



THE SERVANT



*James offers some pre-ordination direction
to Blane Frederik*

#219

Spring 2011

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HOLDING ON TO EASTER

There is a strange phenomenon these days — at least in my part of New Jersey. As I write this, many homes still have Christmas decorations up and — some of them are lighted at night! Those awful balloons — many of which have nothing to do with the real meaning of Christmas — are filled and lighted and up — and it is February 20! I wonder — some of this could be attributed to the many snow storms which covered the ground to many feet in places — but then, much has melted now. But this takes me to some thoughts about Easter.

As is the case with many holidays, once they are passed they are forgotten. In the above-mentioned case I am not sure what gives! But I wonder how many “Christians” keep the spirit of Easter alive and in their work and play, in their coming and going — after Easter Day? We are Easter people. We know that this day is the promise to us of new life; the promise that one day, Christ will come again and as Julian said, “All will be well.” We should be ready, after the lilies fade and the daffodils and tulips are gone, to keep those Easter smiles on our faces and in our hearts.

We somehow manage to keep the Christmas decorations on homes and the lights on — but is there any more to this? Probably not — just a bit of procrastination — but — Easter gives us an opportunity to spread the joy of the Resurrection. We can proclaim that Jesus did rise from the dead and that we are prepared to go out and tell the world this news! We have a Savior — Christ the Lord — now, today and tomorrow. Decorations and lights fade. Jesus does not!

RTB

Here and there with the Brothers

COMMUNITY NOTES

Winter Retreat 2011

Gregorian Friars gathered at Mount Alvernia Retreat Center in Wappingers Falls, New York for their annual Winter Retreat and received a warm Franciscan welcome

from the OFM Friars there. The Brotherhood's Education Committee arranged for the retreat to be led by the Rev Dr Katherine Grieb, Professor of New Testament at the Virginia Theological Seminary. She prepared a series of four sessions through which we studied sections of Mark and Philippians. Each session included a meditation from Dr Grieb and extensive small-group study as the





brothers immersed themselves into the times, places and issues highlighted by the biblical texts. The goal was greater understanding of our individual religious vocations and Dr Grieb drew inspiration and examples from the religious poetry found in *The Book of Mystical Chapters: Meditations on the Soul's Ascent, from the Desert Fathers and Other Early Christian Contemplatives* as well as Ælred of Rievaulx's *On Spiritual Friendship* — how his thoughts link with those of Saint Paul's letter. These exercises were intended to broaden our perspective concerning the source of our vocation as friars and to provide us with spiritual connections to the earliest Christian authors. After each small group session she invited us to share with the assembled group any insights we had gained as we spent time thinking and talking about the ideas that came to us as we delved into past experiences and the grace received from each of our individual ministries and lives of prayer. Too often such depth of spiritual learning is taken for granted as each of us goes about our daily lives, and this opportunity to return in quiet but intentional thought to those spiritual blessings was a welcome source of refreshment amid the cold winter months that many of us were experiencing.

Retreat sessions were spaced amid each day's round of prayer in the Daily Office and the Holy Eucharist. The masses were celebrated by Novice Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands and Postulant Richard Helmer, deacons Charles Edward LeClerc, Gordon John Stanley and Thomas Mark Liotta, and ably assisted by other members of the community. Insights into the daily observances from *Holy Women, Holy Men* were provided by Christopher Stephen Jenks, who preached on Agnes of Rome (see page 9ff); Thomas Bushnell preaching on Fabian of Rome; and Ron Fender on Vincent of Saragossa — three saints who were martyred for their commitment to their faith in Christ.



Thomas Mark, Blane Frederik, and James

Though four days together can seem too short for each brother to catch up on the lives of the others in attendance, and each day was very full and yet never hurried. Ample time was provided for conversation and rest, and the daily menus were just as ample! And there was also time for “business” within the community which included a meeting of the Education Committee as they planned future retreats and convocations, and a formation conference for the benefit of the Brotherhood’s novitiate.

In summation, the brothers present found this time apart to be rewarding and spiritually enhancing, and all expressed the wish that a longer retreat could be planned for the future — ‘God willing, and the creek don’t rise!’



