife, and a boom in technological patents and progress.

Coolidge became president at the unexpected death of Warren G. Harding, who thought of himself as a significant orator. But that splendid curmudgeon, H. L. Mencken, said of Harding's rhetoric: "It reminds me of a string of wet sponges, it reminds me of tattered washing on the line; it reminds me of stale bean soup, of college yells, of dogs barking idiotically through endless nights. It is so bad that a sort of grandeur creeps into it."

On the other hand, Coolidge spoke very well indeed. He was the last president to write his own speeches. Though the media caricatured him as "Silent Cal," he gave more press conferences than any president before or since.



On the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Coolidge said that equality, liberty, popular sovereignty and the rights of man "belong to the unseen world. Unless the faith of the American people in these religious convictions is to endure, the principles of our Declaration will perish."

Our nation has been given a remarkable chance, through all its government branches, to set what is right, and to fix what is wrong. The prayer of our nation's first bishop, John Carroll, in 1791 is offered again in this new year:

"We pray Thee O God of might, wisdom, and justice! Through whom authority is rightly administered, laws are enacted, and judgment decreed, assist with Thy Holy Spirit of counsel and fortitude the President of these United States, that his administration may be conducted in righteousness, and be eminently useful to Thy people over whom he presides; by encouraging due respect for virtue and religion; by a faithful execution of the laws in justice and mercy; and by restraining vice and immorality."

The Moving Pictures: Reviews for the Faithful

with Caution for Propriety

by the SubDn. John Brainerd, St. Mark's, Denver

Risen

RISEN is a movie released in 2016, now on DVD, set in 33AD Jerusalem. It tells the story of a Roman Tribune, Clavius, played by Joseph Fiennes, tasked with preventing Jesus' body from being stolen by his followers. Jesus' claim to 'rise in three days' is known to Pontius Pilate. He hopes to quiet the mob by preventing any claims that Jesus did rise from the dead. When Clavius fails to prevent Jesus' body from 'disappearing', he is tasked with investigating the disappearance, and 'finding' the body before rumors about Jesus' resurrection and messiahship cause more civil unrest, riots, mayhem, etc.

Clavius, assisted by Lucius, played by Tom Felton (Draco Malfoy in the *Harry Potter* films), sets off on a CSI: Jerusalem style quest to find out what really happened to Yeshua's body, and to put an end to the rumors of the Resurrection once and for all. Lucius, the son of an old friend of Pilate's, clearly admires Clavius. However, Lucius is also quite ambitious. As the investigation continues, tension rises between them, as Clavius shows restraint towards those they encounter, while Lucius feels brutality is the best and only way to deal with all problems.

Clavius must find Yeshua's body quickly, as decomposition in the hot Middle Eastern will soon render bodies unidentifiable. If he cannot show a dead body as recognizably Yeshua, he cannot disprove that Yeshua rose from the dead.

First, Clavius and Lucius investigate the empty tomb. They find the stone rolled away, the ropes sealing the stone apparently torn away, and the guards fled. Clavius enters the tomb, and finds it empty, except for the burial cloth.

Next, Clavius sends Lucius out into the city with a team of soldiers to find anyone repeating any rumors about Yeshua. Lucius 'persuades' any and all that he can find to return to Clavius' office to be interviewed. As Clavius conducts interviews, most people have little to say, they are just repeating rumors, a friend of a friend's cousin said, etc. As the day wears on, he finally finds someone who thinks he knows one of Yeshua's

disciples. Clavius asks him to lead them to this disciple. The chase is on! Clavius gets closer and closer to the disciples, first capturing and interviewing Mary Magdalene then Bartholomew.

