

Will God Pass the Test?

Malachi 3:8-12

Two thousand people were before us. It was the annual Church Mission Rally in Newport Beach, California. The event had been wonderfully challenging and enlightening that whole day. Now all were together to “wrap up” the experience in a grand celebration of worship and communion. The singing had been ecstatic, the praying had been powerful, and the preaching had been heart grabbing for everyone to this moment; except for me.

I had a front row seat. Actually, I sat “up front” in the midst of the huge, massed choir, cloaked in one of my congregation’s choir robes...anonymous! That had been my role and my desire that day; to stay an unnoticed part of the crowd. To everyone there I succeeded well in that intent. To everyone there...except one! God took notice of me.



This may sound strange, especially for a priest to say, but I wasn’t particularly desirous of being noticed by The Lord that day. I had been feeling rather “dried up” recently. No Psalmist’s flowing streams of mercy, nor green pastures of grace were in my inward parts. Oh, I wasn’t Death Valley inside either, just a browning lawn in a Central California heat wave. It’s not that I was happy about how I was doing spiritually. I just didn’t want to be disturbed about it. So, I had been quietly enjoying being hidden to that moment.

It was not to stay that way. God had decided to disturb my complacent soul. The words of the sermon kept attacking my sense of comfort. God would not let them fade from my consciousness. “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me...in your tithes and offerings. Bring the full tithe into my house...put me to the test, and see if I will not open up the windows of Heaven for you...”

I did not want to think about these words. They burned my already parched soul like a hot wind passing over dry grass. Yet, I knew that I could not resist their truth. I knew from experience that I would no longer be able to turn a deaf ear to The Spirit’s steady rapping at the door of my mind and heart.

How long had it been? When was it that I had stopped tithing? I remembered that I had started tithing in High School. My pastor in those days had preached a very straightforward sermon on Malachi 3:8-12 and had not minced words. The Biblical model for giving was “first fruits,” and tithing, he had said. First fruits meant giving to God before all else. It was to come off the top of the paycheck before anything else was paid. “First fruits” was to be an act of faith that said that we trusted God for the rest of our needs. The tithe was to be the goal of our first fruits. We were to dedicate ourselves to eventually giving the 10% of our income “off the top” as God blessed us with income. “It’s not that God needs your money,” my pastor explained. “It’s that you need to give it for your own sake. Giving money to God, in our money-centered culture, is a true reflection of giving your whole self to God. “And,” he said, “it will keep money from becoming your God instead.”

Continued on page 2

Test, Continued from page 1

Most of my home church congregation responded. People began to give according to what they actually received. The professionals in our midst began to give as they prospered with clients. The farmers would give as the harvest came in. Some of them went so far as to invite gleaners into their fields to take a portion of the crop to feed the hungry. The salaried members gave according to their pay checks, and the laborers gave according to their hours; including overtime. As for me, I had an after-school job that paid me a whopping \$100 a month. Ten dollars doesn't look like much in retrospect, but just then it was a lot to me. I started to tithe.

Throughout college and grad school/seminary I continued. In college, when jobs changed almost as fast as semester classes, I would write on my annual church pledge card, "10% of anything I get!" I know that didn't particularly help the finance committee in determining the future budget, but it was, for me, the only financial truth of which I was sure. At one point, while working as a waiter in a restaurant, I pledged to give as my tips rose or fell. Somehow, my giving only seemed to increase. God's promise to faithfully open the windows of Heaven in blessing was proving true at every turn. That blessing, though, was not foremost an economic one. Primarily, I was continually growing in my sense of God's presence and guiding hand upon my whole life. I knew that money was just one aspect of my life, but tithing, for me, symbolized the giving of every aspect of my life to God. As a result, I saw that God had taken a very personal hand in the whole of my life. His bounty of guidance and meaning was going far beyond anything that extra 10% could have even begun to buy.