Postulant Richard gives a blessing to the gospeler.

Gregorian Ordinations

The Winter Ember Season has long been a focus for priestly ordinations throughout the church, and 2010 was very special for the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory. First came the ordination of Mark Andrew Jones on Saturday, December 4th at his parish Saint Andrew’s Chapel in Boca Raton, Florida. The ordaining bishop was the Rt Rev Leopold Frade, Bishop of Southeast Florida, who together with his wife Diana have been long-time Associates of the Brotherhood. Adding further Gregorian flavor to the ordination were Gordon John Stanley, who served as deacon, and David Luke Henton, who was a lector. The Florida weather cooperated fully and the church was filled with Mark Andrew’s family, friends and parishioners, who also enjoyed a gala reception following the liturgy (as organized by Diane, Mark Andrew’s wife). He celebrated his first mass at Saint Andrew’s the following morning, where Gordon John and David Luke also assisted, and that was followed by a visit to Saint Andrew’s Retirement Center where Mark Andrew and Gordon John provided the Holy Eucharist for that congregation.



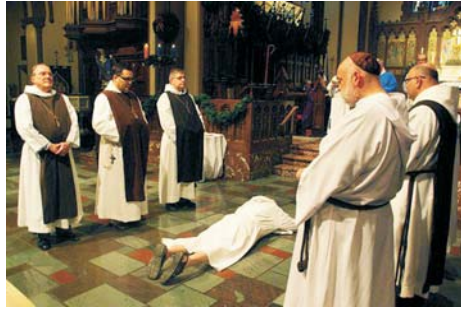
Gordon John, Mark Andrew, and David Luke

Two weeks later, on December 18th, came the priestly ordination of Novice Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands, at Saint Paul’s



Photos this page: left, the laying on of hands; below right, the brothers stand in support and witness during the prostration and singing of the Litany; below left, Tobias Stanislas preaches at the ordination.

Cathedral in Buffalo, New York, where Blane Frederik is already serving on staff as Canon for Children, Youth and Pastoral Care. The ordaining bishop was the good friend of the community and Bishop of Western New York J Michael Garrison, assisted by Dean N DeLisa Spangler, Archdeacon Bruce N Gillies and Cathedral Deacon Jason Rayburg-Elliott — new friends to the Brotherhood all. A number of Gregorian Friars braved the snow and freezing temperatures in order to participate in this service, particularly Tobias Stanislas Haller who was the preacher for the liturgy and joined with the bishop and a goodly number of other priests in the laying on of hands.



Thomas Mark Liotta served as deacon and sang the Litany. Also present were James Teets, James Mahoney, John Henry Ernestine, Ælred Bernard Dean and Novice Millard Cook. The brothers stood with Blane Frederik as he lay prostrate for the singing of the Litany, and they participated in the vesting of the newly-ordained priest. After a grand reception at the cathedral following the service, the principals retired to the home of Blane Frederik and Scott Edward van Pletzen-Rands, where Scott and daughter Esmé Camille van Pletzen had prepared a dinner and refreshment.



Some of the brothers stayed on for the rest of the weekend's activities and participated in the mass at the cathedral the following morning. Blane Frederik's first mass was earlier that day as he celebrated all three services of Holy Eucharist that morning at the cathedral, and the guest preacher for all three was Tobias Stanislas.

James, Ælred Bernard and Blane Frederik attended an Adult Forum between the second and third masses at which Tobias Stanislas discussed the Anglican Covenant and his ongoing work with the Continuing Indaba Reference Group for

the Anglican Communion. And the Sunday ended — at least for the cathedral — with a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols officiated by Bishop Garrison and Dean Spangler, at which James was called upon to serve as the thurifer. No rest for the wicked!

All told, this will truly be a Winter Ember Season that Gregorian Friars will long remember and give thanks for!

Province 1

Now well into his third year of study toward his MD at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Ciarán Anthony DellaFera has recently had an essay published in the *Thursday Morning Memo*, a compendium in the form of “a short essay, reflection, poem or story about your clinical/teaching success” highlighting the presence of a senior teaching neurosurgeon on the staff who has provided him with particular inspiration and insight to the human qualities that effective physicians need to possess and practice.