Risen is really quite interesting, telling the story of Jesus/Yeshua's Death and Resurrection not from the viewpoint of Jesus or the disciples, but from the viewpoint of a non-believer. With strong veteran actors, and a Hollywood quality look and feel, I really enjoyed this movie. Certainly, there are all sorts of details that were way off, like the Roman's main Jerusalem fortress being down in a valley, when in fact Herod the Great had constructed the Fortress of Antonia around 30BC, in the wall of Jerusalem, directly adjacent to the Temple. The scenes in the film set near Sea of Galilee show a desert, rather than the lush Galilean plain. You could probably find any number of errors, just as there always is when well known historic events are recreated. That said, the film had a very authentic feel, with good costuming, lots of actors grimacing at bad smells, lots of dirt and dust, cool looking Roman armor and weapons, etc. Certainly the treatment of these most important events in the lives of the Apostles and Our Lord were treated fairly and authentically. There was even some humor and jokes with Bartholomew teasing Clavius during his interview. So, I really liked the movie, and I would recommend it as a well-made film, with an authentic look and feel, and a fair minded treatment of Our Lord's last days on earth.

Quick Hits

Rogue One

For fantasy/sci-fi film lovers, the release new Star Wars movie, *Rogue One*, was an exciting occasion. The promise of many more Star Wars movies to come, not just the original nine movies George Lucas had originally envisioned, made sci-fi movie fans anticipation for this movie almost palatable.

That said, how was the movie? Well, I would have to say it was fairly entertaining. Set just before *Star Wars IV: A New Hope*, the original *Star Wars* movie, *Rogue One* tells the story of the "Rebel spies who managed to steal secret plans to the Empire's ultimate weapon." For a movie that pretty much everybody that is seeing it knows the outcome, it did a good job creating dramatic tension, keeping the viewer wondering if the characters were really going to get those darn Death Star plans stolen by the end of the movie. I suppose you have to know that the plans will ultimately be stolen, but who will do the stealing? Who will live? Who will die?

I enjoyed the exotic, interesting locales chosen to represent the various planets visited by the characters. I enjoyed the variety of space ships, and the wear and tear many of the ships seemed to have, making the fantasy more 'realistic'. The acting was OK, all though some of the plot twists were head scratchers. So, *Rogue One* is a good, fun sci-fi movie, and certainly bodes well for the future of the *Star Wars* franchise.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

Fantastic Beasts is another big budget fantasy movie released around Thanksgiving 2016. It is the beginning of a new movie series, set in the Harry Potter universe, but in 1920s New York City. The title comes from one of the textbooks Harry and his friends studied during their time at Hogwarts. The action centers around the future author of Fantastic Beasts, Newt Scamander, who having finished up the bulk of his research to write his new book, stops off in New York on his way home to London to free a fantastic beast he rescued during his travels.

Mayhem of course ensues, as he tries to keep a low profile, while trying to arrange to free the beast, Newt and the viewers of the film are introduced to the wizarding community in the United States. As in the United Kingdom, the wizarding community tries to hide in plain sight, has a magical governing body (Magical Congress of the United States of America or MACUSA), and generally does all the things we have come to expect from the wizards of Harry Potter, but in fine American style.

I also enjoyed this movie. In fact, I think it really was better than *Rogue One*, at least for me. The characters seemed stronger and quirkier and more likeable. I thought there were a number of fun surprises, as well as a nice love story. I enjoyed the unusual and original fantastic beasts that kept cropping up. I will admit I saw the revelation of who the real bad guy was pretty early in the movie, it was still fun to see how that found their way to the big finish. I do recommend this movie, and am very much looking forward to seeing what comes next.



Jeffrey Stout, who was Ordained a Subdeacon by His Grace, Bishop Basil, at St. Mark's and graduated from Denver University is Father to Phoebe and son of Randy and Edith Stout, grandson to Max and Bebe Greenlee. Jeff has been married to Bekka for about ten years. Jeff attends St. Mary's Orthodox Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts while he completes a graduate degree in Medical Science at Harvard University. Fr. Anthony Hughes has long been the Rector at St. Mary's

