

Church of the Good Shepherd  
and  
St. John the Evangelist

**23 Pentecost**  
**November 7, 2004**  
**Fr Bill McGinty**

**“Freely Have You Received...Freely Give!”**

Today is the 23 Sunday of Pentecost. It is also the day we commemorate our dead. Traditionally November 2<sup>nd</sup>, All Souls, is our day for remembering those who have gone before us. It is a day that comes towards the end of the Church’s calendar year. And as our year comes to a close, we pay tribute to them, the love we bear them, the memories we hold of them and the obligation we hold from them.

It is interesting to note the various ways people choose to be forever remembered. Or, indeed the way we choose to remember our loved ones. John Denver’s relatives chose to drop his ashes over the Rocky Mountains from a plane. But, on reflection, John will be best remembered through his songs.

**Poems and Prayers and Promises**

Things that we believe in  
How sweet it is to love someone  
How right it is to care  
How long it’s been since yesterday  
What about tomorrow  
What about our friends  
All the memories we share?

Captain Rupert Brook was a soldier serving in the trenches in France during the course of the First World War. After he was killed in April of 1916 one of his poems appeared in the Times newspaper.

“If I should die, think only this of me  
That there is some corner of a foreign field  
That is forever England.  
And there will be in that fair earth  
A sweeter soil consumed  
An earth born of England  
Under an English sky  
Breathing English air  
Loving her ways to roam  
Touched by sounds of Home.

Erin Healy Fox was a second year college student when she was tragically murdered on a two-day trip to the Jersey shore. Her parents took her ashes back to Ireland and scattered

The Rev. William J. McGinty, Rector  
110 West Catharine Street, Milford, Pennsylvania 18337  
Phone: (570) 296-8123 ♦ Fax: (570) 296-4383

# Church of the Good Shepherd

and

## St. John the Evangelist

them on the beautiful Arran Islands off the West Coast of Galway. In this way they found healing and some measure of peace.

It is good to remember. It is good to recall the good times that we have shared with those we love, and have loved. Today we commemorate the memory of all who have gone before us and passed on to their eternal reward. Somehow we know deep in our hearts that monuments to people don't last. Whether it is a castle or a church, time and centuries wear things down and memory fades. We may still have the Pyramids, but who can remember the names of the people buried within them. In one hundred years time who will truly remember any of us. Jesus said "build up treasures for yourself in Heaven where no thief can steal or no moth consume. For where your treasure is there will be your heart also."

Jesus was saying that the only treasure worth having is not made of material things. The only treasure worth having is made of spirit. The only treasure worth having is love. If our Heaven is made up of the love we have given and shared, then it beholds each of us to love more, hate less and give more time and effort to those we do love.

Is it any wonder that in John's Gospel Jesus speaks of love an incredible number of times? "I give you one command that you love one another; love one another as I have loved you; greater love than this has no man than he lay down his life for a friend; do you love me more than these," and so many more.

This is the Kingdom of God, and the love that we shared with those who have died and gone before us is a big part of it. In today's Eucharist we pray for them, especially those who have died in the last year.

Today is also the day we begin our pledge drive which will continue through the month of November. I am instructed and mandated by your Vestry to speak to you about Stewardship and Pledge giving.

This time last year when I gave this address we were not in a good financial place. We owed the Diocese assessment account \$14,000; we still had an outstanding amount of money to pay on the new boiler; money was not forthcoming from the Child Care Center for its monthly rent and we had substantial problems with the way the latter was being operated.

Despite that we gave several amounts of money to various good causes in the course of the year, including money to a parish poorer than we are; money to Kajo Keji and differing amounts from the Rector's fund to individuals in trouble. We did this with faith and half a prayer that you cannot give anything to God that he doesn't give it right back to you. And so it proved.

We paid off our debt to the Diocese; the Child Care Center was turned around and paid a large amount of its arrears; substantial amounts were paid off the boiler fund, which gives us a relatively debt free church for the first time in several years. Most of that success is

The Rev. William J. McGinty, Rector  
110 West Catharine Street, Milford, Pennsylvania 18337  
Phone: (570) 296-8123 ♦ Fax: (570) 296-4383

# Church of the Good Shepherd

and

## St. John the Evangelist

due to yourselves and last year's pledge drive. It was a great success. We aimed to raise \$52,000 and raised \$59,000. Last year I told you that your pledge was a part of your Covenant with the Lord. Only you can look back on that year and assess what God has done for you in that time. I wanted you to feel, one year ago, that you had an anchor here in this church and in this community. That here, you would find prayer and worship, Sacrament and counsel, fellowship and friendship among Christians that share your beliefs and values.

