

A special
THANK YOU!
**JoAnn & Scott
Haner**
donated funds to
purchase a new work
truck to replace our
unsafe '98 GMC.
We appreciate you!

A Lenten Reflection

By Joseph, Caretaker

This Lent, I've taken some time to focus on spiritual preparation for the hard-hitting questions Jesus asks during Easter. Some of the questions I've found particularly fruitful to my spiritual development in the desert are these:

"Are you still sleeping?" (Mk. 14:32-42). Beginning with the question asked as an admonishment just before being arrested, Jesus wonders at the frailty of his closest friends' bodies. The obvious connection for me to this question is the

continual reminder of how weak our bodies are even when our spirits are at their greatest willingness. Year and year again, I commit myself to a Lenten practice or practices, trying to tease out ways I can deepen my relationship with Christ. But year and year again, I fail to follow through on those commitments consistently. I slip up and forget. I then make a system that makes me remember. I then get lazy. I then ask for community accountability. It seems there is no end to the depth at which I can plumb my own frail human weaknesses. No end of attempts to find a way to worm out of commitments I make to God. But I take solace in Jesus' recognition of willing spirits. My body, in its perfect weakness, has limits. By relying on my relationship with God, I can work to push past those limits and become transformed more into who God created me to be.

"Why are you crying?" (Jn. 20:10-18). Sometimes we can fall into the trap of reflecting on Good Friday from the perspective of Easter. What I mean by this is we can fail to truly sit with the devastation of the crucifixion because we know the resurrection follows. In our hearts, we can say "that's rough, but everything is going to be ok in a couple of days" and rob ourselves of the opportunity to grapple with the spiritual desolation the disciples felt. Of course we are unable to flip a switch and forget about the stone being rolled away, Mary, Mary, and Salome finding the empty tomb, and John beating Peter in a foot race, but we can try to sit with the preceding events intentionally. What meaning could be found in such a devastating loss? What hope for the future comes from a

place of deepest despair? What is the purpose behind our grief?

"Do you really love me?" (Jn. 21:15-17). After a fish breakfast with the disciples, Jesus gives Peter an opportunity for reconciliation for the three denials Peter made after Jesus' arrest. With these questions, Jesus calls Peter to a heroic love. How do we respond to Jesus' query? I know I love the communion of believers in the Church and the example Christ set for how we should live our lives. But do I let that love permeate my every action and decision? Do I always take into consideration the effect I have on the poor and vulnerable in order to ensure they are privileged and not just kept from harm? If I pity Peter in this interaction, it is because I am too squeamish to truly investigate how I have denied Jesus and avoided his association. But unlike an ingratiating favor-seeker, I must work to tease out precisely how Jesus is calling me to love him. Because the question about real love implies Christ is uncertain of the answer. In what ways can I reassure him as we journey forward together?



"Why do you stand there?" (Acts 1:1-11). While not technically a question Jesus asks (as he's just been obscured by a cloud after being lifted up), this question certainly comes from God, and as Jesus is the Word, I'll allow it. The first scene in Acts sets the stage for life after ascension. The disciples were already commissioned into apostles back in the first halves of Matthew, (continued on page 4)

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WISH LIST



2021 Group Weeks

Serve and Be Part of Our Community, in the Community

Bethlehem Farm is hosting Volunteer Group Weeks in 2021! We currently have 7 group weeks booked with volunteers – with open opportunities on those weeks ranging from 2 to 12 spots. There are a total of 10 group weeks during 2021 that are open to additional volunteers. Please see the 2021 Group Week Calendar on the Farm website for all the available weeks.

Registration is now open for Family Week (July 25 – 31) and Adult Week (July 18 - 24). Historically, these weeks have filled quickly. If you are interested in either of these weeks, do not hesitate.

- If you would like to participate in a Group Week as an individual, with a group of friends and/or family, or as a small organizational group, You Are Welcome!
- Teens 16-18 can attend a High School Week with a parent, an adult chaperone, or approved parental consent.
- Adults 18 years or older can join a College Group Week.



