

This Week at Ascension

Jesus and Buddha

In his book *Jesus and Buddha*, New Testament theologian Marcus Borg (1942-2015) highlights numerous sayings in the teachings of Jesus that are strikingly similar, if not identical, to the teachings of the Buddha who lived some six centuries earlier. There have been some attempts to explain these similarities through historical access, which is a remote possibility. Borg suggests a more meaningful view: that Jesus and the Buddha had both discovered the same spiritual goal and destiny, or I would say the one Holy Spirit that is guiding all of history. The Jewish Kabbalah, Muslim Sufism, and the teachings of the Tao also reveal a map toward non-dual consciousness and oneness.

Let me just share just a few of the parallel teachings Borg gathers in his book [1], and you will see how they are coming from the same non-dual perspective:

Jesus says, "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). The Buddha says, "Consider others as yourself" (Dhammapada 10.1).

Jesus says, "If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also" (Luke 6:29). Buddha says, "If anyone should give you a blow with his hand, with a stick, or with a knife, you should abandon any desires [to hurt him] and utter no evil words" (Majjhima Nikaya 21.6).

Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me" (Matthew 25:45). Buddha says, "If you do not tend one another, then who is there to tend you? Whoever would tend me, he should tend the sick" (Vinaya, Mahavagga 8.26.3).

Jesus and Buddha diagnose the human dilemma similarly. Our suffering is primarily based on ignorance. The vast majority of humanity lives in blindness about who we are and where we are going. Jesus and Buddha both speak about anxiety, attachment, grasping, craving, and self-absorption.

Unfortunately, Christianity became so concerned with making sure everybody believed that Jesus was God (faith in Jesus) that we largely ignored his teachings on detachment, simplicity, nonviolence, and anxiety (the faith of Jesus). Our Buddhist

brothers and sisters can help us remember these teachings at the core of our faith; they can help us be better, truer Christians. And we can help them, or at least give them very few reasons to dislike us! Why not try this novel idea?

On many levels, Jesus and Buddha talked about the same experience of transformation. In the end, all spirituality really is about transformation, dying before we die and being reborn as our True Selves in Love.

References:

[1] Marcus Borg, *Jesus and Buddha: The Parallel Sayings* (Ulysses Press: 1999). These passages were selected from the chapter "Compassion."

Adapted from Richard Rohr and James Finley, *Jesus and Buddha: Paths to Awakening*, disc 2 (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2008), CD, DVD, MP3 download.

HEADLINERS

Christmas Altar Flower Donations

If you'd like to make a donation toward the special flower arrangements that adorn the altar in the Christmas season, \$25 (or more!) in the special envelopes included in today's announcement bulletin will do it. You may offer your gift in memory of departed loved ones or as a thank offering. Use the space on the front of the envelopes for this purpose so that we can publish a list of memorials and thanksgivings for the Christmas bulletins. If you are using a check, make it out to Ascension with "Christmas Altar Flowers" in the memo field. Submit your gift in the offering plate or drop it off (or mail it) the Church Office. We need your gifts by next Friday, December 22.

One Ascension Sunday—December 31st

One Ascension Sunday is fast approaching. We are going to celebrate the end of one year and the start of another. Please join us after the service and bring a dish to share. The main course will be spiral cut ham. We need side dishes such as mac and cheese, potatoes, green beans, salads, desserts or your favorite dish. Please plan on joining in on the fun. A clipboard will again be passed around in the church so that we can have a rough idea of who is coming and what people are bringing.

Janet King, for the Parish Life Committee

Nursery Closing after Sunday, December 31

At the most recent meeting of Ascension's teachers with the Rector, it was clear that the "nursery" has not been utilized as originally intended for toddlers and infants up to age 3. This has been the case for some time. Parents with infants and toddlers attend the 10:15 service (often with a child on the way!) or one of our other services. Starting January 7, 2018, Room 2 will be the Joyful Path

classroom (for kids in 3rd to 5th grade), and *Room 4* will become a comfortable place for parents with children who need a "break" from sitting in church. There will be comfortable furniture, a bathroom, and in time a monitor so that the service can be seen and heard there.

Ascension Youth Group Coat Drive for St. James

We are collecting *new* coats, scarfs and gloves in the broad size of "middle schoolers" for the students at St. James School in intercity Philadelphia. Ascension Youth Group has been a strong supporter of this amazing school since its inception through our annual work camp trip. Please take a minute to learn a little about St. James School <https://stjamesphila.org/> . A labeled bin will be in the church narthex to place your items. The winter wear will be mailed on Monday Dec. 18th to arrive by Christmas. Question? Contact Angei at ahight@nist.gov

Volunteers Needed

We are looking for volunteers for the church office from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Contact Lin at office@ascensionmd.org

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Tai Chi

Tai Chi classes are offered at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday afternoons in the Chapel; a good time of peace and balance in a lovely place. Please come and join us.

