

THE CTS PROPHET

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In this Issue:

**Facilities Planning
Tuesday**

**Student Gov't
Wednesday**

**Introducing
'Critical
Conversations'**

**In The Field With
Farmer Eric, pt. 2**

**Stress Relief- Right
Around the Corner**

**Calling Progressive
Seminarrians--Live
Out the Beatitudes!**

Applications are still being accepted for Prophet Editor until April 15, (or pending budget approval for the stipend). See previous editions of the Prophet for details.

Lent, Fasting and the Food System

Part Two: an Introduction to Think on These Things Theologically

Anastasia McRae

Not too far in the distant past my ancestors were farmers. Or they knew someone who was a farmer. In either case, they probably had a pretty good idea where the bulk, if not all, of their food came from. When they sat down to eat a meal, when they gave thanks for the food on the table before them, for the hands that harvested and prepared the food, they didn't have to search hard for the face of a real person to whom they were grateful. Their prayers, their thanks, about their daily bread had a different meaning and relevance than ours today. The value of the harvest was not lost on them.

As my Lenten fast concludes and we ready for the in-breaking of spring, I have thought a lot about food and prayers, food and gratefulness, and if and how what I eat matters in the big scheme of things. In considering what it means to live with greater integrity around food, the environment, and prayer, I have begun to ask myself some challenging questions: Must gratitude change as our connection to the land changes? How have our rituals around food already changed as we've moved farther and farther away from the how, where, and who produces our food, something so crucial to who we are as beings? How do those ritual changes effect our overall rituals in terms of our connection to the land through food, or for that matter, how does our distance from the land effect our rituals and our gratitude in general? What is the purpose of saying a prayer at the dinner table if the food we are about to eat is part of the environment's destruction and when so many are going hungry without cause in an age of an overabundance of food? Is there a role for people of faith, if it stands for a love of God or a belief in humanity's goodness, without care for the environment?

Living close to the land as our ancestors did lent itself to a more humble perspective of food consumption as there was little doubt about the interdependence of all species and the elements for the basics of survival. Giving thanks for food was also giving thanks for survival. That was a time before large chain grocery stores, the ready availability of any kind of food you can afford to buy-in or out of season, before food was appreciated solely for its chemical composition and nutritional value. Giving thanks takes on a wholly other meaning when what you're eating and who (Continued, p. 4)

From the Editor: Critical Conversations

For the next few weeks of this semester, I plan to run a series of editorials on topics that are currently under discussion in our new student government. Called 'Critical Conversations,' it is my hope that we can critique ourselves honestly, and also think critically about possible strategies for the future. I also believe that these conversations are crucial to have in a public forum, with as much participation as possible, in the spirit of free inquiry so necessary to authentic theological education and formation for ministry.

Everyone is invited to submit reflections or responses on these issues, either for publication in the *Prophet*, or for discussion within the student government. Send in 20 words, or 2,000--and we'll print all that come in. If a need arises for further public discussion, the student government will try to provide the means for this to happen.

Some of the topics coming up in future editions will be:

- + Stewardship and Student Groups Finances
- + Power Relationships, Voice, and Vote
- + Housing and Hospitality
- + Spiritual Formation and Outreach
- + Representation and Accountability

...and others as they arise. In the meantime, I hope that everyone who is able will participate in the Facilities discussions Tuesday and the Student Government meeting Wednesday. Holy Week is a busy time for many of us. Still, there is the possibility of finding blessing in the gathering and presence of one another, no matter what the task.

Peace,
Le Anne

Editorial Policy:

The *CTS Prophet* is designed as a weekly open forum, placing a high value on freedom of speech. All submissions from members of the CTS community will be printed, provided the submission does not engage in defamation or *ad hominem* attack against any person or group of people. The editor reserves the right to edit text for clarity or length, without altering the spirit of the article. The Interim Executive Committee of the student government serves as an advisory board for this newspaper. The views expressed in *The Prophet* do not necessarily reflect the views of Chicago Theological Seminary.

In the Field with Farmer Eric: Shouts of Great Joy

Having not worked a physically demanding job for several years, my hands, legs and back ached from my first several days of routine work on the farm. Then came Friday, Harvest Day, an entire day of crouching like a baseball catcher, using a knife to cut baby spinach, lettuce, kale and chard leaf by leaf. At one point, with my knees and quadriceps on fire, I remembered the lines from Psalm 126, about the harvesters coming home with shouts of great joy. "Maybe they were actually shouts of great pain," I thought to myself.