As we settled into our first parish together, D'aun and I remained tithers. Now tithing meant that we could really give back to God's work something significant and steady. The windows of Heaven continued to pour out one blessing after another. Somehow, somewhere, though, even while the giving increased on our part, the tithing began to slip. As my salary went up, that 10% was starting to look awfully big. Increasing financial responsibilities were calling out to be met, and I wasn't sure that I could afford to "just give away" all that much anymore.

"How strange," I thought as I sat in that Mission Rally choir. "When I had less, I was more faithful." Despite my faithlessness, God had remained faithful to me. I still had prospered economically; more importantly, I had prospered in spiritual growth, in personal relationships, and in a rich home life. The windows of Heaven were still wide open. Yet, there was a disquieted dryness in my spirit.

The preacher announced an alter call. Those who would rededicate themselves to God were called to come forward. Hundreds of people rose, filling the aisles full and swelling the numbers kneeling at the altar rail. God had called, and they were responding. God had noticed me, too. The complacency in my soul was gone. The dryness within was now provoking a raging thirst; a raging thirst for God. Nothing less than to go forward would do.

After a few agonized moments of debate within, ("I can just talk to God from my seat. I don't really need to go forward! What will my people think if they see me?"), I found myself crossing the chancel to arrive on my knees at the rail. There I made my commitment to return to a Biblical standard of giving. "Lord," I prayed, "I will give you the first fruits starting today. And, I commit myself to become a tither again."

D'aun and I began right away to give the first fruits of my income. Over the next few years, we slowly became tithers again, adding a percentage increase every year until we got there. It wasn't easy. It never is! Those were hard economic times. But do we ever have truly easy economic times? I wish I could say that every economic problem miraculously disappeared since then. That would not be true, however, nor would it be entirely helpful if it were true. God wants us to give as an act that builds our faith, expresses our love, and puts our daily needs in perspective; not particularly for economic gain. *Continued on page*

Test, Continued from page 2 Yet, we have come to see God's provision at work for our family's needs. Even more, spiritual revival has become the norm, even in the face of setbacks, and deep and emotional loss. Our sense of the Lord's presence has become stronger, our trust in Him surer, and our prayers have become more confident even as they have become more daring. We have long since learned that our church pledge is about way more than money: it is about our whole lives and our souls. It is about thankfulness, hope, and Joy.

So, God, in the words of the prophet Malachi, challenges us to put him to the test. "Bring the full tithe into the temple...and see if I will not open the windows of Heaven for you in overflowing blessing." Will God pass this test? This stewardship season, step out in faith. Become a "first fruits" giver. Make tithing your eventual goal, if you are not already there. God will open the windows of Heaven for you in blessings.

Blessings,
Fr. Rick

Until Then



It wasn't until a month after my grandfather died that that my mother and I began to clear out his desk. That was when we found his written funeral instructions, tucked away in the back of a desk drawer. He wrote that he wanted a simple service and no flowers. Donations instead to go to the local hospital for the new baby nursery. (He was one of the local doctors who'd delivered many of the town babies for over 30 years). His instructions continued, "Ask John C. and five boys at good old Co. B to act as pallbearers," (Company B, 184th Infantry was the town's historic National Guard unit). He ended, "To you my loved ones, I owe all my good fortune. To my good wife, my thanks for a lifetime of care and support." In closing, he added, "Adios. Hasta la vista," always two of his favorite departure sayings.

My mother and I were so dismayed. Knowing of no previous instructions, we were at a loss as to what he would have wanted. But we did our best. We asked his younger brother and other Masonic brethren to be pallbearers. And as my grandfather was a World War I veteran, we decided local American Legion post should conduct the burial service. It was all guess work. After we found his instructions too late, we realized that nearly none of his other wishes were followed, because we simply didn't know. How comforting it would have been to have known, and followed, his wishes instead.

This brings to mind our own final wishes: what sort of a service do we want? Which hymns? Do we have a message for the congregation? Do we want family members and friends to participate in the service? Where do we want the service to be held? Do we want a large or small reception or none? Who will act as pallbearers, if any, and where do we want our remains to be placed? These topics require thought and planning.