A New Blog to Unite the Community of Former Bethlehem Farm Volunteers

Community is united by its stories. With this blog we are asking for stories from the diaspora of the Bethlehem Farm's wind and flame. As you carry the Cornerstones with you to your community, what successes have you had? What failures have you learned from?

Wind and flame can be some of the most profound experiences of God at Bethlehem Farm – the silent moments of listening to the wind or the loud moments of community around a campfire. So too the ones who have left the mountaintop are the wind and flame of the community of the Farm. The spark of life has been lit in us to carry to all corners of this round world.

Please send your stories to thehubbcap@gmail.com. There is no need to make them a novel. Matt may suggest edits or ask if you can expand on your thoughts. He will then post them on the blog as encouragement and inspiration. A photo to go with your story would be great! Even if you don't have a photo, please send your story all the same. We would love to share your experiences of living the cornerstones in your own communities.

Miracle of Spring

By Molly, Caretaker

Guardian of generations,
Usher of spring;
Power far beyond all nations,
Seed, where lives begin!

You slowly stretch to greet the day,
Peek beyond the womb;
With kiss of rain and sun's sweet rays,
Unfurl from winter's tomb.

Gray gives way to verdant green,
I'm left with lush surprise;
A broken world becomes pristine,
Once again you rise.



Jimmy (Bubba) and Ruth Love at First Sight and at Second Chance

By Pat, Caretaker

You may think we worked with Jimmy and Ruth for the massively cute dogs, but in fact, that was only part of the reason. The rest of our motivation came from the desire to build friendships, serve our local community, and build something that would improve the livability and access to our neighbors' home.

Originally from Ohio, Jimmy and Ruth first met in seventh grade where they fell deeply in love for the better part of a year but broke up before the transitional period known as eighth grade. Over 30 years later, Jimmy and Ruth reconnected and have resided in WV for over 7 years! Awesome! Caretakers spent just about three full weeks getting to know Jimmy and Ruth while building a new porch, wheelchair ramp, and porch roof on their house. The community enjoyed several socially distanced lunches, barbecues, and porch swing chats with our new friends and got ample encouragement from Ruth and Jimmy who were excited for the ramp that they could use to more easily carry groceries up and access their house, while maintaining a raceway for the grandkids to run up and down.

Caretakers also enjoyed the company of three pups: Bubby, Sissy, and Blackie. Jimmy and Ruth would often sit outside while the Caretakers were installing deck boards or hanging joists and playfully keep us in line by yelling "watch him Bubby, watch him" or making sure that I kept working hard by reminding me "not to sing it, but bring it baby." Jimmy and I became friends through our shared love for dogs, building, West Virginia scenery, and our Covid-safe, handshake style, elbow-bumps aptly named "clicking it".

Jimmy and Ruth expressed their gratitude by providing us cold soda, complimenting our work, and thanking us for being willing to come to work each day and make a difference for the life and accessibility of their home. Caretakers were also able to rehang their porch swing which allows them to sit together and look out over Big Creek and the surrounding mountains. Jimmy taught me several life lessons on the importance of work, shedding oneself of the desire for material things, and calming the mind and soul through gratitude for the people and love that surrounds you. He also shared some local experience he had with the mountains and could tell me exactly when it was going to rain based on the blue haze that sat in the valley above.

I am excited to see Jimmy and Ruth use the ramp on a daily basis and feel fortunate to have made friends with such positive role models. I am thankful to the entire Bethlehem Farm community for supporting our mission, and as Jimmy and I would say after working each day at his home, "Goooodnight."



Maple Crunch Granola *From Raine's mom, Roxanne*

Note from Raine: This is my dad's favorite granola. He always adds dried cherries, nuts, and fresh blueberries.

