

The Servant

Mar/Apr '90 #131

Founder's Forum

Travels with the Founder Puerto Rico 1989

Last November I was privileged to be the master of ceremonies for the installation and seating of Bishop David Alvarez of Puerto Rico. Being no stranger to this beautiful island I was able to renew many old acquaintances and make new friends. I was MC and Deputy Registrar for Bishop Alvarez' ordination and consecration two years ago—this was another wonderful occasion.

I am reminded of a quote from Theodore Ferris: "The real things in life cannot be kept. Keep a vision and you become a visionary." This is the story of the church in Puerto Rico. Vibrant and alive, the people filled with the Spirit of the Living God and so happy to be sharing Christ and Gospel with each other and those they meet. Being in Puerto Rico for this service was a renewal for me—a renewal of that feeling I had two years ago when, at the ordination we had a major power failure and still the liturgy went on, and the celebration was as real as it could be—because we were together

in the power of the Spirit of the living God.

As St Paul said, "Put love first"
That's how it was. That's how it *is*. We in the States often see the church at its affluent best. We have what we need for

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worship and music; we have vestments and we have candles for the altar. I saw Fr Benjamin from St James' Church, Rio Grande, who recently bought chairs from a restaurant to use in his church. I bought and provided one of those chairs. I went to a church in the Levittown housing complex with the bishop to visit "Cafe

Teatro"—a cafe setting for the youth of the area who needed something to occupy their time—to keep them away from the many negative influences of our day—stronger than ever in this island paradise. It was a wonderful event.

What I saw and experienced was the church alive and loving. I saw the people of God serving with the bare necessities, and not being concerned, because all we really need is ourselves, our souls and bodies—offered as a reasonable, living sacrifice to God.

From the Gospel of John: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. God is Spirit; and those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth." This is what the church in Puerto Rico does, full of the Spirit, and full of grace and truth.

Next time: my report on Honduras—and my investiture as a canon of the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, San Pedro Sula.

—RTB

For the Second Sunday in Lent

Loving the world

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life. It was not to judge the world that God sent his Son into the world, but that through him the world might be saved—John 3:16-17

Here we are in the middle of Lent again! So what are you doing for Lent? Keeping a rule? Giving up those delectable treats that come between you and reality. Yes, I mean fasting. Are you watching those around you, to see just what they are doing for Lent? Well, stop watching them and start watching your-

self! Jesus didn't come to judge us so why do we judge us?

Real soon we will be witnesses to the Resurrection of the Lord, real soon we will be witnesses to the resurrection of the earth in the Northern Hemisphere as spring starts. Rebirth, that great restart—a shocker, so that Nicodemus is taken

back when Jesus says to him, "You must be born again." We are born again into Jesus Christ and thereby have eternal life. Go beyond this statement as words you have heard again and again; see that God is very active in the world, meddling with creation even! We are witnesses to the rebirth even as we

experience rebirth ourselves over and over.

When I fail in my Christian duties, do I beat myself into making the failure worse because I make guilt the goal, in-stead of restoration? I hope not. I hope that I recognize my failure, tell Jesus that I am may sorry, especially if I had any control over whatever the failure was, and pray for forgiveness and experience a rebirth. It happens over and over again with all of us: sin and error, repentance; forgiveness and rebirth.

What I find even more exciting is that God meddles on a global scale. We live in a wonderful time. We are witnesses to the subtle call of God at work in the world. In today's lessons we learn about faith in God. We witness the call of Abram, we hear the recounting of Abraham's faith by Paul and we hear in the good news just what Jesus is doing, offering eternal life, not judgement.

We live in a wonderful time because last fall we were witnesses to several events that move us. As the people of the post World War II era, who have lived on a diet of *Capitalism=good* and *Communism=bad* for 40 years, we have witnessed the rebirth of Eastern Europe, and

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the Soviet Union in a movement toward democratic ideals where the ruled have a greater degree of input into the ruling being done.

One of the greatest joys of my life came last fall when I witnessed the Berlin Wall being dismantled on national television. Being a child of the Television Era I had witnessed the wall's construction on television. The wall was a part of my life; it marked the difference between "us" and "them." It was a physical representation of Churchill's Iron Curtain. Now we have witnessed the dissolution of several Communist parties and the birth of the non-Communist parties.