Province 2

Tobias Stanislas took part in a colloquium on “How to be a Welcoming Church” at historic St Anne’s in the South Bronx.

His Royal Highness Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester — in his capacity as Grand Prior of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem and Royal Patron of the Saint George’s Society of New York City — paid a visit to New York.



Chap James Day, the Rev Susan Copley, and Tobias Stanislas at “Welcoming Church”



(l to r) Stephen, John Culpshalk, Gloucester, and Peter Buffington at the House of the Redeemer

Stephen Storen, who is very active in both organizations, reports that “the Duke is active in numerous charities and spent several days with both organizations. This included a meeting of the beneficiaries committee of the Saint George’s Society, a visit to Lehman College to meet Commonwealth students supported by scholarships provided by the Saint George’s Society, and a fund raising event for the Order of Saint John. We all found him to be very down to earth and insightful.”

Province 4

Ælred Bernard Dean has initiated a new outreach ministry at Epiphany (Atlanta) called, “Walk In Love.” This ministry focused on purchase of new shoes to give to homeless people through the Open Door Community’s foot clinic. Ælred Bernard



asked parishioners to purchase new shoes and bring them in on the Feast of Saint Nicholas. Between the liturgies a special intergenerational Sunday School service was held in the nave. People entered the nave and took off their shoes while carrying their gift of new shoes. People’s shoes were lined in the back of the church as this simple gesture emphasized the need for shoes. Rector Benno D Pattison played a young Saint Nicholas and told his ancient story in an interactive exchange with the congrega-

tion. At the end of his retelling the story, Saint Nicholas invited people to bring up their new shoes and place them in boxes in front of the altar. To date 155 pairs of shoes have been collected. While people were bringing up their shoes as gifts, busy little elves were placing chocolate gold coins in the shoes of parishioners!

Stephen Storen attended the annual investiture of the Priory in the United States of the Order of Saint John in Atlanta. “Investiture Weekend” is an important event in the life of the Priory as members from all across the country come together for fellowship and to hear first hand reports of the work being done at the Saint John’s Eye Hospital in East Jerusalem.

David Luke Henton was in Nicaragua over the winter break, doing community development work, and delivering an extra suitcase of gently-used toys and books in



Bishop of Atlanta Neil Alexander, Stephen, Dean of the Cathedral Sam Candler, Prelate of the Order of Saint John Bishop John Nicholls in the Court of Gratitude at the Cathedral prior the Service of Investiture

Spanish for the children of Santiago in La Concha (Masaya Province, Nicaragua). The ministry there offers childcare and a nutritious meal to the youngest children (including babies) of the poorest 50 families in the barrio. The idea is not only to help the development of the kids but to allow the mothers the time and space to work as many of them are engaged in informal ways of making a bit of income — cooking and selling tortillas for example. The books and playthings help keep the children occupied and interested.

Province 5

Ronald Augustine Fox, Joseph Basil Gauss and Nathanael Deward Rahm journeyed from Chicago to Saint Paul, Minnesota to attend a live performance of “A Prairie Home Companion,” the long-respected radio show starring satirist Garrison Keillor, and to visit with Sr Laurie Joseph Niblick SSG, an Associate of the Brotherhood. Joseph Basil, a Minnesota native, acted as tour guide as the brothers enjoyed the final day of Saint Paul’s Winter Carnival, followed by the performance at the Fitzgerald Theater that evening. As Joseph Basil recounts: “We had third row seats — Garrison and all were fabulous — Nathanael Deward absolutely loved the hymn singing!” (We’re sure the others did, too!)



Nathanael Deward, Joseph Basil and Ronald Augustine listen as Laurie Joseph, SSG, explains about her sense of call as a Sister of Saint Gregory.