There will be no Tai Chi on December 21st and 28th. We will resume in January. Tai Chi will be cancelled any Thursday that schools are closed for bad weather this winter. Contact Claire Rosser at [301.275.0617](tel:301.275.0617) or Cjrosser@aol.com if you have any questions.

Thursday Morning Yoga

It will be on hiatus for the season and will resume at 10:00 a.m. on January 11, 2018.

Godly Play

The Godly Play Advent lessons help us prepare for the Mystery of Christmas. We move toward Bethlehem, guided by the pointing prophets, with the Holy Family, the shepherds and the Magi. We arrive at the birth of Jesus and the lighting of the Christ Candle in the church. This week we focus on the wise men and the celebration of Christmas.

A note to parents: We will not have class on December 25th and January 1st. We will resume on January 8th with the story of Holy Baptism.

Joyful Path

The members of A Joyful Path will learn about sharing the loaves and the fish to feed the many. Discover how sharing really works and begin work on a crafts project. Come join us after the 9:00 a.m. service in room 11.

Spanish Class

Come and take part in Ascension's Spanish Class on Mondays from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Ascension House. You don't need to know Spanish to come, because we get together to learn and/or practice. For more information contact Javier at ocampo@ascensionmd.org

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Ministerio Felicidad

Ascension members prepare lunches and send love and prayers to day laborers in the neighborhood of the church. Join Javier at 6:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 23 in the church kitchen. If you have any question, Contact Javier at ocampo@ascensionmd.org

Men's Shelter Lunch Preparation

The Men's Shelter Lunches program provides bagged lunches, assembled in the Undercroft Commons once a month. Supplies are donated by Ascension members. Depending on the season, we provide forty to eighty lunches a month.

[Read more](#)

Gaithersburg HELP

This organization provides emergency food and other support to needy families in Gaithersburg. Non-perishable food collected at Ascension every week, and during specific holiday in-gatherings, helps to stock the pantry. Donations may be brought to church at any time and left in the narthex. For more information, contact Melanie Mitchell at [301.519.1074](tel:301.519.1074) or melanie.mitchell@verizon.net

Mobile Med

Every Tuesday, Mobile Med will be open for the service until 3:00 p.m. Starting January 2nd, our Tuesday Mobile Med clinic at Ascension House will move to the fixed site at Rollins Avenue for the cold winter months. It is too cold in the van for the staff, patients and equipment. Around February 1st, I will request blackout dates for March and April. If there are questions, contact us at spangle1@comcast.net or [240.372.3652](tel:240.372.3652).

LIFE AT ASCENSION

Epiphany Pageant - The King's Birthday

Wanted - Participants young and old; for speaking and nonspeaking parts in our Epiphany Pageant. Needed-Assistant Director(s), Piano Accompanist, Greeter, 4 Narrators, Innkeeper, Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Inn Workers, Stars, Angels, Kings, and Stable Animals. We have the scripts and the costumes we just need you. The pageant will tentatively be on Sunday January 7th. at the 5:00 p.m. service. Rehearsals on Saturday December 23, 30th and January 6th. from 9:00-10:30 a.m. Please contact Gordon Donnelly. I sing in the choir at 9:00 a.m. , teach in Room 11 at 10:15 a.m., in the instrumental ensemble for

the 11:15 a.m. My e-mail is vagordon1@yahoo.com

Thanks,

Gordon

Lady of Guadalupe Day

Join us on Saturday, December 16 to celebrate the Lady of Guadalupe Day at 7:00 p.m. in the Main Church. After the service we will have a Mariachi Band to sing "Las Mañanitas" to the Virgin. If you want to experience more about the Latino Traditions, this would be a great opportunity to do it. After the service we would continue the celebration in the Undercroft with more Mariachi songs and Latin-American food.

Pledge

The Pledge Campaign has been extended into December 2017 to reach all congregation members who have not yet pledged for funding year 2018. For tax planning purposes, please be aware that the last day to fulfill a 2017 pledge commitment or to make a donation/gift for calendar year 2017 will be Tuesday, December 26h, 2017.

PRAYERS REQUEST

Prayers For Those Whose Lives are Closely Linked With Ours: St. Thomas' Church, DC, St. Thomas' Church, P.G. County, and the Chapel of the Incarnation

Pray for Comfort, Healing, Courage, and Hope: Harriette, Mike, Sall & William, Sue, Ruthie, Melanie, Mitchell, Fran, Suzanne and all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

We pray for peace in the world and all who are serving our country here and abroad, especially those in harm's way, and their families.

We pray for all special intentions, and those on our extended Healing Prayer List.

Quick Links

[Link to Service Leaflets for December 17](#)

[Link to Podcast of Randy's Sermon on Sunday, December 10: "Stop"](#)

[Link to Podcast of Javier's Sermon on Sunday, December 10: "All at Once View"](#)

[Link to the Episcopal Diocese of Washington's Website](#)