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

St. Mark i. 1 – 11

THE 2ND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

January 15th 2017

Preached at St. Mark's Church, Denver

by the Rev'd Deacon **Vladimir Christopher McDonald**

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

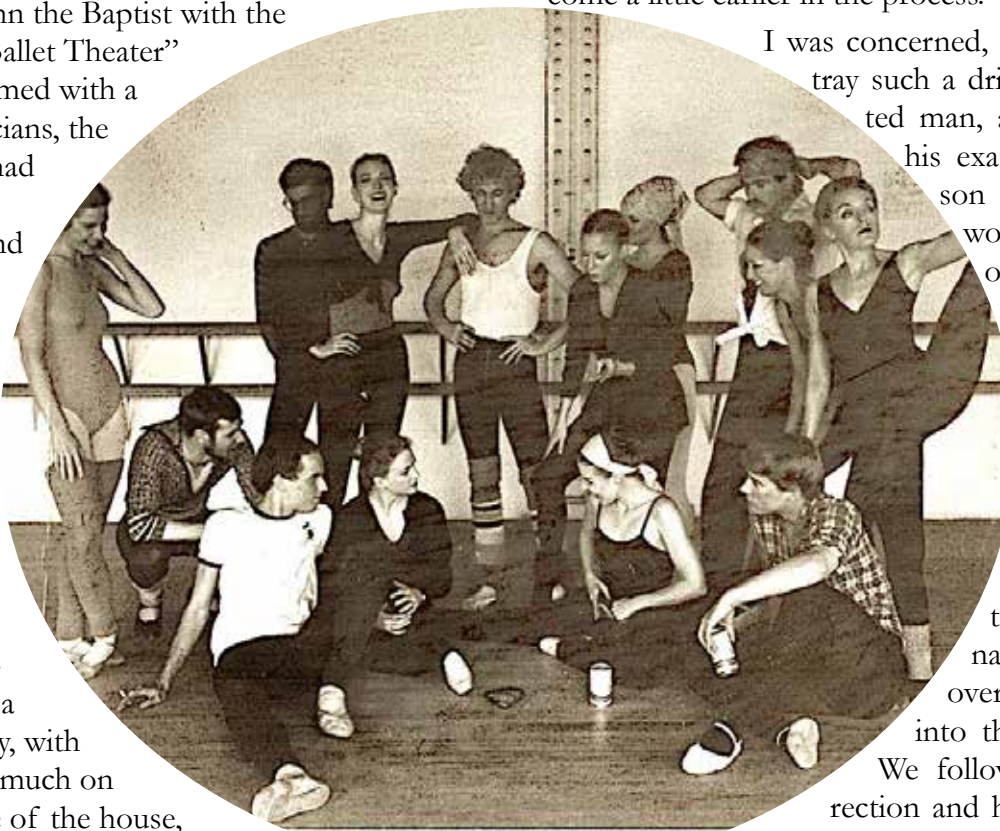
I CANNOT REMEMBER IF I HAVE TOLD THIS STORY BEFORE, but in approximately 1981 into 1982, I had the honor to dance the part of John the Baptist with the then, "Denver Ballet Theater" when we performed with a Choir and musicians, the "Messiah." We had been in the past "Ballet Now," and the company would return to that name later in the decade. It was, I think, one of the best pieces of choreography that our Director, Richard Denny, had produced. We were a pro-am company, with yours truly very much on the amateur side of the house, but it was a privilege to have a piece of choreography placed on you. Over the course of the run I shared this role with another male dancer who was a lot stronger than I.

I had the tendency to be more lyrical, all rounded arms and gentle *pour de bras*, whereas Charles was stronger in his dance, solid fifth positions and high jumps. We complemented each other in our performances, because we showed the depth of the interpretation of

Richards vision, by our dichotomy, by being different. Showing of course the different sides of John, helping to make him, along with Handel's wonderful music and Charles Jennens working of the King James Text, live again as a complete person.

As I have said many times before, I am here in this Pulpit before you because God gave me Music, wonderful Music. To dance and live John through the vehicle of dance and music gave me profound peace, and overwhelming horror!

How could I do this piece, how could I portray this man, was I going to live up to the trust my choreographer had placed in me, would I screw it up and bring ridicule down on the Company, the Director, and would I annoy God by dancing in his house, we performed this in a Church. You note the concern about God came last in those days, I would hope now it might come a little earlier in the process.



