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THE SERVANT is published monthly by the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, a Religious Community of the Episcopal Church. Kindly address all inquiries to: The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606.

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Volume IX  
Number 3  
March 1985

**84**

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**BE SILENT**

**LENT IS HERE**

Thereupon the Spirit sent him away into the wilderness, and there he remained for forty days tempted by Satan. He was among the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.  
— Mark 1:12-13

This is the way that Mark describes the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Alone, without food or shelter, and beset by temptation. A time of privation, prayer, and learning -- about himself, his enemy, and what he was being called to do. A time in which he tested himself, and was strengthened by the Holy Spirit. A time in which angel's wings were ever near, and in which evil was conquered by good. On the way to Damascus, tradition has it that the Lord struck Saul from his horse, and blinded him. A dramatic way of getting the attention of the future apostle to the gentiles; but then, Saul was a strong, proud, forceful and opinionated man who perhaps would otherwise never have listened to the quiet voice of God. His blindness gave him a period of enforced quiet and inner retreat. No doubt also torn by doubts and temptations, it was for him a time of reshaping his values and opinions and discerning God's will for his life, a time during which God remade Saul into Paul, and readied the world to receive him.

In the world of Jesus, and of St. Paul, and of the early Church, it was easier to hear the quiet voice of God. There were neither cities as we know them, nor industry, nor automobiles, and there were fewer people. The earth was not a crowded place. Life was simpler, without the complexities of modern economics and industrialization and fluid ethical standards. Religion was a serious business, and in integral part of life.

Times have changed. A noise level that would have deafened the early Christians has become such a part of our environment that we no longer even hear it. And the quiet voice of God can easily become lost amid that unheard background. Substitute gods are readily available, and recommended by society -- especially the one of self-gratification. We have lost the habit of speaking with God, and forgotten how to listen to him.

Clergy and religious are not immune. True, we are set apart by titles and dress and vows and disciplines, but these can themselves become substitute gods. We, perhaps even more than the average layperson, must be on our guard. For amid the non-Christian world that we live in, we can easily think that the little we have done is enough.

In her wisdom, the Church recognizes these dangers, and sets aside a period of time in each year in remembrance of those days which Jesus spent in the desert. It is a time when the normal hustle and bustle of church-related activities slows down to a more somber tempo, and all are called to remember, and to listen. It is the time called Lent. Its position between the observation of Christ's Transfiguration on the mountaintop and the Palm Sunday is significant -- immediately after the wonder and awe associated with the realization that Jesus is God, and before the expectancy of the triumphal last entry into Jerusalem; and before we see the extent of God's love for us hammered home on that hard, unyielding cross of wood. It is a time for seeing our pilgrimage not only as an answer to the calling of God, but as a kind of penitential offering for the sins of the past and of the future -- our own and those of the whole world -- as we share in the redemptive work of Christ.

Practice the presence of God this Lent. Seek the Bridegroom. Learn of his immeasurable love for you, and of his plan for your life. Continue your own pilgrimage; but be careful always to check the signpost to be sure you are still on the right path, Listen for his voice as you stand still for a moment -- he has gone on ahead, perhaps just out of sight around the bend -- but if you listen carefully, you can hear him calling, "Come, follow me."

Novice Brother Joseph Thomas Irvin serves at St. Stephen's Church in East Haddam CT. He is married, and the father of two teenage daughters. His secular work is as a contract administrator for General Dynamics.

# THE FOUNDER'S FORUM

## LENT -- AND SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR POSITIVE ACTIONS:

I have often written during the Lenten season regarding taking on rather than giving up. In this day of hunger and homelessness it seems even more important to do something extra -- to see Christ in those we meet day by day. The following are some suggestions, not just for the homeless but for any who may need the quiet peace of our kindness and concern.

Forgive someone who has hurt you and if at all possible find a way to offer that person your forgiveness. Write to someone who would be happy to hear from you -- make the time you have not had in the past. Do something thoughtful for someone who is alone or lonely. Have someone to dinner; take someone to a movie -- bring someone to church with you. Give a street person some food. Some may refuse it -- many will not.

If you find yourself wallowing in negativism -- and it is easy to do that these days -- find something hopeful to say or something positive to do.

Judge others, if at all, with kindness. Be gentle toward them. Guard your tongue when you speak of them.

Seek God's help, asking for his guidance at the beginning of the day, and put yourself in his care at the end of the day.