If God let you down in the last twelve months, then I don't want you to pledge your support for his work in this church and in this community, for the year to come.

If your children didn't grow one solitary inch, your husband not buy you one single little diamond, if the flowers refused to grow in your garden and you found all or most of the sermons too boring to endure, then this year you cannot make a pledge, because your God owes you.

Looking back at the year behind, Maryann and I had a wonderful year. The grandchildren grew beyond belief, and our daughter had gone back to college, so we had many sleepovers and baby-sitting duties, and we thought God is good.

Sammy had a great year in school and thank God we were sickness free. The winter was long, but not as bad as previously so we were accident free. Thank God. God is good.

Last year we saw so many people made unemployed, including some of our friends. We were spared that, although we worried about it like lots of others for a while. But God was good. And we are thankful.

In the spring we moved house and came to Pennsylvania. It was sad to leave our little blue house behind. It had served us well, through many a winter and through tough trying days when our Faith was deeply tested and we held on to Sam by a fingernail and much prayer. God was Good and we will always remember the love he showered on that little home.

We had a great spring and some wonderful experiences, great times at church and much fellowship. Even through trying times we always believed that our God had a purpose and he did.

So here at the end of our year, we as a couple and as a family have a lot of Thanksgiving to do this year. If we were to pay back God in full, the check would easily pay for a new pipe organ. Alas. We'll probably cut a deal with the Lord for a lesser amount.

Last year I told you that I'd like to think my pledge was a greater amount than my cable bill each month. And after some of the programming I have seen in the last year, I can only say: My God has better programming, looks after me better, has a better service and doesn't mind doing repairs.

The Rev. William J. McGinty, Rector  
110 West Catharine Street, Milford, Pennsylvania 18337  
Phone: (570) 296-8123 ♦ Fax: (570) 296-4383

# Church of the Good Shepherd

and

## St. John the Evangelist

Today I invite you to look back at the year that has gone. Assess the good things that God has done for you and then sit down and make your Commitment to God in the year ahead. Remember that your giving in the year ahead can be something other than a financial covenant. Giving of your time, service and abilities are as valuable to this church and to this ministry as any other kind of giving. In the last year the service to this church has grown in so many different ways. We have had new members join the altar guild, the Shine Jesus Shine team and various ministries throughout the church. Their work, talent and sense of duty have added to our liturgies and ministry in a way that has enriched all of us. We have had new people teach in our Sunday school program, go to prison and serve as readers, chalice bearers and lectors. To all of these we are deeply grateful and we ask for God's blessing on you in the coming year.

In the last year our church has grown in number, even in the summer when many families are away, the church has been full. In the last year God has been good to us. Of course we believe that we have our own Angels looking after us especially Dorothy, Agnes and Helen. As much as we have prayed for them in the year gone by, we have also prayed to them. And it is no coincidence that we have received so many blessings, when we remember the love and service they gave to this church year after year.

There are two people in our church who do not often get a mention. They have struggled valiantly since February to give us a music program without an organ. They are Herta and Lucie. Between them they have put in so many hours to produce something that has warmed our hearts and met our needs. Herta travels. She travels a long way. This year she lost her husband, and life partner and we all pray with her at his passing. If God is handing out any goodies this Thanksgiving, they should go to Lucie and Herta.

So let us gather on this Autumnal Day in November as we mourn the dying embers of the church year that has passed. Let us thank God and worship him in all his glory as we pray:

Father, you gave us an empty page of a year and we have filled it with Gospel and your teaching. You gave us the stave empty and bear and as best we could we filled it with music with which to worship you. You gave us health and growth, your spirit and your love and we thank you. You gave us Dorothy, Helen and Agnes and John and we are guided by their love and light. In the coming year open wide the book of your son, spell out Gospel across the months and days ahead.

Let us build you the City of God in this community by our love and service, and let our Pledge this year be a token of our commitment and duty to you and the work of your Son.

Amen +

The Rev. William J. McGinty, Rector  
110 West Catharine Street, Milford, Pennsylvania 18337  
Phone: (570) 296-8123 ♦ Fax: (570) 296-4383