God's plans are not our plans; God's timetable is not our timetable. Some-times all we can do is pray, as in those frightening hours after the San Francisco

earthquake, when the rescuers kept faith that in all that destruction there was still life to be saved, and for almost a week kept finding life, assisting in the resurrection of those trapped.

Dare I say that the events of the year past reveal that God is still very active in our lives as individuals and as a group? God has answered the prayers that we have prayed for the people of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe—they have been reborn, have shed a mantle of human oppression.

Having said all of this, as we approach the Resurrection event, we do it with our eyes open, with the understanding that God is really present in our lives and looking for each of us to accept the rebirth that is so freely given. God came not to judge but that we might have eternal life.

Br William Francis Jones is a life professed member of the community, and serves as provincial of the Province II, (New York and New Jersey) and as administrative assistant to the Superior General.

For Maundy Thursday

Fuel for Christ's sake

Do this in remembrance of me. —Luke 22.19

"Do this..." Was ever a command so obeyed? Why do we "do this"? There are many reasons, to be sure. As Dom Gregory Dix says in his great tome, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, no better thing to do has been found than this,

for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold; for armies in triumph or for a bride and a bridegroom; for a good crop of wheat or for an old woman afraid to die; for Columbus setting out to discover America or for the soul of a dead lover; in thankfulness because my father did not die of pneumonia or because the Turk was at the gates of Vienna; for the settlement of a strike or for Captain So-and-so, wounded and prisoner of war; while the lions roared in the nearby amphitheater or on the beach at Dunkirk; tremulously by an old monk on the fiftieth anniversary of his vows or furtively, by an exiled bishop who had hewn

timber all day in a prison camp near Murmansk. This is just a very small list of why to "do this." If one were to list all of the reasons to "do this" I suppose that we could not build a library large enough to hold all of the books to hold the list.

*There is a fire
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But why do we "do this"? This is the question we must answer. Why do I "do this"? This is my answer: there is a fire burning inside of me, a fire that burns inside all Christians, a fire that makes us different from the rest of the world. Unfortunately, God did not give us an eternal supply of fuel for this fire, at least not at birth. Our Lord Jesus took care of this problem. "On the night when he was betrayed, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.'"

And a sacrament was born. What is a sacrament? Well, as we know from reading our catechism, it is an outward and

visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. This grace is the fuel for the fire within us. Our Lord knew that the fire would go out on his disciples after his death if he did not give them a supply of fuel. So our Lord gave them the eucharist, in order that they would have the fuel they needed. And look how brightly it burned on Pentecost, so brightly the tongues of fire could be seen dancing on their heads.

Kerygma Korner

God first: A tithing catechism Part 4

The first three sections of this series dealt with the tithe up through the end of the apostolic age, and concluded with the church suddenly finding itself a major property holder.

If the church had the benefit of all this property, why did it need to have the tithe?

Quite simply, there was a need for cash, both for the support of the clergy and for the welfare of the community. There are two factors involving cash flow that led to the tithe. First of all, the church was not allowed one of the major sources of hard cash—the church was forbidden to put money in banks, since this was interpreted as usury (lending money at interest) and any clergy who did this were deposed (see Canon XVII of the Council of Nicaea). It was also an offense for Christian laity to loan money at interest, and this was considered a serious crime and immorality. The church was further forbidden even to receive offerings which came from usury.

How seriously did the church regard usury?

To get an idea of how the church felt about usury, here's a passage from the *Apostolic Constitutions* (4.1.6). Usury comes as the climax of a long list of abominations:

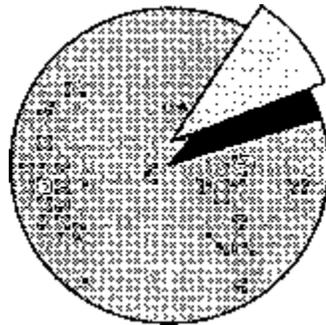
Now the bishop ought to know whose oblations he ought to receive, and whose he ought not. For he is to avoid corrupt dealers, and not receive their gifts... He is also to avoid fornicators,... extortioners, and such as covet other men's goods, and adulterers; for the sacrifices of such are abominable with God. Also

I need fuel to get through the week. If I did not come to the altar each week, my fire would go out before a week was up, because I am weak. That is why I "do this." Why do you "do this"? Only you can answer that question.