Put wet ingredients into a blender and blend well:

1/3 cup water
1/2 cup oil
1 1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup real maple syrup
1/2 cup flax seed (optional)

Mix well in a large bowl:

6-7 ounces whole or quick oats
1 cup wheat germ - toasted or raw
1 cup coconut flakes - unsweetened
1/2 cup sunflower seeds
1/2 cup white flour or almond flour (optional)

Mix the wet ingredients into the bowl of dry ingredients. Spread the granola onto two 11x16-inch cookie sheets and bake at 250 degrees for approximately two hours. Mix every 20 minutes. Granola is done when it turns light brown. For clumpier granola, add 1/2 cup white flour or almond flour to the dry ingredients. Enjoy!

MISSION

STATEMENT:

Bethlehem Farm is a Catholic community in Appalachia that transforms lives through service with the local community and the teaching of sustainable practices.

We invite volunteers to join us in living the Gospel cornerstones of community, prayer, service, and simplicity.

OUR

COMMUNITY:

- Will Fair
- Colleen Fitts
- Eric Fitts
- Tori Llorens
- Patrick McGinnis
- Raine Nimmer
- Steve Rassa
- Joseph Reilly
- Gemma Stanton
- Molly Sutter

BOARD

MEMBERS:

- Josh Bleisch
- Brenna Davis
- John Hannagan
- Vickey McBride
- Kera McNelis
- Kathryn Moran
- Michael Newman
- Kat O'Loughlin
- Jennifer Scott
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- Craig Snyder
- Bill Thompson
- Nicholas Vergatos

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By our friends at Canfield & Tack

Farm Tales - Farm Fun in a Pandemic By Colleen, Apprentice of Miriam



(A Lenten Reflection *continued from page 1*) Mark, and Luke, but now that role changed. No longer was there a teacher to lead and instruct them as followers. The followers of Christ must begin to find their own path, relying as best they can on the wisdom left behind for them and being open to the Holy Spirit as it moves in the world. We too are called to act in the world. It is not our purpose to simply stand agape, squinting at the spot we think we can just barely see Jesus. It is our purpose to move in the world and search out Jesus where we can tangibly meet Christ in those around us. We can't stand still. We each must embody the Greek apostolos and become "one who is sent forth," spurred on by the fire of Christ in our hearts. By keeping the memory of Jesus' sacrifice alive in our daily actions, we can continue the spiritual development we've found through our Lenten practices and build on it throughout the Easter season and the rest of the year.

Director's Corner - Do Your Best By Eric, Director

I'm serving as Cubmaster and Tiger Den Leader this year for Miriam and Isaiah's Cub Scout Pack 316 here in Summers County. I'm proud of them for achieving the ranks of Webelos and Tiger this year, as well as earning the Roman Catholic religious emblem for their respective age groups. One thing that sticks out to me from my Cubmaster training is the Cub Scout motto: "Do your best." If we were to adopt a motto to bring us through the past 12 months as a human, we could do much worse than "Do your best."

Looking back at these past 12 months, I've seen "Do your best" at work in:

- The creativity and care taken as Caretakers and Summer Servants continued our Repairing Homes, Renewing Communities program
- The courage of donors to step up and make things happen while participation fee income dropped precipitously
- The Master Facilities Plan progressed with work on solar installations*, maintenance garage, Project Director Residence, and San Damiano Center*

Looking ahead at the season to come, I see "Do your best" bringing hope through:

- Bringing volunteer groups back in a safe way, beginning as early as June
- Enacting our Green Neighbors Solar* program, with 0% interest loans provided to families and nonprofits going solar
- Moving the first flock of laying hens into the livestock shed of the San Damiano Center for Sustainability*
- The steel structure of the garage going up -- Please check out the enclosed progress update and appeal!

*in partnership with the Wheaton Franciscan Sisters

Check us out online!
www.bethlehemfarm.net

Questions or Comments regarding this publication, article submissions and photos can be sent to the editor at caretakers@bethlehemfarm.net