On the following Sunday, the brothers attended mass at Saint Paul’s on the Hill, Laurie Joseph’s parish, and were welcomed by her and Vicar Mark Thompson. (This was Gordon John Stanley’s parish home when he lived in Saint Paul.) The four Gregorians provided the context for the day’s Adult Christian Education Forum as they developed the theme of “Call and Vocation.” The vicar said “thank you” by hosting them to lunch at “an old traditional restaurant in Saint Paul.” Your brothers thank you, as well, for so positively flying the flag at that good parish and city!

Sermon for Agnes, Martyr

ARISE, MY LOVE

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. — the Song of Solomon

As many of you know, when I was a kid I was a chorister at what is now the Church of Saint Luke in-the-Fields in Manhattan. Like many choirs we had certain customs. For example, every Easter, for the communion motet, we sang an elegant and ethereal setting of today’s text from the Song of Solomon by Healy Willan: “Rise up, my love, my fair one and come away.” In high school I sang another setting of these words by the 18th-century New England composer William Billings. It actually starts several verses earlier than our reading today with, “I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley” and continues with the passage, “He brought me to the banqueting house...” and “Stay me with flagons; comfort me with apples...” It wasn’t nearly as refined and elegant as Healy Willan’s setting, but it had its own unsophisticated, rough-hewn charm.



Both of these pieces of music came to mind as I began preparing today's homily, but the choice of this text for the Old Testament reading also struck me as a little odd. Today we commemorate Agnes, and according to ancient tradition, Agnes was a kid — a child martyr. She was only twelve or thirteen years old when she was executed. At first glance, using ancient erotic love poetry to commemorate a martyr who was barely a teenager when she died seems, at the very least, to be beside the point. So I decided to see what I could find out about her.

Agnes was born around the year 291, a member of a Christian family of Roman nobility. As she approached marriageable age, the Roman prefect Sempronius commanded her family to marry Agnes off to his son. Agnes refused, and she was condemned to death, probably in the year 304. This is what we know or can reasonably infer about her from the historical record. We are not even sure how she died. Some ancient sources state that she was burned at the stake; others state that she was beheaded; still others recount more gruesome and unusual forms of execution. But human imagination tends to fill the voids in her story, and many legends grew up around her. For example, one story states that Sempronius's son died, but that Agnes resurrected him, even though his death would have made the attempts to marry her off moot and Agnes's martyrdom unnecessary. In another story, Agnes was sold into a brothel, but every man who attempted to have sex with her was struck blind. In another, Agnes prays to be made repulsive to men, and she instantly grows hair all over her body, sort of like a werewolf.

One story that shows up at least as early as Ambrose states that Roman law did not permit the execution of virgins, so Sempronius had Agnes dragged naked through the streets of Rome to a brothel, where she was repeatedly raped before being led to her execution. This story has the ring of truth to it, and I strongly suspect that it is factually correct, at least in its main features. Things like this happen in the biblical and historical record all the time. A couple of weeks ago we heard about the murder of the Holy Innocents in Bethlehem by King Herod. That story would not have seemed incredible to the people of the time. Everything we know about that particular King Herod indicates that this is exactly the kind of thing he would do. In fact it was exactly the sort of thing he did do time and time again.

I wish I could say that we live in a more civilized world where these sorts of things just don't happen, but as we all know they do happen. Children, both boys and girls, are trafficked into slavery as household drudges, farm laborers or sex slaves. Women are publically raped in acts of war to shame their families and bring dishonor to their husbands, and then they are often killed by their families to restore the family honor. Young boys are recruited as child-soldiers and forced to kill their own parents, while their sisters are forced into sexual bondage. I could go on and on and on. Needless to say, none of this is new.

In light of all this, I looked at Agnes again. Agnes was the daughter of Roman nobility. Even in a Christian family she would have known that her own person was merely a pawn in the political power games of the Roman Empire. She knew what was expected of her. It would have been easy for her to submit to the authority of the prefect and marry his son. She could have been expected to live a reasonably secure and comfortable life, held in honor and respect by Roman society. If she had the requisite political skills, she could have become a great power broker within the Empire, albeit working behind the scenes. If she was ruthless enough, she could even have become like Livia, the wife of Augustus, who connived to have her son Tiberius succeed Augustus as emperor by having all the other heirs killed off; or Agrippina, the wife of Claudius and mother of Nero, who seemed to look to Livia as the ideal role model for a Roman matron, leaving a trail of death and destruction behind her, including poisoning her own husband.

