



St. Andrew's Tidings

Message from Ray:

Deuteronomy, Moses, & Yoda

The Reverend Raymond Wishart, Deacon

As good loyal faithful Christians we have all studied the bible; you've heard sermons, read commentaries, and heard snippets in the lessons each week. At the same time, I would agree that most of us know a lot about the life of Christ from the New Testament I'm not sure most of us know as much about the books of the Old Testament. This week's Old Testament lesson come from Deuteronomy, the final book of the Books of Moses and the fifth book of the Old Testament as we know it.

The English title of the book of Deuteronomy is apparently based on the mistranslation of the phrase, "a copy of this law" or "this second law." The Jewish title, (devarim), "words," comes from the custom of using the opening word(s) of a book as its name. Deuteronomy opens with the statement, "These are the words which Moses spoke." Deuteronomy is a sermon – actually a series of sermons. It is the longest sermon in the Bible and maybe the longest sermon ever. Deuteronomy presents Moses, standing on the Plains of Moab with all Israel assembled before him, preaching. It is his last sermon. When he completes it, he will leave his little pulpit on the plains, climb a mountain, and die.

The text from the Lectionary assigned this week is Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Moses has been preaching his final message for chapter after chapter, aren't you glad you weren't standing in the desert heat to hear all of it! This is the very end of that message; he closes with a bang, telling them like it really is. God has spoken to Moses, and now Moses gives them his send-off message before they enter the Promised Land. Moses never enters the Promised Land, his job was to take them there and not to lead them once they got there – but that is a different topic that we will skip today.

Having assured the people that what God commands they can do, Moses launches into his final call for a decision. He reiterates the essence of God's covenant, focusing especially on the promise of blessing for obedience and the threat of a cursed existence in exile for failure to obey. With these words, Moses concludes and descends from his pulpit, or more likely just a rock he was standing on. The terms of the covenant are clear; the community must now decide.

Readers of Deuteronomy, both ancient and modern, stand alongside those in the story world. They, too, must decide. What will God's people choose when confronted by so momentous a decision? We are not told the response the first congregation made. In the following chapter, it becomes very clear that both Moses and God know that the people will fail miserably. So why does Moses preach the sermon if he knows ahead of time that it will make no difference? I guess that's a question every preacher, and congregation member, must ponder now and then.

In its final form, Deuteronomy is addressed to the post-exilic community, which simply means people after the exile. Those hearing or reading the book of Deuteronomy know that the first hearers failed. That first congregation, encamped on the border of the promise, did not take root in the land but was whisked into exile like wind-blown chaff. The later audience living in the shadow of the exile would have heard Moses' words with regret and sadness.

The call to love the Lord and obey the commandments had been emphatic; the conditions had been crystal clear; the promises and threats had been compelling. But Israel had failed, as Moses had predicted they would. The post-exilic community quite naturally wondered, "Is there any hope that we can succeed where our parents failed?"

The answer is yes -- then and now and always. The call to obedience assumes that Israel in a new generation can indeed turn to God and walk according the commandments. To every person who hears the call of God the promise is made, "Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away".

Moses' repeated use of the word "today" emphasizes the hope of a new beginning. In every age, there are moments when it is again "today," pivotal moments of decision in which God's people, individually and collectively, are offered "life and prosperity, death and adversity. To first-century Christians, the letter to the Hebrews says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts". Whenever God's word is read, it is again that "today" in which each of us must decide how we will respond.

The choice is laid out bluntly. It is yes or no. The options presented do not include 'maybe' or 'I'll have to think about it' or 'I'll give it a try.' As Yoda famously tells Luke Skywalker who has half-heartedly promised to "try" to do as Yoda asks, "No. Try not. Do. Or do not. There is no try." Moses' strident call for decision is basically the same. Both remind Christians that Jesus made stark demands upon his followers. A decision is required; we must choose and we must act.

NEW SERIES FOR ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

FRANK LO'PEZ WILL LEAD THE 9 A.M. ADULT CLASS IN

Richard Rohr's book, "Breathing Underwater."

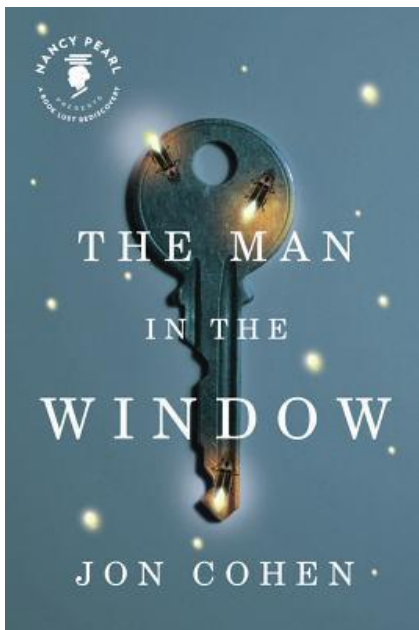
Rohr, a Franciscan priest, is the founding director of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is he author of numerous books such as "Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality, and Wondrous Encounters: Scriptures for Lent. Books will be provided. The series begins this week.

