

Teaching From The Heart



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Advent 2003

Episcopal Diocese
of Albany

Memorials, Memories and Miracles of Advent

By Rev. Laurie M. Garramone-Rohr

Upcoming Events

(details on pp. 2)

December 5-6, 2003 \$40
"My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord" per
an Advent Retreat for person
Women
(See p. 2 for details and
registration informa-
tion)

January 2004 Cost:
Young Adult Retreat \$35
Ages 18—22
Contact Chris
Copeland
[Episcopalyouth@
beavercross.com](mailto:Episcopalyouth@beavercross.com)

Lenten Retreat 2004 Cost:
"The Gifts of the Holy TBA
Spirit"
Details to be
announced

May 1, 2004 Cost:
Christian Education TBA
Conference
Location: TBA

Advent Links:

www.textweek.com/advent
Excellent source of Advent resource
materials

[www.anglicanonline.org/special/
advent](http://www.anglicanonline.org/special/advent) A variety of resources and
links, including several 'virtual' Advent
calendars.

[www.spiritnet.ca/sermons/christm
aspage](http://www.spiritnet.ca/sermons/christmaspage) a cornucopia of information

"What are you waiting for?" My mother's voice was irritated. We had Christmas shopping to do and I had stopped in the middle of a gathering crowd, transfixed. I was about 11 years old.

Standing at the traditional red Salvation Army kettle was a young, uniformed man, but instead of ringing the usual bell, he was singing, no he was *belting out* Christmas carols, in a strong, clear voice. There were no other musicians, no one to accompany him, and he kept his eyes focused upward, as if he were singing for someone else entirely.

I was stunned. I could not believe someone would just sing in the middle of a crowded shopping area, even to raise money for a good cause! I asked my mom for some money to put into the kettle, but she said no, we had to get going. The echo of his music, and my inability to give anything, has remained with me, crystallizing like a memorial in my mind.

But it didn't stay crystallized; it became a catalyst for action. It has become one of the reasons

why I have donated money many times to the Salvation Army, and each time I have done so, the memory of the singing soldier and his bold faith returns to me.

Now fast-forward to 2003. Since I've had children, that memory has become an inspiration to me, and we have added to it our own family tradition. For example, we now have to put money in every kettle we pass by, and I am blessed to realize that somehow, we always have something to give. Even more, we have decided as a family that we want to be volunteers during this Advent season, ringing bells and raising money for the Salvation Army. We might not be comfortable, I've warned the boys. It gets pretty cold in December, but I know we'll learn something from being on the other side of the ringing bell.

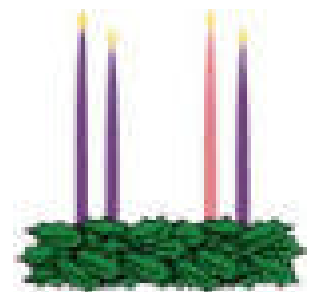
Amazingly, God has taken a single event in my life and He has worked a great transformation. From an observant child, He has created an entire family of mission-minded people! That's miraculous!

What are you waiting for?" my mother asked that long-ago day and I finally have the answer. I am wait-

ing, arms outstretched, heart wide-open, to be transformed daily by Jesus Christ. I am waiting for a small baby in a manger who has the power to transform the entire world. I am waiting for the boldness to sing, like that soldier many years ago, in places where people may not know His name or the power of His great and healing love. I am waiting for miracles even as I see miraculous things happen around me.

What are you waiting for this Advent and Christmas season?

Note: The title and theme for this article are derived from Bishop Bena's new book. See p. 2 for more details about his book.



My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord An Advent Retreat for Women

Wrapping presents...

Baking Treats....

Christmas Charities..

Buying gifts...

Mailing packages...

Decorating your home...

Does any of this sound like *your* life? When Jesus is invited into our hearts and homes, He isn't paying attention to the decorations on the tree or the color-coordinated wrapping paper, He

When: Friday, December 5-
Saturday, December 6,
2003

Where: Beaver Cross

Cost: \$40 per person

Contact: Deacon Laurie at
(518) 465-4737 or e-mail
LGRohr@albanydiocese.org

wants the gift of our love and time.

Do you have some time to spend in prayer and guided meditation, focusing on the blessings, joy and abun-

dance that is already present in your life?

Share conversation and ideas to help restore your soul and build up the way your life magnifies—or announces—the newborn Savior to your family and the world.

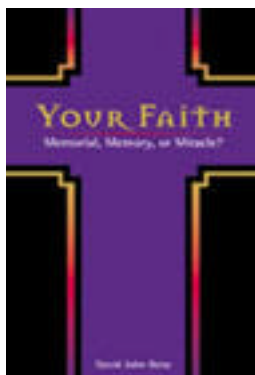
Join Deacon Justine Guernsey, Director of Beaver Cross, and Deacon Laurie Rohr on this prayerful Advent Retreat .