Why do we Christians "do this"? If we took that list that fills all those books that fills that library that is so large that we can never finish building it, and if we distilled that long list down, I think we

would come up with just one answer: as Dom Gregory said, we make eucharist so as to make the *plebs sancta dei*—to make the holy common people of God.

Br Kevin James Jensen is a life professed member of the community, serving in Portland OR.



those who oppress the widow and overbear the orphan,... rogues... and idol-makers, and thieves, and unjust tax-gatherers, and those that deceive by false balances and deceitful measures, and a soldier who is a false accuser..., a murderer, a cut-throat, and an unjust judge, a subverter of causes, him that lies in wait for men, a worker of abominable wickedness, a drunkard, a blasphemer,... an usurer, and every one that is wicked and opposes the will of God... For the bread that is distributed to the widows from labor is better, though it be short and little, than from injustice and false accusation, though it be much and fine. For the Scripture says: "Better is a little to the righteous, than much riches of the sinners."

That sounds pretty serious! But surely there were other sources of money, weren't there?

Yes, but some sources we now use were not options then. For example, clergy were forbidden to carry out any kind of business or commerce (Canon III of Chalcedon)—quite a change from the tent-makers Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, or the other early apostles who supported themselves, accepting only occasional contributions.

So the church had plenty of real estate, but little hard cash. How did they raise it?

The answer emerged from what would at first appear to be an undesirable complication concerning the property left to the church. You see, there were people living on it. Under the economic system, tenants went with the property. So the church took over the role of landlord, and began taking the rent in the form of the tithe. This eventually became so well established a principle that if a land owner wanted to establish a church on his property, he would collect the tithe and build the church himself. The tithe became the support for the maintenance of the church.

Out of this emerged the parish structure—each parish was supported by the people living in its boundaries, through the tithe. This system was crystallized during the reign of Pepin of France and his son, the Emperor Charlemagne. They established and codified what we now know as the parish. Each parish had fixed boundaries, and contained one mill, one bakery, one smith, and so on—and one church. Everyone who lived in the parish had to take their grain to the mill to be ground, the flour to the bakery to be baked, and their tithe to the parish church. The laws governing this were known as *les banalites*. Our modern word, *banal*, meaning dull and routine, derives from the way people apparently felt about this ordered life! Similar customs and regulations evolved in England.

What did the parish do with the tithe once it got it? Didn't the tithe go to sup-

port the poor, and the other charitable institutions?

The church has gone back and forth on this issue over the centuries. In the Old Testament, as we saw in Part 1, every three years a tithe went to aid the poor, the widows and the sojourners, as a supplement to the openhanded charity already required under the Law of Moses. But the earliest Christian tithe was used by the church for the support of the church itself, for the upkeep of the buildings, and the maintenance of the clergy. If there was an excess, it would go to support the poor or widows, whose major support was the generosity of the community. In general the tithe was seen as money for the maintenance of the professional clergy. Later, it seems that the situations were reversed at times, and the tithe would be used for the poor, while the "first fruits" went for clergy support. One example is in a later (fourth century [?]) portion of the *Apostolic Constitutions*:

"All the first-fruits of the winepress, the threshing-floor, the oxen, and the sheep, shalt thou give to the priests... Thou shalt give the tenth of thy increase to the orphan, and to the widow, and to the poor, and to the stranger..." (7.2.29) "Let all first fruits be brought to the bishop, and to the presbyters, and to the deacons, for their maintenance; but let all the tithe be for the maintenance of the rest of the clergy, and of the virgins and widows, and of those under the trial of poverty." (8.4.30)

But whether tithe or first fruits, the important thing is that what is being discussed here is not "free-will offerings." The church and its work is supported primarily by regular giving based on some objective principle, not simply on spontaneous generosity. This is not to say that spontaneous generosity did not exist—far from it! but that the people were expected to participate in the orderly operation of the church and its work it was a duty.