Denver Ballet Theatre, Corps de Ballet, 1980-84. Dn. Vladimir 2nd from left, crouching down

I was concerned, how could I portray such a driven and committed man, a man that knew his exact place and reason for being in this world. He was to lay out for the Jews, the ground work of the Coming of the Messiah, he was to bring them physically and emotionally to a place that they could accept that the old covenant was over, to be overlaid and absorbed into the new covenant.

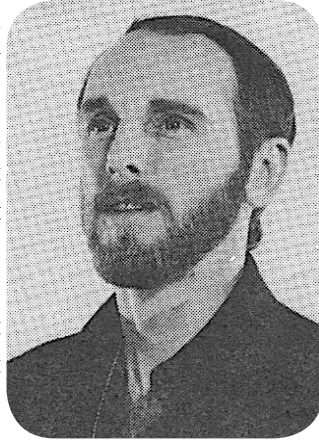
We followed Richards direction and his steps were big and bold, any number of Jumps, Chaines across the stage, changement, and a signature thrust forward with a deep bend of the knee, a stretching out in front of the body, and the arms also thrust forward. It came on the line," make his paths straight". We were to interpret that line very specifically, Richard knew exactly what he wanted. It was to be a very straight line to the audience, no twisting to right or left, a thrust into the heart of the audience.

So, if Richard knew that to bring his vision of Handel's Messiah to fruition, he would need to present John as a visionary, how much more than did God need to show to his people that John would tell them the truth, would present himself as the tip of the spear as it were when he was talking with the Jews of the coming of their God. They needed to understand that this coming was unique, it was not going to be followed by an encore next week on the other side of the world, there were no reserved tickets for the second house, this was the coming of The Lord, plain and simple, so God used a simple straight arrow of a man John to bring his message. It was, is and ever shall be a simple message of Love. Love of God for His people, that was to include us, the Gentiles. We have his love, as all his people have his Love. Pure and unadulterated by the cares and woes of this world. Untainted by the snares of this world, offered for what it is, a Fathers all-encompassing love for his children.

John had to deliver this concept to what would have been a skeptical audience at best. There were a slew of "prophets" around this time, the roman historians tell us that they were prolific; so, another would not necessarily stand out as any different, but John spoke the truth of Jesus with a commitment that was recognized as genuine. Mark tells us that "all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem" went to him for to be baptized in the Jordan, confessing their sins. We do not know how many stayed with the program as it were, but I have always felt that there is a connection between this story of John, and the parable of the Sower, where we have some seed fall on stony ground, and not take a strong root. Now I may be extrapolating more from this passage than there is, but that is how it looks to me.

We can now move, with John, to our Lords Baptism.

Did Jesus really need to be baptized? From the point of view of His divinity, of course not; but to show his roots in the people, to show his humility, his lack of pomp, his grounded personality, his simplicity, it was incumbent upon him to show this to the people,



to show he was one of them. This of course, as his ministry progressed, brought him into conflict with the Pharisee's, the Priests, and some of these same people that he was trying to show solidarity with. As we know, for many, He did not match their expectations for the King of the Jews. This was always going to be a problem. Pilate asked Him this same question at his trial, "Art thou the King of the Jews?", and his answer has always been for me a telling one; "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" Pilate answers, rather sarcastically, "Am I a Jew?"

This "King of the Jews" term will haunt him throughout his life, and be thrown back at him here, and of course when he is on the Cross. So again, one has to ask, did he need to be Baptized, and the answer is again, yes. He needed to fulfill the prophecies, to fulfill the old covenant, to bring it to a natural and understandable conclusion. The Jews had been living under the Covenant for so long, that to leave it hanging, to not fulfill its potential, would have seemed to them that he was negating all that they held to be the truth. He was/is, the Truth, the Way and the Light, the very fulfillment that they had been waiting for, but they needed to be prepped and led, and John was that man, a Holy Pied Piper as it were.

So, we come to us, to our journey to God, to our moving from what could be called the shadows of our former selves, into the Light of the World. Do we need a John, some of us do, because we are all unique, and what is obvious for some, will be a veiled mystery to others, and to even others, a specious fantasy.