If you and your loved ones have your final wishes placed in the files at St. John's Chapel, good for you. It will make all the difference to your loved ones who want to send you off in the manner you chose. If you haven't yet put pen to paper and described your wishes as completely as possible, please do so. You can drop off your instructions at the chapel office, and they will be kept on file.



It will make all the difference.

Until then.

Understanding the Change in Intinction (dipping)

The National Church, “The Episcopal Church”, has notified all churches that they must change the way communion is delivered. While still working out our knowledge and issues around the COVID pandemic, the subject of intinction came up at various times as a way to work around the Common Cup in the administration of Eucharist. Theologically, there is no good basis for intinction in our tradition. It did not become common in worship until the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s as an alternative to the Common Cup because of the fears during that time. Despite scientific evidence put forth about the safety of the Common Cup, community fears about germs and a stigma attached to those with AIDS led to intinction as a practice. Some of our parishioners have never experienced the administration of communion without intinction.

In our discussions and review of materials during the past five years across the Episcopal Church, the issue of the Common Cup, while desirable in our tradition, continues to be problematic for some. Certainly, if all chalices have the silver patina needed, and all wine is the standard 15-18% alcohol (like port), it is easy to make a one-way-fits-all regulation about the Common Cup. Some of our churches have done so. The National Cathedral is one of many that have chosen to offer Common Cup only.

For the Diocese of El Camino Real, the preferred method of administration remains the use of the Common Cup for wine or receiving communion in one kind (bread only). However, we realize that some in our churches may still want their bread intincted. To accommodate intinction safely for all, only priests may intinct (dip) the bread and then

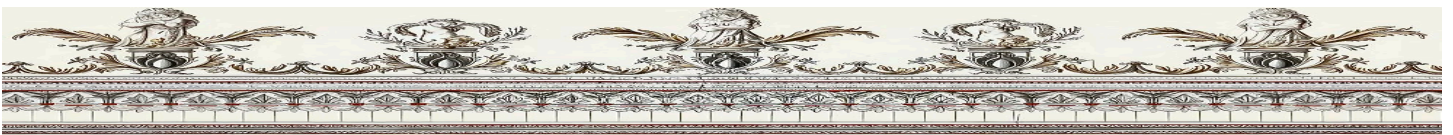
place it in a worshipper’s hand.

With this in mind, here are the revised instructions for communion at St. John’s:

- **Drinking from the chalice**? Hold your palms facing up to receive a wafer, eat it, then drink from the chalice in turn. Help guide the chalice to your lips when it is offered. When sick, please refrain from drinking from the cup and opt for intinction.
- **Intincting (dipping) wafer in wine**? Clasp your hands together in front of you and the priest will know to intinct the wafer for you. Then open hands palms-up to receive the intincted wafer.
- **Receive a blessing only**? Cross your arms in front of your chest to receive a blessing by the priest, instead of receiving the bread and/or the wine.

Fr. Rick has decided to use medical-grade nitrile gloves when he administers communion as a further layer of protection.

Change is never easy, but we hope this broader explanation will help us all as we approach the altar together for Eucharist.



A Mighty Fortress is Our God

1529

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

We think of Martin Luther as a great reformer. Bible translator, political leader, fiery preacher, and theologian. But he was also a musician, having been born in an area of Germany known for its music. There in his little Thuringian village, Martin grew up listening to his mother sing. He joined a boys' choir that sang at weddings and funerals. He became proficient with the flute (recorder), and his volcanic emotions often erupted in song.

When the Protestant Reformation began, Luther determined to restore worship to the German Church. He worked with skilled musicians to create new music for Christians, to be sung in the vernacular. He helped revive congregational singing and wrote a number of hymns.

Often, he “borrowed” popular secular melodies for his hymns, though occasionally a tune brought criticism, and he was “compelled to let the devil have it back again” because it was too closely associated with bars and taverns.

