

Subject: I Didn't Want To Be Ordained
From: "St. Francis Episcopal Church" <vicar@stfrancisva.org>
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S⁺ Francis



December 17, 2014

I Didn't Want To Be Ordained

*You are God's field
I Corinthians 3:9*

Actually . . .

I did not want to be ordained at first because I thought most people really did not pay attention to pastors since they were paid to talk about religion. However, I did change my mind about ordination (although sometimes I wonder about people paying attention to pastors). Here are some thoughts about ministry that have been rolling around my mind for a few years now.

Ember Days

Today is one of the three Ember Days that fall during the third week of Advent. Ember Days come around four times a year:

- between the third and fourth Sundays of Advent
- between the first and second Sundays of Lent
- between Pentecost and Trinity Sunday
- and the week beginning on the Sunday after Holy Cross Day (September 14).

Those who are preparing for ordination are normally required to write an Ember Day Letter to their bishop. While that is more information than you actually need about Ember Days, I thought I might restore the practice with you. It has been along time since I have written an Ember Day letter (Spring of 1979). And that one was to my bishop at the time, Lyman Ogilby. I wrote to Bishop Ogilby about how it was going with me as I prepared for ordination. I want to write something a little different to you this Ember Day.

God's Field

One of the readings set aside for worship on an Ember Day is I Corinthians 3:5-11. In that passage appears this sentence, "You are God's field." The Apostle Paul points out that the whole church is like a field. I like to think of it as a wild field which produces its own order and symmetry. The plants and flowers of the field grow in their natural state into an incredibly complex and beautiful place of life. It reminds me of G.K. Chesterton's description of church order:

The more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it has established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild.

One of the other things we do on Ember Days is pray for the ministry of the whole church, not just bishops, priests, and deacons, but everyone who is sealed by the Spirit of God and marked as Christ's own forever. When we all receive the power of the Holy Spirit to extend the kingdom then we are like God's field. That's where good things run wild. What a church that could be! Paul Minear briefly describes this in his book *Images of the Church in the New Testament*:

The existence of the community as a whole, including the work of the apostles and the response of the believers . . . marks it out as God's own work and as God's possession.

We look for God's work to be released through everyone, not the clergy

only. Would you pray with me today that the church becomes the kind of field where good things run wild? This prayer from the Book of Common Prayer would help us get started:

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Coming Attractions

sunday, December 21, 2014 worship at 10:00am with the Aspire Dance Company visiting

Wednesday, December 24, 2014 candlelight service at 6:00pm

Sunday, December 28, 2014 worship at 10:00am

Centerville Circle of Prayer

Air Specialists of Virginia, Paul Leslie, Manager, that this business would grow under a new business plan and be of great service to home owners in Central Virginia

Diocese of Virginia

Congregations and clergy of Immanuel – Old Church, Mechanicsville; Calvary, Hanover; St. James', Mt. Vernon; Creator, Mechanicsville; St. Paul's, Hanover.

Metropolitan Richmond

For families of Metropolitan Richmond: For the care and protection of infants, children, and youth: and for the intimate knowledge that each one is a beloved child of God.

Grace and Peace,

John Maher

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