We need to be John for our fellow travelers, we need to lay out the straight path that is the way of truth. We need to be prepared to explain the beauty of that truth, and the concomitant responsibilities that go with being a Disciple, for it is not always easy. We by our lives should show the rough places made plain, and the Love of God should shine through us, to be that simple messenger of the Truth.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Notes:-

- 1 – We lost Richard in 2008, a great loss to the Ballet community.
- 2 – Charles also passed, before Richard. The date I do not have.

Submitted by Subdeacon Joseph L. Vacca, M.A.
author of : thespiritualworkshop.org

THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

February 2nd

Commonly called Candlemas Day

The Christmas season comes to an end on February 2nd, forty days after Christmas, with the Feast of the Purification of Lady. Other common names for this feast are the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple and Candlemas. The services appointed for that day include a solemn blessing of candles for use throughout the remainder of the Church year and a solemn procession with the blessed candles which commemorates the encounter with Simeon when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the Temple in obedience to the law. Celebration of this feast started in the East as "The Encounter," but rapidly spread to the West and was well established as part of the Western Rite by the sixth century. From the very beginning of its observance in the West it has included the blessing and distribution of candles and the procession through the Church with the candles.

The liturgical prayers and other texts which are part of the liturgy of this day are filled with great richness and set forth many themes: the entry into this world of Christ, the Light of the world, through His Incarnation; the fulfillment of prophecy to Simeon and Anna (who stands for all who patiently awaited the coming of the Saviour). Simeon's own prophecy to Mary that Christ is the Light for all people, even the Gentiles but He will suffer greatly, so greatly that "a sword shall pierce thy own soul." The liturgy of this day by its prayers and actions acts as a summary of all that has been proclaimed and done from Christmas onward.



In this essay, I want to consider one part of the liturgy for this day: the blessing and distribution of candles and the procession with them through the Church. All of this occurs at the very beginning of the liturgy. In the very first prayer of blessing said over the candles, the Priest says: "O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, who hast created all things out of nothing, and by thy command hast made this liquid through the labours of bees to come to the perfection of wax: who didst *likewise* on this day fulfill the petition of the just man Simeon...". The use of the connecting word "likewise" indicates to us that the manner in which bees make beeswax is in some way analogous to the way in which God fulfills our prayers and His promises to us.

To make wax, bees gathering pollen from flowers, bring it back to the hive and then by chewing it turn it into wax which is ideally suited as the structural material for their hive. For the most part the bees do not process their own collected pollen but that of another bee, exhibiting thereby a sort of social dimension to this work. The bees then work together to use the wax as they construct the familiar six-sided honeycombs in which the honey will be stored and eggs will be laid for the next generation of bees. This shows us that a great deal of work is required to go from the pollen to the finished product.

This analogy with bees shows us that the fulfillment of God's promises and the petitions

of men is an integral part of His saving work from the call of Abraham through the work of the prophets leading to the Incarnation. The Incarnation is the completion of God's saving work for us so it is appropriate that the liturgical season which focuses on the Incarnation ends with this festival. Just as it takes work effort by the whole bee hive to produce the honey and wax needed for its welfare, so we must understand that, like Simeon, our petitions will be fulfilled by God's grace cooperating with our own labors to grow in holiness as we progress from day to day throughout our lives.

This idea is carried forward in the second prayer of the blessing. We are reminded that Simeon actually "took [Christ] up in his arms" and showed by this action that each one of us is to receive Christ in a mystical way. This is symbolized by each one of us receiving a newly blessed candle. We are then to carry these lights in procession to symbolize the enkindling of holy charity in our hearts. This cooperation of our actions by holding candles, processing, *etc.* with the inpouring of grace from God purifies and strengthens us so that we will become worthy to be with Christ in His glory, which is symbolized by the entry into the Temple, *i.e.*: the sanctuary of the church.

In the third prayer of blessing, the focus shifts back to the candles themselves. We are first reminded that Christ is the true Light, that "lightest every man that cometh into this world," then we pray for the blessing of the candles so that the visible fire which dispels darkness will symbolize the action of the Holy Ghost within us which illumines us and delivers us from sin and evil. Further, just as the light of candles enables us to see in the darkness, we seek the internal illumination and strengthening of the Holy Ghost so that we can both see those things which we ought to do and be strengthened to actually do them by the mysterious action of God's grace working in harmony with our freedom.

