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St. John/Zion Parish

December 2019 Newsletter Article: "The Oyster that We Are."

A pleasant thought for so many of us is gathering as an extended family around a festive holiday meal. In each of our gatherings, there is most often a very special dish that we always look forward to. That special dish for me, in years past, was anything that my grandmother, who lived near Maryland's Chesapeake Bay, made with oysters. We had raw oysters, fried oysters, and even oyster stuffing to go with our main meat dish.

Now the oyster isn't exactly the most pleasant creature to look at. It's grey, rough, slimy, and it doesn't exactly have a personality. Then, you had to "shuck" them open with a special knife. Yes, oyster shucking could be a lot of work! But it was always worth it for what was inside. Then, on one occasion, my grandfather and I found the treasure of a pearl inside of one of them!

Sometimes, I like to think of who we are, as congregations, as being like oysters. So often, we can be "rough" on the outside as the sinners that we still are. Our personalities aren't always as pleasing as they could be. Then, getting us to open up to each other so as to share our deepfelt cares and concerns can be a lot of work!

But what is inside of that "oyster" who we are is always something special. Who we are as God's people is always worth the effect that it takes for us to get to know one another. Psalm 133:1 tells us, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers (and sisters) dwell in unity." Or as the hymn proclaims, "Blest be the tie that binds, our hearts in Christian love."

Then, the oyster who we are always has a pearl inside of it—the Gospel message of forgiveness and life that we have in Christ (Matthew 13:45-46). Yes, like the lowly oyster, there is much more to us as God's people than might first meet the eye. May we all grow to treasure the extended family in Christ that He has made us to be both this holiday season and always.

Your Fellow Oyster in Christ,

Pastor Bill