In the forward of a book, Luther once wrote, “Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. It controls our thoughts, minds, hearts and spirits...A person who...does not regard music as a marvelous creation of God...does not deserve to be called a human being; he should be permitted to hear nothing but the braying of asses and the grunting of hogs.”

Luther's most famous hymn is “Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott,” — “A Mighty Fortress is our God.” Based on Psalm. 46, it reflects Luther's awareness of our intense struggle with Satan. In difficulty and danger, Luther would often resort to this song, saying to his associate, “Come, Philipp. Let us sing the 46th Psalm.”

This is a difficult hymn to translate because the original German is so vivid. At least 80 English versions are available. The most popular in America was done by Frederic Henry Hodge. But an older version appeared in the Pennsylvania Lutheran Church Book of 1868:

A mighty fortress is our God, / A trusty Shield and Weapon;/ He helps us free from every need, / That hath us now o'ertaken.

The British version of “A Might Fortress” is Thomas Carlyle's translation:

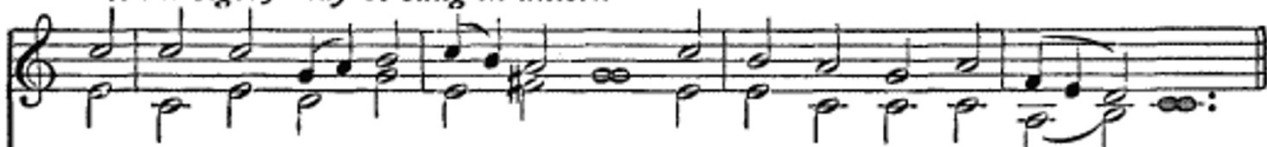
A safe stronghold our God is still, / A trusty shield and weapon ;/ He'll help us clear for all the ill/ That hath s o'ertaken.

Continued on page 6

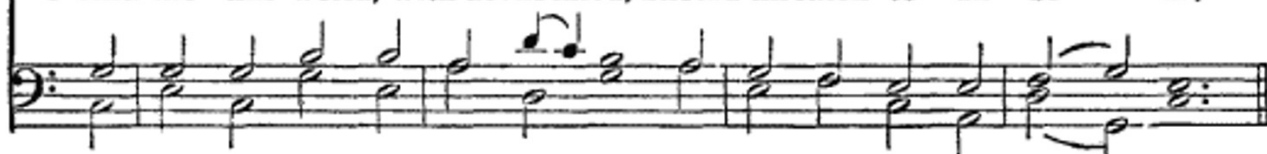
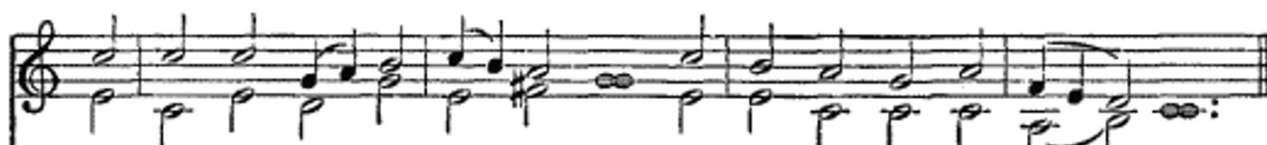


EIN' FESTE BURG

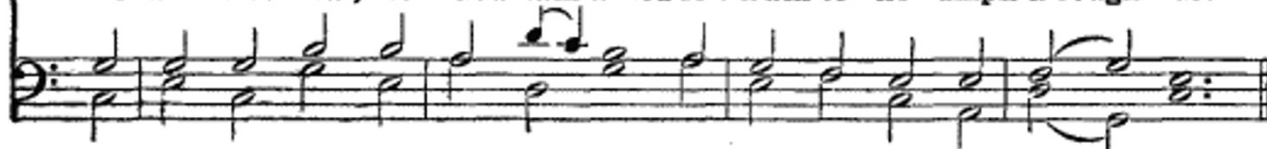
Melody, MARTIN LUTHER, 1529

With vigor; may be sung in unison


1 A migh - ty for - tress is our God, A bul - wark nev - er fail - ing;
 2 Did we in our own strength confide, Our stri - ving would be los - ing;
 *3 And tho' this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to un - do us;