In the fourth prayer, we are reminded of the rule in the Law of Moses which prescribes that lamps which burn in the Temple must use the purest oil. Then we ask that the candles be blessed and made holy so that the visible sign of the light that they shed will signify the light of the Holy Ghost shining within our souls. Once again, we see that grace must work in harmony with our own efforts and actions to enable us to do what God wills.

In the last of the prayers of the blessing, we are reminded that the actions of Mary and Joseph by which they brought the infant Christ into the Temple are another theophany or manifestation of Christ to men. In the Epiphany on January 6th, we commemorate the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, symbolized by the Magi. However in today's feast, we commemorate the manifestation of Christ to the Jewish people. Simeon, was illumined by the Holy Ghost and had faithfully lived a life dedicated to righteousness and hope for the coming of the Saviour. He represents the Jews and acknowledged this Child to be that Christ whom he had waited for all of his long life. So, too, we ask that the same grace of the Holy Spirit will enlighten and strengthen us so that we may truly know and faithfully love the Christ, the Son of the living God, made manifest now in our flesh.

Sermon - Sexagesima

A Sermon from Fr. Theodore Eklund

From the Gospel according to St Luke: But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. (Luke 8:4-15)

The Gospel for today has an important message, which is very appropriate for us as we come into Lent. Christ speaks about scattering seed in various types of ground. When He is done, His disciples ask him about the meaning of it. He then explains the meaning of each portion, section by section, starting at the seed that fell by the way-side, and ending with the seed on good ground.

The message we should take from this is that if we are going to bring forth fruit in the Kingdom of God, we must develop roots in our faith. We must also not be overwhelmed by the cares, riches or pleasures of this life. However, there is only one problem with this message, or at least it is a problem for those who preach. It is very difficult to write a sermon to expand on the information as presented, as the lesson is basically self contained. Even St Gregory the Great said about this Gospel: "The passage from the Holy Gospel which ye have just heard, needeth not so much that I should explain it, as that I should seek to enforce it's lessons. For what the Truth himself hath explained, human weakness may not presume to comment on."

So instead, let's look at this from a different angle. As we go through our lives as Christians, we encounter many different people. Some are fellow Orthodox. Some may be Christians of another denomination. Some may not even be Christians at all.

As we interact with them, many of us may question if we should share something about our faith with them. Should we help to spread the seed of the faith? And if we do, how much? By looking at today's parable I think we will find that God had actually answered those questions for us.

In the parable, we are told the sower sowed his seed on every type of ground. It didn't matter if there seemed little hope that it would take root. He did not miss an opportunity. I think the lesson from this is that while we should speak about our faith only when it is appropriate to do so, we should not be afraid of talking about it. And in some cases, we should be willing to plant the seed, even if we believe it will not grow right away. Indeed we may never see the result.

There is a precedent for this in nature. The Columbine seed has to freeze in winter so it will crack open, to be

able to grow. The Giant Sequoia cones only open after a fire. Sometimes a seed of God can take a very long time to grow. However, it is still worth planting.

The next question revolved around how much information to present to someone about God. And again, we get our answer from this parable. Our Lord speaks of planting seeds, not full grown plants.

While we may be excited about God and want to tell people about Him, we should not give too much information too soon. One should start with a little, plant the seed and then wait to see what happens. Everyone processes or grows at their own rate.

God is the ultimate sower of seeds. In good soil, his seeds will grow and bear fruit. However, there are times when we can assist in spreading those seeds, and developing the good soil. Sometimes the right word or prayer at the right time makes all the difference.

The St. Mark's Parish annual meeting is 5 February, the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, at 9:00 o'clock. It is important that parishioners attend and approve the Reports of the Guilds, the Financial Report for 2016 and the proposed Budget for 2017. Everyone who contributed is to be thanked and encouraged to carry on in the New Year of Grace.

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1405 S. Vine Street
Denver, CO 80210

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