My brothers: Agnes's Beloved is our Beloved. . . He calls us to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

But despite her tender years, Agnes was not a little girl. She chose to assert her dignity as a woman and as a Christian. She chose to say “no” to a politically and economically advantageous marriage, because she knew that she was pledged to another — to Jesus, the Lover of her soul. For her sake, he “endured the nails, the spitting, vinegar and spear and reed.” For his sake she endured the shame of being dragged through the streets of Rome naked, and the humiliation and brutality of being gang-raped in a brothel. And on this day in the year of our Lord, 304, during the reign of the Emperor Diocletian, she heard the voice of her Beloved, “leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.” On this day he brought her into his banqueting house, clothing her nakedness with his banner of love — an embroidered gown of the finest cloth-of-gold, “fragrant with myrrh, aloes, and cassia.” He wooed her with flagons of wine and with fruit, and his fruit was sweet to her taste. And he spoke to her saying: “Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past. The rain is over and gone.”

My brothers: Agnes's Beloved is our Beloved. He has brought us into his banqueting hall and we are gathered here at his table. He clothes our nakedness with his banner of love — an embroidered gown of the finest cloth-of-gold, “fragrant with myrrh, aloes, and cassia.” He woos us with flagons of wine and sweet fruit. And he speaks to us saying: “Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear upon the earth. The time of the singing of birds has come.” May we, like Agnes, recognize the voice of our Beloved, “leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.” He is calling us to this Eucharistic Feast, the marriage supper of the Lamb. Our Bridegroom awaits.

Christopher Stephen Jenks

INTERCESSIONS

For the Brotherhood

Episcopal Visitor *Sun*
Rodney R Michel

Episcopal Visitors Emeriti
Horace WB Donegan d 11.11.91
Paul Moore, jr d 5.1.03
Walter D Dennis d 3.30.03

Professed

Richard Thomas Biernacki
John Nidecker d 6.20.88
James Teets
Luke Anthony Nowicki
John Peter Clark d 2.25.94

William Francis Jones *Mon*
Stephen Storen

Thomas Joseph Ross d 12.18.01
Tobias Stanislas Haller
William Bunting d 10.12.88
Edward Munro
Charles Kramer d 10.23.06
Bernard Fessenden d 8.10.93

Donovan Aidan Bowley *Tue*
Edward Riley d 9.15.05

Christopher Stephen Jenks
Ciarán Anthony DellaFera
Damian-Curtis Kellum d 10.9.07

Richard John Lorino
Ronald Augustine Fox
Maurice John Grove
Charles Edward LeClerc

Virgilio Fortuna *Wed*
Gordon John Stanley

Karekin Madteos Yarian
William David Everett
Thomas Bushnell
Thomas Mark Liotta
James Mahoney

Patrick Ignatius Dickson d 7.20.05

Robert James McLaughlin *Thu*
Peter Budde

John Henry Ernestine
Francis Sebastian Medina
Ælfred Bernard Dean
Joseph Basil Gauss
Mark Andrew Jones
Richard Matthias

William Henry Benefield *Fri*
Nathanael Deward Rahm

Thomas Lawrence Greer
Enoch John Valentine
Ron Fender
Michael Elliott
David Luke Henton
David John Batrick
Will Harpest

Bo Alexander Armstrong *Sat*

Francis Jonathan Bullock

Novices

Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands
James Patrick Hall
Jonathan Severus Turner
Millard Cook

Postulants

Richard E Helmer

and for Associates and Friends of
the Brotherhood

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Sacramentine & Visitandine Nuns
Society of the Atonement
Order of Friars Minor
Community of the Paraclete
Companions of Saint Luke~
Benedictine

Community of Celebration

Little Sisters of Saint Clare

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Anglican Order of Preachers

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Society of Saint John the

Evangelist

Anglican Oblates of Saint

Benedict

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Order of the Holy Cross

Order of Saint Helena

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