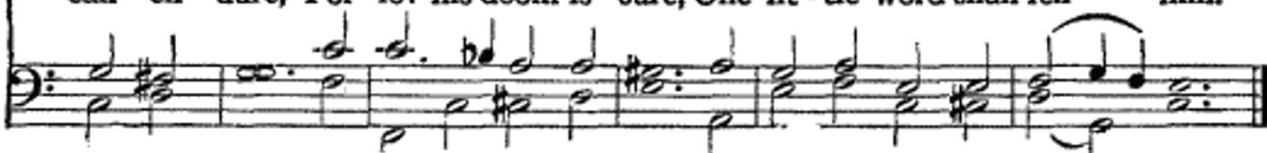
Our help - er he a - mid the flood Of mor - tal ills pre - vail - ing;
 Were not the right man on our side, The man of God's own choos - ing;
 We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to tri - umph through us:




For still our an - cient foe Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and
 Dost ask who that may be? Christ Je - sus, it is he; Lord Sa - ba -
 The prince of dark - ness grim, We trem - ble not for him; His rage we



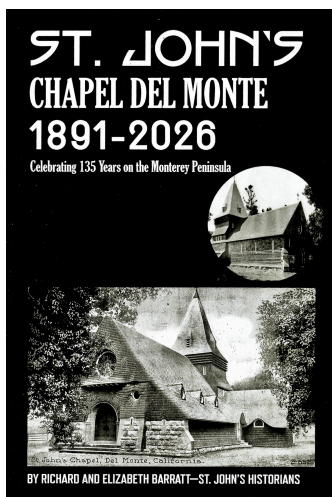

power are great, And, armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his e - qual.
 oth his Name, From age to age the same, And he must win the bat - tle.
 can en - dure, For lo! his doom is sure, One lit - tle word shall fell him.



The Business News

St. John's Chapel Current Financial Encapsulation October 2026

Available Funds in Checking	\$ 38,809.14
September Expenses	\$ 15,836.73
Bottom Line (+/-)	\$ 22,972.41



It's here! The history of our beloved chapel, which has taken Dick and Elizabeth Barratt the past four years to research and complete (Elizabeth wrote the text, Dick organized and set up the illustrations) is now available for purchase. You may buy your copy after the Sunday service during the upcoming weeks. Book cost: \$30.



THE BENEFIT SHOP ACCEPTS

Clean, gently used clothing
Clean, working small appliances
Clean Kitchen items
 Chinaware, Glassware
 CDs and DVDs
 Knick knacks and bric-a-brac
 Small furniture items in good condition
 Art and Art objects
 Holiday items
 Jewelry

WE CAN NOT ACCEPT

ELECTRONICS: such as MEDICAL EQUIPMENT, PRINTERS, COPIERS, LAPTOPS, CELL PHONES, TELEVISIONS, OR COMPUTERS.
 Soiled or worn-out clothing or shoes
 Cassettes or VHS videos
 Non-working small appliances
 Broken, chipped, or cracked items
 Worn kitchen ware
 Broken jewelry or watches

Please Note: We do not have the woman-power to dispose of unsaleable items. Please do not leave items at the gate, it is unlawful.

Altar Flowers: The Flower Chart is in its usual place in the Parish Hall. Reserve those important dates now. Costs are \$40.00 for regular seasonal flowers, greenery and candles, OR \$50.00 for roses.