Your Faith: Memorial, Memory or Miracle?

Bishop David Bena has written a powerful and useful book that helps us prayerfully consider not only where we are in our faith lives, but even more, how we can grow in our faith.

Using the available Study Guide, the book provides an excellent 14-week study for parishes, men's groups, weekly Bible Study groups, and adult Sunday School programming.



Copies of Bishop Bena's book are available online from Forward Movement.

Visit www.forwardmovement.org

All proceeds from Bishop Bena's book will be donated to the Spiritual Life

Praise Reports!!! (send your praise reports to LGRohr@albanydiocese.org)

Trinity Church, Watervliet

reports that their Sunday School is really taking off now that they have scheduled the classes between church services.

Grace Church, Waterford,

has a special program to keep in contact with College students. They bake cookies, box them up and send them out to college students with special notes, prayers and other items collected by church members.

Calvary Church, Burnt Hills

has a successful Family Ministry program running. Families are encouraged to take part in a variety of events including a recent Procession of Saints, St. Nicholas Day activities, and a family heraldry workshop.



Programs available in Christian Ed office for borrowing

Visual Bible Series

Small group bible study by
Thomas Nelson

Narrated by Dr. David Jeremiah

Three Topics, 4 sessions each:

- ◆ The Parables of Jesus
- ◆ The Sermon on the Mount
- ◆ The Miracles of Jesus

Both workbooks and videos are available in the office; workbooks cost \$6 each.



Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace,
goodwill toward men!

Luke 2:14

What's So Amazing About Grace?

Or if You Want to Know How Amazing Grace is, Take a Good Look at the Broken World it Heals

By Philip Yancey

Ten Sessions (includes video, Leader's Guide and sample Participant's Guide.)

What is grace, why is it so precious, and how can you integrate it into your life and the life of your church?

New Christian Ed Web Page: Find a List of Ways to Make Your Advent Holy!

Would you like to see back articles on Christian Ed from the Albany Episcopalian? Do you want to see the Web version of this newsletter (it looks much snappier in color!)?

Check out the new Christian Ed web page!

- ? Go to www.AlbanyDiocese.Org
- ? Click on "Ministries" on the left side of the page.

- ? Click on "Christian Ed", and you should open a new page that will allow you to choose to browse through archived materials.

Be patient—it's new and we're still learning! But feel free to submit suggestions or ideas at any time; we're also flexible!

Check the web page for information about:

- ⇒ Conferences
- ⇒ Retreats
- ⇒ Registrations
- ⇒ Articles

www.AlbanyDiocese.Org/Ministries/ChristianEd.html

Barna Report on Children's Ministry

George Barna is one of the leaders in research related to Christians and their faith today. At a recent conference led by Barna in September, he focused particularly on our ministry to children in our churches, which he calls "the single most important ministry" in each of our churches.

He also believes that our job as a church is to help families and churches work together to raise our

He poses these and other questions for our churches:

1. What priority does your church place on children's ministry? What is the evidence of this?
2. How do you specifically support ministry to children in your church, financially and otherwise?
3. Does your church teach effective parenting skills?

4. How do you evaluate the success of your children's ministry programming?

These questions and others may be found in the book Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions by George Barna. Additional research and information may be found at the Barna Research Group website at www.Barna.org



Did You Know That...

Having Dinner With Your Family Matters...

Teens who have dinner with their families *five or more* nights in a week are:

- ? 32 percent likelier never to have tried cigarettes
- ? 45 percent likelier never to have tried alcohol
- ? 24 percent likelier never to have smoked pot
- ? Almost twice as likely to receive A's in school
- ? Academic performance is tied to substance-abuse risk. Teens who typically receive grades of C or lower are at twice the risk of substance abuse as those receiving A's and B's

Information from the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) in September, 2003

We are always looking for great Christian Education ideas and stories from the missionary outposts within the Diocese. Please send an e-mail to LGRohr@AlbanyDiocese.Org and we will work to share your successes!

To subscribe to this newsletter by e-mail or US Post, send a note to LGRohr@AlbanyDiocese.org or to Christian Ed, Episcopal Diocese of Albany, 68 S. Swan Street, Albany, NY 12210

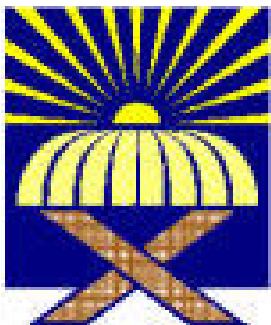
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*Have a Holy and Blessed Advent and
Christmas Season!*
