

## MAES Episcopal Schools Day Celebration – 10.10.18

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Isaiah 42:1-7

Psalms 72:1-4, 12-14

James 2:5-9, 12-17

Matthew 10:32-42

Were you listening to those readings? Did you hear what I heard?

- A stirring call to justice, to right action
- From the Hebrew scriptures/Old Testament: Isaiah and Psalms of David
- From the New Testament: Epistle of James and the Gospel of Matthew

From Isaiah:

I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,  
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
I have given you as a covenant to the people,  
A light to the nations,  
To open the eyes that are blind,  
To bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
From the prison those who sit in darkness.

And this verse from Matthew:

Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake  
will find it.

God isn't messing around. We are being invited, challenged, to look out across the world in which we live and take action for the sake of those who are poor, vulnerable, ignored, abused, forgotten, hurting. We are being challenged to stand up to fight evil, protect the innocent, and teach love. You and I know how much work there is. We know that fear and judgment and jealousy and greed are shaping too many people's choices today. Decisions are being made all the time that protect and privilege some people while silencing and hurting other people. That harm can happen at school in recess and it can happen at the highest levels of government or international business.

You and I are being called to daring action. That's an exciting but scary idea.

Fortunately, we are not alone. We are in this together and there are some powerful friends here today who might be able to help us.

Did you notice anything different as you came into this magnificent Cathedral?

Who's standing over there? (6 life-size cardboard cutouts)

We are accompanied today by a few powerful friends – 5 superheroes you may know well:

- Harry Potter
- Supergirl
- Luke Skywalker
- Dobby
- Rey
- Black Panther – T'Challa

I invited them to join us because, just like the scripture passages we heard, their lives have much to teach us.

Yes, superheroes have superhuman powers, and I'll come back to that. But think about their stories ... They were trained by older mentors we call elders, names you would recognize like:

- Obi Wan Konobi
- Dumbledore
- Queen Ramonda

Superheroes know who they are. They know their mission. They keep their eyes on the goal.

Superheroes never work alone. They have friends, and allies whom they trust and who contribute ideas and skills to the cause. They learn together, practice together, fail and succeed together.

Did you ever want to be a super hero? I did. If so, I have some good news for us.

In the Christian tradition, we believe everyone is created in the image of God, blessed with particular gifts that the world needs.

Did you notice where the superheroes are standing? They are standing around the baptismal font, facing outward, ready to take on the world!

In baptism - individuals are supported by their family and godparents to claim those God-given gifts and go out into the world and live them. In baptism, we make promises about what we believe and how we will live:

Among the promises made at baptism are:

- to “persevere in resisting evil,
- to love our neighbors as ourselves,
- to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

If you look back at our visiting superheroes, you'll notice one who is a REAL person – our very own Episcopal Superhero AND Episcopal school super-fan – Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry. He's the leader of the Episcopal Church and recognized around the world for teaching people about love. He is our Dumbledore, our Gandolph, our

inspiration to claim our baptized superpowers. He models for us the Way of Love every day, from visiting the Bishop Walker School to preaching at the Royal Wedding.

Did you realize that baptized Christians have superpowers?

Did you realize that with God's help and with the support of each other, we have been called to be superheroes?

And guess what, Episcopal Schools believe ALL young people, from all faith traditions are loved by God and blessed with superpowers. Your Episcopal School is your Hogwarts where your superpowers are seen and trained, where you are being prepared to be a superhero.

So, what are YOUR superpowers?

Don't worry. You don't have to figure them out alone. That's what a school is for. Education is to show you what the needs of the world are and what your superpowers are to fight them.

That's why I've never understood when people say, "School is boring." You'd only say that if you don't realize what's happening there ... you have the choice every day to become a superhero.

And the stakes are high – the time is right. As T'Challa's speech to the United Nations in Black Panther made clear, you are the new generation of superheroes the world needs:

"Wakanda will no longer watch from the shadows. We cannot. We must not. We will work to be an example of how we as brothers and sisters on this earth should treat each other. Now, more than ever, the illusions of division threaten our very existence. We all know the truth: more connects us than divides us. But in times of crisis, the wise build bridges, while the foolish build barriers. We must find a way to look after one another as if we were one single tribe."

JK Rowling who wrote the Harry Potter stories said it best, "We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better."