By the late Middle Ages, the church again separated the tithe and the support for charitable work.

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What kind of separation took place?

The tithe began to be seen as clergy support once again. The poor and sick were maintained by the church, not from the tithe income, but from the *alms and oblations*, which were completely separate free-will offerings over and above the tithe—just as many offerings of the Old Testament era were separate from the tithe. In the medieval church, in England, for example, the tithe was collected by the landlord and turned over to the parish rector, but the alms and oblations were collected by the wardens during the service. This money went to the-poorhouse, -the hospital; or the-other charitable institutions. But as Richard Hooker points out, the tithe "which we offer proceedeth not only as a testimony of our affection towards God, but also as a mean to uphold religion, the exercise whereof cannot stand without the help of temporal commodities." (LEP V.79.3)

Well, we seem to have lost—or changed—the distinction between tithe and alms. How did the tithe change and evolve through the Middle Ages, and into the present time?

The tithe remained a stable institution through the Middle Ages, but various abuses involving money gave the church a bad name generally. One issue among many that came up was, "Who gets the tithe from a parish that doesn't have any clergy to support? Should it go to the bishop, the archbishop, the pope, the landlord, or what?" There was a scramble for these tithe monies, and sometimes parishes were left vacant just so someone higher up could collect the

income. These abuses and others came to a head with the Reformation, which changed the history of the tithe—and just about everything else—considerably. Three major factors were involved in this.

What were the three factors?

The reformers came to accept usury (or at least interest derived from banking) as an acceptable way to make money. C.S. Lewis has noted the irony of this development: the very basis of our modern economic system is forbidden under ancient Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian law. The reformers, Calvin in particular, were the first to decide that banking (lending money at interest) wasn't usury after all, and that it was all right for the church to make money in the normal channels of commerce. At the same time, the old restrictions on clergy taking part in business had fallen into disuse.

The second major factor was the shift from an agricultural (and rural) to a commercial (and civic) economy. This cut off the agricultural roots of the tithe—until the beginning of this century the English still figured the tithe in *produce*. It wasn't until 1918 that they adjusted the tithe by setting monetary values based on land productivity.

The third factor, of course, was disestablishment of the churches—which continued up through the eighteenth century—and the collapse of the feudal system. The agricultural tithe could only really be levied where all the people belonged to the same church, or where the church was established (as in England) and people had to tithe whether they were worshipers or not, or where feudal or baronial land ownership kept control of the economy.

All of these factors combined to diminish the importance of the tithe in the period from the Reformation through the end of the 19th century.

So how did the tithe make a reappearance?

It was all very well for the church to live off endowments and investments, and individual benefaction for a while.

1 The Roman Catholic Church came around to this point of view in 1830, with the approval of Pope Pius VIII, decreeing that interest up to that allowed by the state should be permitted to the church.

But finally there emerged a sense of personal commitment to the work of God, on the part of all the members of the church, not just the wealthy ones.

There was also an increased awareness of and sensitivity to the source of investment money, not unlike the earlier prohibitions on money received from questionable sources. Knowledge of the inequalities of the class system, and the terrible conditions for workers in the Industrial Revolution, began to dawn in the

minds of the church's members and leaders. Movements in the late nineteenth-century Church of England, for example, combined concern for the poor and oppressed with a strong sense of personal commitment and devotion.

Today, many churches are beginning to rediscover the tithe as both an effective and orderly way to produce dependable income for operations, and for individuals to discover the freedom that a disciplined, regular giving program can

bring. The tithe is both a spiritual discipline and a practical action in support of the church's work.

The next section of this series will explore the spiritual and personal dimension of the tithe, and what it can mean to each of us.

—TSH

Here and there with the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood

Community Notes

Province I

Br Roy Tobin's work with the South Shore AIDS Project is going very well. They have just moved into new office space in the Brockton area. Roy's work as president has been very rewarding and positive for him.

Companion Grovesnor Calkins is recovering from eye surgery; please keep him in your prayers.