St. John's Chapel, Del Monte October 2026 Schedule

Date	Activity	Notes
OCTOBER 4 Trinity 18	10:00 AM - Holy Communion	Fr. Richard Miles Presiding Blessing of the Animals on Chapel Front Steps
OCTOBER 11 Trinity 19	10:00 AM - Holy Communion 11:00 AM – Vestry Meeting	Fr. Richard Miles Presiding Centennial Hall
OCTOBER 12 Columbus Day	Federal Holiday	
OCTOBER 18 Trinity 20	10:00 AM - Holy Communion ★ 11:00 AM - Important Congregation Update & Potluck ★	Fr. Richard Miles Presiding Parish Hall
OCTOBER 25 Trinity 21	10:00 AM – Morning Prayer	Carl Patience, Licensed Lay Reader Conducting
OCTOBER 31 Halloween		

NOTE BENE: Schedule is subject to change by the Front Office

Blessing of the Animals

Sunday, October 4th @ 10 AM

We will have a special Holy Communion service with Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, October 4th at 10. Bring your furry, feathered, and scaly friends (photos only of snakes; stuffed animals and photos of your pets work too), to the beginning of the service for a special blessing from Fr. Rick at the steps of the church. For the safety of all participants, all pets must be on leash or crated. After receiving a blessing, pets should be returned to the owner's vehicle for the rest of the service. The worship service will continue in the Sanctuary.



This is a wonderful service to share with family and friends. All are welcome!

St. John's Chapel, Del Monte & Our Military Connection



David Jones, longtime member of our congregation, is undertaking the daunting task of chronicling the members of St. John's who have served in the military. Our connection to the military goes back even before the US Navy acquired the Del Monte Hotel. David is asking everyone in the congregation to search their memories and provide him with names, photographs in uniform (or partial thereof), any military memorabilia, and any history you might have. Any uniform (Dress, Class A, Battle Dress

Nomex Flight suit, Scrubs - any uniform). Photos can be portraits, personnel photos (even ID photos that usually look like police mug shots) or candid photos. David can be reached at davediane1@comcast.net, or you're welcome to chat with him during "coffee hour" after service on Sundays.

HERCULE POIROT WAS RIGHT

- 
1. Live in a cosy home
 2. Keep a few close friends
 3. Have a signature style
 4. Sip hot cocoa before bed
 5. Attend house parties with fascinating eccentrics
 6. Whenever possible, travel by train
 7. Holidays should be educational, frequent & luxurious
 8. Work from home whenever you can
 9. Bring order and truth to every aspect of your life
 10. Be observant and use your little grey cells

Halloween, a [holiday](#) observed annually on October 31 and noted for its [pagan](#) origins and its Christian roots as well as its [secular](#) traditions. In much of [Europe](#) and most of [North America](#), observance of Halloween is today largely nonreligious, celebrated with parties, spooky costumes, [pumpkin carvings](#) called [jack-o'-lanterns](#), and trick or treat. Halloween also marks the beginning of Allhallowtide, a [Christian](#) tridium ([Latin](#): "period of three days") dedicated to remembering the dead that begins with All Hallows' Eve (October 31) and is followed by All Hallows', or [All Saints'](#) Day (November 1) and [All Souls' Day](#) (November 2).



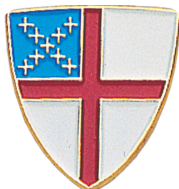
Editorial Policy

The *St. John's Chapel Newsletter* is published by St. John's Chapel, Del Monte, 1490 Mark Thomas Drive, Monterey CA 93940, a 501(c)(3) non profit, tax exempt organization. It is published monthly for the benefit and edification of its parishioners and the general public. The advertisements appearing in this publication do not reflect an endorsement by St. John's Chapel, Del Monte.

First
Class
Postage

St. John's Chapel, Del Monte Staff, Vestry & Officers

The Very Rev. Dr. Richard Miles - Priest-in-Charge
Cynthia Brown - Chapel Administrator
Mary Clare Martin - Organist
Jose Martinez - Sexton
Brieanne Goldberg - Bookkeeper
George Spelvin - Newsletter Publisher



Elizabeth Barratt - Senior Warden
Art Brost - Junior Warden
Monica Nathan - Treasurer
Elizabeth Barratt - Clerk
Chibby Ogbuka - Member
Margee Bennett - Member
Jean Givetz - Member
Carl Patience - Member