Luckily, the very next day we went to market, driving our harvest one and a half hours from the Munice area to Trader's Point Creamery, just outside Indianapolis. Quickly, my shouts of great pain turned to shouts of great joy as all of our baby spinach, which had taken 2 of us 3 hours to harvest, sold out in less than 30 minutes. Evidently, I work for the only farmer in Indiana who can grow spinach year round. The nagging aches throughout my body became inseparable from a feeling of deep satisfaction as I watched the fruits our labor - organic produce thousands of miles fresher than anything currently available at Whole Foods - quickly disappear.

Then I remembered something else: ancient Israel's 3 major religious festivals corresponded with the harvests of its major crops. Farmers would travel from the outlying areas to the major urban centers to sell their crops, and use them to pay taxes and make offerings. (For more on this, read Theodore Hiebert's pithy, but excellent book *The Yahwist's Landscape*). Our trip to market suddenly began to have a holy feel to it. I imagined it being a pilgrimage of sorts, akin to those made by farmers in the ancient world. I didn't recite any prayers or make offerings to a priest, but when I partook of the food being sold - local food grown with cooperation and reverence of Creation - my weary, aching body could taste the goodness of God.

Learn more at the farm's website
www.ringfamilyfarm.org

Student Government Meeting

Wednesday, April 4
5:15-6:15pm
George Commons

Food will be provided.

We have much to discuss
(and will aim for fun as well)
All students are welcome!

Topics Include:

- + Student Groups Budgeting
- + Voice and Vote on Committees
- + SpringFest
- + and Much More...

Is It Crowded In Here?

Help us to assess our facilities and our space needs: All students are invited to join architect Nevin Hedland on:

Tuesday, April 3
12 noon – 1p.m.
OR

5 p.m. – 6 p.m.
In McGiffert Lounge

Nevin will be interviewing students/seeking your feedback:

- How is our space?
- Where are our un-met space needs?
- What would you like to see changed/improved?

Lunch/light dinner will be served.
Please RSVP Alison x 229.



(Lent Fasting, from p. 1) produced it is, for all intent and purposes, a mystery.

The coming together of food and prayers with the issues of food security, ecological justice, sustainability, food accessibility, community supported agriculture, and urban farming is a natural merger if we as faith-based people are to at once claim both our right and responsibility to co-exist with and care for creation. What we eat connects us to the land, which in turn knits our lives into the fabric of creation.

You are invited to share in a discussion, “Local Food Systems: an alternative to bland food and saying grace”, on April 19th at 12:15-1:15pm at Meadville Lombard, in the Curtis Room. Guests will be Julie Pavuk, former seminary student and budding organic farmer talking about her what led her to farming and her experiences on organic farms in Illinois and Indiana, and Martha Boyd, of the Angelic Organics Learning Center’s Urban Initiative, who will share her knowledge of local food systems and urban farming. It is a lunchtime event; so feel free to bring your lunch with you, and some ideas about “the food you’re about to receive.”



The Beatitudes Society: For Progressive Seminarians

On Tue., April 10, 5:00-6:30 p.m. in George Commons, there will be an informational gathering on setting up a Beatitudes Society chapter at CTS. The discussion will be led by Executive Director, Rev. Anne Howard. Rev. Howard writes, "We are building a nationwide network of progressive Christian seminarians and divinity school students to be a prophetic witness for justice, compassion and peace (in the spirit of those Beatitudes). We help students establish campus chapters (check out our chapter page on the website to see what each does) so that students and faculty have a local community for sharing justice work and reflection. We give each school \$1,000 to start a chapter. Our 'centerpiece' is the paid summer fellowships we offer to students to serve at social justice organizations as summer interns; we also offer scholarships to a variety of conferences and learning opportunities." To find out more about The Beatitudes Society go to www.beatitudessociety.org. Dinner will be provided (please RSVP Alison Buttrick Patton at apatton@ctshchicago.edu or 773.322.0229).

Stress Relief Techniques

Tue., April 10,
12 noon – 2:00 p.m.
George Commons,

Tim of Hyde Park's Three Pillars Wellness Center will be offering a session in which you will learn simple, stress-relieving techniques to revitalize your spirit. You will learn basic yoga poses & stretches and fundamental breathing techniques that can re-energize you and return focus to your work and study. These practices are easy to learn and repeat in your daily life. You might ask why you would take time out from your busy day to learn these practices. Very simply, if you are going to be effectively of service for the rest of your life, you need to take good care of yourself. This demonstration will give you a couple of useful tools to be strong and healthy. This event is being sponsored by the Dean of Community Life. Wear comfortable clothes in which you can move and stretch. A light lunch will be served.

Due to Good Friday, this week's 'First Fridays' will be rescheduled. Stay tuned for further details.