

Church of the Good Shepherd  
and  
St. John the Evangelist

8 Pentecost  
July 6, 2008  
Fr. Bill McGinty

**“Passing on the Legacy”**

Today’s first reading from Genesis 24 is about the passing on of legacy. In the story of finding a wife for Isaac, the Old Testament writer has found a way to pass from the Great Abraham Saga to continue God’s plan for his people.

Isaac’s servant finds Rebekah next to a fresh spring of water. It is a scene that will repeat itself with Moses in the book of Exodus. In the New Testament Jesus also sits by a well and encounters the Samaritan woman. He tells her that the water he can give her can well up into eternal life. She replies by saying: “Give me some of this water.”

We probably all wish that we could pass on to our children all the lessons that we have learned in life, if only we could somehow bottle it like water. In recent weeks our local newspapers have run stories about the concerns parents have for their children. In Shohola they are worried that Route A power lines will run near school and home raising the dangers of dreaded diseases such as Leukemia. In West Fall we read of 25 teenage pregnancies in the High School and the inability of the schools to offer adequate moral education that will protect the young and the vulnerable.

Passing on the legacy of family and Christian values is not easy and it has been made more difficult in the last two decades by what schools call the Postmodern Era. In the postmodern there are, we are told, no answers, no solutions and no certainties.

It is not a Philosophy that we Christians care for or believe. We like to think that we do have answers and that they begin with our bible and the teaching of Jesus and have been handed down to us by Grandparents and parents.

When the Old Testament writer describes the passing on of the heritage of Abraham from one generation to another, deep in that legacy is contained the knowledge of their God and the faith that goes with it.

I read in last weeks Courier of a woman in Shohola who teaches sex education to her children at home and insists that they live up to a moral code that she, her husband and family set for them. Who could possibly object? Is this not the proper order of things? Does it not make us question and ask” “Where does the real blame lie when children make up their own rules and step across boundaries? Where was the parenting? Where was the teaching? You and I know that for two decades it has been absent and that the tail has been wagging the dog. Thomas Moore, politician, scholar and Saint said in 1531: “For evil to succeed it suffices that good men stand by and do nothing.”

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In every school I have ever taught in, show me a teacher, who is deeply loved, decade after decade and I will show you a man or woman who knows how to draw the line in the sand and tell their charges: “Here are the rules, and these rules you will respect.”

Cheap love fades like everything that has no substance. Over and over Jesus tries to tell his disciples that there is no escaping passing through the narrow gate. He tells them not to seek the praise of mortal men. He tells them over and over that if they would follow him and be disciples they must take up their cross. It is a sober lesson that true wisdom does not come cheap, but is often hard earned.

Paul in the seventh chapter of Romans has a confession to make. He says that for him sin is way too easy, while good real good is so difficult. “Who?” he asks, “can rescue him from such a life? Only Jesus Christ. No one else, just Christ.”

It is a question that we need to transfer to ourselves and our children this morning. Who can rescue them from a life of moral dilemma, where the pressures to conform to the lowest common denominator are immense? Who will rescue them from knowing too much too young and not enough when the answer should be “no”. Who will rescue them from crippling disease, a loss of self esteem, and an uncertain future, because they brought in, too “cheap popularity” instead of the values of those who truly loved them. “We played the flute for you and you did not dance, we wailed and you did not mourn.” Today’s Gospel.

We who send our children to Delaware Valley have a responsibility to our children. We have a responsibility to send them armed with the values that we learned from Grandmother and mother. We have the obligation to talk to our children and not stop till the lesson is hammered home, choose the good, reject what is bad. Remain faithful to your truth.

I seem to have been thinking a lot about libraries lately. I suppose I have belonged to about fifteen major libraries in my lifetime. Because this has been floating around in my head for the last few weeks I have been thinking about how important some of those places were to me and the influence they had on me.

A good library is much more than a place where they store books. It is a place where you meet old friends. It is a place where you had some of your most treasured thoughts and moments.

I started reading very seriously when I was about eight. It was the summer and my brother John and I were staying in a large house while the rest of the family had left for three weeks in France. Our cousin was pre-occupied looking after the dying mother of her best

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friend. We were left to entertain ourselves for three weeks. The only thing to read in this entire house was girl's comics. Because the house had raised five girls it was full of thousands of girl's comics. In the three weeks I read them all. They had stories that were serialized week by week. Most of them were about rich girls in boarding schools playing field hockey. Or some secret ballet where the girls had been kidnapped and taken away to a remote Scottish Island castle to train under the guidance of a wicked but crippled ex-Ballerina.

You will read anything when you are bored, so I read them all. The story that remains in my memory was about four girls who went to an expensive private Boarding School in a comic called SchoolFriend. They involved themselves in solving crime, catching Spies and fighting foreign Agents by dressing up each night in Monks robes with hoods and calling themselves the *Phantom Four*. Over thousands of issues and hundreds of adventures the identity of the Phantom Four was never revealed. Which is surprising because they always got the highest grades, were the best hockey players and most nights their beds were empty as they marauded across the countryside catching and defeating the bad guys.

Besides this, by the time I had read the last comic they had all been in high school for about twenty years, so you would have thought that might have been a give away.

But the principal Mrs. Havesham was short sighted and none too bright and as far as I know the girls are still keeping the country safe to this day.

Reading so many comics made me a real fast reader when at the end of the summer I switched to books. Alas, I think my lack of success dating girls lay in the fact that I spent the next twenty years hoping the next girl was one of the Phantom Four.

You will remember from that little rant that back in the 50's and 60's we lived in fairly innocent times. It was a time when everyone still knew the name of Roy Rogers's dog as well as his more famous horse. Dennis the Menace lived in the house next to Mr. Wilson and no one was in the slightest surprised that a horse called Mr. Ed could talk.

Given the choice, would you not prefer for your child to grow up in that environment?

But we all know that those days have gone. You cannot read comics any more because they have graphics and usually only two to three words.

It is time for us to invest. We have to invest in our children and we have to invest the most important thing we have our time. "The greatest gift you can give to a child is your time."

As a church, a fellowship and a Christian community I call on all of us today to reflect and pray about the future of our children in this town. Do not let a meeting pass where you are

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not represented and the future of your child is at stake. If you have not as yet supported the new library, get behind it. It will be good for our children. But most of all make prayer and Mom and Dad's voice a daily part of their experience.

May Jesus who came for them protect and guide them.

Amen+