FEBRUARY BOOK CLUB NEWS

Too many books!

The St. Andrew's Book Club meets the fourth Tuesday of each month. Lately we have been rotating among the various members' homes. Last month a new book was introduced for February, but the typist forgot she had already submitted a different book to Tidings! So this is a clarification of which book we will discuss. Since February is Valentine's month, we will use the "gentle romance" described below and read *The Story of Beautiful Girl* next month. The Book Club will meet at Teri Floore's home at 2701 W. 27th St. at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 25th. Bring a sandwich or something light for lunch. Everyone is welcome—reader or not!

In February the St. Andrew's Book Club will read and discuss *The Man in the Window* by Jon Cohen. A poignant, darkly comic novel by the author of *Max Lakeman* and *the Beautiful Stranger*. A disfigured man stays in the safety of his



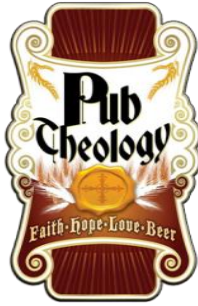
parents' house for 16 years--until a fateful accident causes him to meet the woman who changes his life. Since he was disfigured in a fire sixteen years ago, recluse Louis Malone has remained hidden from the prying eyes of his neighbors in the small town of Waverly.

Across town, Iris Shula, a lonely and unlovely nurse, knows at thirty-seven it is unlikely that her Prince Charming will ever appear. But Iris is about to learn how wrong she is.

When Louis accidentally falls out of his second-story window, these two kindred souls are brought together. What unfolds is a most unlikely love story. One that will make you laugh and that will break—and remake—your heart.

"A gentle romantic fantasy of piercing and eccentric beauty".--Boston Globe.

*Pub Theology
Tomorrow
Night
6 p.m.
"The Place"
on Harrison*



*Bring a
Bible-no
experience
necessary!*

MEN'S CONFERENCE AT BECKWITH

FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 1

**WHY THE LITURGY ROCKS: HOW EPISCOPAL WORSHIP CAN LEAD TO
HEALTHY AND AUTHENTIC LIVING**

PRESENTED BY

***THE VERY REV. IAN S. MARKHAM, PhD
DEAN AND PRESIDENT OF VIRGINIA SEMINARY***

SEE THE BULLETIN BOARD!



Centennial King and Queen Contest

Nominations have ended and it is now time to vote. Vote for your favorite choices in Byrne Hall. One dollar = one vote. The nominees who collect the most \$\$\$ win and will be crowned at the Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner on March 4. All proceeds go to the Capital Campaign Fund.



Let's fight against hunger together!

Panama City CROP Hunger Walk – Sat., February 22

Registration: 8:00 a.m., Walk: 9:00 a.m.

Location: McKenzie Park in Panama City, Florida

CROP Hunger Walks are community-wide events that bring people together in a common mission: helping hungry people at home and around the world.

I'm excited to be part of it and would love to have you join me on the **St. Andrew's** team. The steps we take - and the funds we raise - will make a real impact! Contact Laurie Ayers at 265-5978.

You can join in the CROP Hunger Walk online – even if you can't walk. Make a personal contribution and/or contact your friends and family via email to ask them to support the event at <http://hunger.cwsglobal.org/goto/SAE>

Please remember to pick up your end of the year statements on the table in Byrne Hall if you have not already done so. Thanks!

Please keep the following in your prayers : Faye, Nancy, Kylie, Marilyn, Michael, Keith, Jay, Colleen, Joy, Jane, Dee Dee, Donna, John, Maggie, Anna, Frank, Katie, Aubree, Sue, Colleen, Betty, Jimmy, Bubba, Mary Ruth, Lettie, Leslie, Sandra, Marilyn, Mary, Alexis, John, Evan, Cindy, LaVern, Daniel, Doug, Eli, Kyle, Bob, Sean, Tim, Libby, Marilyn, Sue, Michael, Kyle, Charlotte, Elizabeth, Colleen, Ryan, Joy, Jane, Anna, Michela, Doris, Helen, James, Maggie, Pat, Judy, David, Jerry, Amy, Julie, Frances, Henry, Lena, J.W., Harold, Wendy, Sandy, Charley, Danette, Pam

We pray for our men and women in the Armed Forces at home and abroad; Jeff, Bowe, James, Andrew, Kenneth, Evan, Ryan, Joe, Nate, Richard, David, Brian, Jason, Billy, Joseph, Colin, Todd, Brett, Jordan