Br Donovan Aidan Bowley took part in the Acolyte's Practicum at the Church of the Advent, Boston, and—as a change of pace attended the U.S. EPA's national Environmental Information Conference in Kansas City MO.

Province II

While in Puerto Rico for the enthronement of Bishop Alvarez, Br Richard Thomas Biernacki consulted with a new



The Rev Canon Edward Nason West, with Br William Bunting (l) and Br John Peter Clark (r).

religious community that is in the process of forming there.

Several of the brothers gathered at the home of Br Stephen Storen for a Thanksgiving Day celebration. They were joined by Companions Br Thomas Ferguson, FSC, and Richard Belanger. Rick has just relocated from Manchester NH. There was lots of food, including the traditional turkey. Since this reporter heard no complaining I can say a good time was had by all.

The Council of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory held it's quarterly meeting at the House of the Redeemer in New York. Part of the time was spent interviewing four applicants.

Br William Francis Jones, Stephen, and Charles Kramer

attended a reunion of their 1985 EFM class. + + + William Francis and Stephen attended the second anniversary party for the Covenant House Nineline. Nineline is a nationwide 800 phone number that assists youths that have run away, in locating shelter, food and the way home.

Br James E Teets and Tobias Stanislas Haller attended the requiem celebrating the life of Br Philip Francis Book, MCC, who had begun a vocation as a pilgrim for peace, under the direction of Bishop Paul Moore, some years ago. A composer and organist, he had written and performed a work for the service at which Tobias was admitted to the Brotherhood (in 1980) and Tobias had



(l to r) Tobias Stanislas, Bishop Moore, and Philip Francis at his first renewal of vows.

served as subdeacon at his first vow renewal ceremony, with Bishop Moore.

Another death that must be noted is that of a great man of the Diocese of New York and of the church, the Rev Canon Edward Nason West. Several of our brothers had studied with him in courses at the Institute of Theology at the Cathedral of St John the Divine. The impact he had in more than forty years service at the cathedral is hard to describe. William Francis attended his requiem, a major service at the cathedral, with over 500 persons in the procession alone.

Br Earl Christian portrayed St Joseph in a Christmas play at Good Shepherd Church, the Bronx. He is now working

there with Fr Al Montalto, and assists in the youth programs.

The Provincial Advent Quiet Day was held at St Bartholomew's, White Plains, and included meditations by the Superior General, Charles, and a sermon by Tobias Stanislas.

Province West

The Province gathered—from as far away as Arkansas—for its traditional Thanksgiving Day at All Saints', Chicago. A quiet day was held for the community, Companions and friends, led by Br Bernard Francis LaReau. The meditations focused on God's call as sought, experienced, prepared for, and accepted. On Sunday, the visitors joined

aspirants Michael Austin and Ronald Fox at their parish, Atonement, where they were welcomed by the rector, the Rev Dean Paxton Rice. Br Thomas Joseph Ross, provincial, addressed the coffee hour with a short talk about the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood.

We note that the banner designed and executed by Br Michael David Elvestrøm for the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church appeared (with Dr () wallah Anderson) on the cover of a recent issue of *The Living Church*. Another banner by Michael David welcomed Bishop Coadjutor Robert Hargrove and his wife Linda to a parish visitation. An exhibit of Michael David's works, "Metaphors from the songs my mother sang me," took place at the

Hanchey Gallery, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches LA. This included everything from miniatures to a major composition, "Four maidens entering the garden of delights," a rich and complex work blending imagery from folk tales, nature, and Judeo-Christian symbolism, measuring 8x10 feet.

Br Kevin James Jensen led a workshop for thurifers and boat bearers at an acolyte conference held at St Aidan's, Gresham OR. Over 200 persons attended, with acolytes representing 23 congregations.

The Patronal Convocation of the Brotherhood takes place March 13-18, at Mount Alvemo (RC Franciscan Sisters of the Poor), Warwick NY.



The Council banner forward goes: David Beers addresses the Executive Council, from the lectern decked with Michael David's creation; Dean Collins takes notes, as the Presiding Bishop looks on. (Photo:ENS-Jim Solheim)