

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
The Holy Name
January 1, 2017
The Rev. Grayce O'Neill Rowe

A number of years ago I attended a workshop where the presenter drew a large circle up on the board. He drew one small pie section in that circle, really small and he labelled that section "What you know." I remember thinking that the remainder of the circle would be labelled "What you don't know." I thought this because I knew that there was an awful lot that I didn't know, I knew that there was much more that I didn't know than what I did know - especially when considering science or history or math - much, much more that I don't know than I do know. Imagine my surprise when the presenter drew another really small pie section, and he labelled that "What you don't know." OK - now I was really confused - what was the rest of the circle? A huge black hole, perhaps? Well, here is a clue - the second small pie section was not just labelled what you don't know, it was actually labelled, "What you know that you don't know." The remainder of the circle, the largest part of the circle represented "What you don't know that you don't know." Listen to that again, What you don't know that you don't know. That is a mouthful. And what it represents is a huge amount of information, a huge amount that we don't even know that we don't know. We haven't paid attention perhaps; maybe we just haven't pondered all that we don't even know that we don't know.

That leads to today's Gospel, a beautiful continuation of the Christmas story, the Gospel that is read on the day that is known as the Feast of the Holy Name of our Lord, in this Gospel we find the shepherds going to Bethlehem to see what had been made known to them. And when they saw Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger, they made known to all those they met what had been told them about this child. And Mary treasured these words and pondered them in her heart.

I'm guessing here, but I imagine that what the shepherds knew and what they knew they did not know was considerably less than what they did not know that they did not know. I wonder if they even pondered over how strange it was that they, the lowest of the low in the society in which they lived, I wonder if they questioned why they were called to see the baby

named Jesus. And I imagine that they did not know that they did not know about the huge social and religious upheaval that this infant babe would bring about, or about those who would want to stop him, those who would eventually kill him.

Then Mary, she knew that her son would be named Jesus, she knew that God was a part of this, she knew as we hear in the Magnificat, those beautiful words when Mary says, “my soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, all generations will call me blessed, he has cast down the mighty from their thrones, he has filled the hungry with good things.” She knew these things and she most likely knew that she didn’t know a lot about how this happened, about how her life would change, about what the future would be for this child of hers. And then, it is not hard at all to imagine that there was even way more that she did not even know that she did not know.

This not knowing what we do not know (oh, you might even call that faith) but this not knowing what we do not know is a perfect way for us to share our last day together. For I have to admit that this not knowing what I don’t know is true for me in so many ways. I did not know that I did not know how incredibly wonderful it would be to serve among you as your interim priest. I have been ordained for over 22 years and all during this time I did not know that I did not know what a joy it would be to serve in a church as an interim, nor how quickly the days would fly by.

You have welcomed me, you have welcomed Carl, you have allowed us to become a part of this special community and for that I will be eternally thankful. I’m just sorry that our time together has been so short.

Another thing that I did not know that I did not know was that sometimes not following the rubrics is ok. An example - and for those who don’t know what I mean by rubrics, they are the “rules” for how we conduct our church services, rules about our liturgy. On page 366 of the Book of Common Prayer the small print rubric states that at the dismissal the words Alleluia Alleluia can be added during the Easter Season - from Easter through the Day of Pentecost. That means that for the rest of the year it is not in good Anglican form to say Alleluia Alleluia at the dismissal - you know, when Deirdre so powerfully says, Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, Alleluia

Alleluia and you reply Thanks be to God Alleluia Alleluia. That is simply wrong and it sort of made me uneasy at first. I chose to not say anything about it , always worried, though, that the liturgy police would come and I would be in trouble, but I chose to not say anything about it and instead I began to look around at your faces during the dismissal. What I saw made me realize that sometimes it really is ok to disobey the rubric for what I saw was such joy, such love, such happiness in shouting Alleluia Alleluia that I am certain that if the people who wrote the rubrics could see this, they would change the rubric. I did not know what I did not know. You helped me to realize that finding joy is sometimes more important than following proper order. You have helped me to live the words that our Bishop said about St. Andrew's - that is sooooo Sedona. There is so much that I do not know that I do not know.

I expect that is true for you as well. We are going our separate ways and there will be much, I imagine, for each of us that will fall into that category of what I don't know that I don't know - or, again, you might say faith.

For me, while I sort of have some expectations for my days after I leave this amazingly wonderful church home and while I know that I do not know what my future holds, because it all is really in God's hands, I also expect that I do not know that I do not know what God has in store for me, it is way outside of my ability to ponder.

The same is true for you. You know who your new rector is, the Rev. Monica Whitaker, some of you have met her, others of you have read about her. You know that there is a whole lot about her and about your new journey together that you do not know. And, the truth is, there is even a whole lot more that you do not know that you do not know about that journey.

The one thing, however, that I do know, the one thing that I know for certain, the one thing that I want to leave with you, the one thing that has filled my time with you, the one thing that has filled my sermons, the one thing that I have added to the eucharistic liturgy even though it is not in the rubric and some would think it improper, the one thing that I continue to learn over and over again, especially when dealing with the vast amount

that I do not know, especially when dealing with faith, the one thing that I do know is that Love is Enough.

As we go our separate ways, as you prepare to welcome your new rector, Monica, as you look forward with the assurance that all will be well, as we find joy and most certainly as we find challenges along our path, let us each remember, always, that Love is Enough. Let us each remember that in all of our lives that God's meaning is always love. If our every action is based on love, then we will be living the life that this infant named Jesus calls us to. If Love is the central focus of all that we do, even when in our doing we don't even know that we don't know, if love is the focus then we will be living what God teaches. When I think back on our days together, I will remember the way that you loved and I will rejoice in knowing that in everything, in all of our lives, whether we know we know it, don't know it or don't know that we don't know it, in all of our lives the truth really is that all that you need is love.

Hit it Carl. Amen