And finally, think about the things in your life that are reasons for giving thanks. Remember them and cultivate a grateful heart. Ralph Waldo Emerson summed it up: "The only true gift is a portion of yourself." May your Lent be a sacrifice of this sort, as we remember and imitate during these forty days the giver of the greatest gift, Jesus Christ.

-- Richard Thomas Biernacki, BSG,  
Superior General



BOSTON MA: Novice Br. Bernard Fessenden has been appointed head nurse at the Addiction Treatment Center here. Our prayers are with him as he begins this challenging work.

WORCESTER MA: Br. Michael DelMolino has been placed on the Dean's List at Quinsigamond Community College, where he is studying in the Pre-Tech Health Institute. He has also recently been appointed to the Ecumenical Council at his parish, St. Mark's Church.

NEW YORK: Brs. Christian Williams, John Peter Clark, William Francis Jones and Stephen Storen attended the 16th national conference of Trinity Institute, entitled, "The Christian View of Humanity" --- Br. John Peter Clark. continues his work with the homeless at St. Augustine's Parish on the lower East Side. --- Brs. William Francis Jones and Stephen Storen attended an ecumenical service of Evening Prayer at Trinity Church.

Wall Street. Participating were several Roman Catholic and Methodist parishes; the homilist was Archbishop John J. O'Connor. ++++ We regret to announce that Leslie Victor Morgan has withdrawn from the community; his Vows have been dispensed by the Visitor, the Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Jr.

BRONX NY: Special recognition was given to Brs. Jason Jude Schellas and William Bunting and Postulant Earl Christian by the Wardens of St. Andrew' Parish, at which they all serve. The parish has been without a rector since early last year, and the wardens expressed thanks for the many tasks these members of the brotherhood have carried out over this time. ++++

Br. William Bunting attended a service in honor of the 25th Anniversary of the ordination of the Rev. Stanford Chambers to the priesthood, and was pressed into service as crucifer.

SUNBURY PA: Br. Thaddeus David Williams attended a special service as part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The service was held at St. Michael's and Angels Roman Catholic Church: the guest preacher was the newly elected Methodist bishop, Felton May.

### **THE BROTHER'S WIFE**

What is it like to be the wife of a brother? There are so many words that I could use. It's a miracle and a mystery. In a day when the traditional view of a religious is that they are celibate, I am definitely playing a new role.

Watching someone you love "becoming" a new person is often very difficult. Just as watching a child who goes through infancy to adolescence to adulthood is a cause for joy at times, and pain at others, and always a miracle, so is watching my husband becoming a servant of God.

I see a man who used to hate to get up early in the morning, now getting up in time to do the morning office. I've seen how much better his day goes because of this sacrifice. I see a man trying to become a good brother, following the rules while struggling. It gives me great pain to see him struggle and question and hurt as he fights to become God's person. All I can do is to love him and pray for him to find God's grace.

In a pregnancy, the child in the womb kicks, moves and struggles. The loving mother watches and feels all this. She must nourish the child and be a warm and loving environment. But the baby will grow and struggle until God is ready for that child to be born into a new world, a new environment. So my husband must go through the process of growth and struggle.

Often there is an incredible peace in our house as Joe says his office. Our house is becoming prayer-soaked and all who enter it seem to feel it. Just as teenagers are often grumpy and rebellious, so is my husband, the brother. It upsets me at times, but when I put it into perspective it is o.k. It is a side he has never shown much, and it is healthy to see it.

On the other hand, there are times when I see Brother Joseph Thomas working at the side of the altar and I see incredible happiness in his whole being.

That is one of the ways he serves God, and that is good.

As the people of St. Stephen's get to know him, I see them look to him for some comfort and guidance. They approach him with expectancy. And Christ in his mercy makes Joe aware that he doesn't have the answers, and that he must rely on Christ to put the words into his mouth.

Being a brother is the culmination of all that Joe has ever been. I see it as a melting together of all the wishes, hopes and dreams that he has ever had. It is a struggle, but it is one that he can't turn away from.

I see a person being reborn into something new, Christ's person. I see God's joy and love in the process. I see death and resurrection, but above all I see God's grace. I am overjoyed at the rebirth of this person that I love. Just as I am happy and thrilled when my children are happy and content, so with my husband. When he is feeling God's peace, so am I. When he hurts, I hurt. And when he becomes a life professed brother, I will rejoice in God's love and grace! Thank God for my husband, Brother Joseph Thomas of the Brotherhood of St: Gregory!

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Delphy Irvin, whose husband wrote the opening article in this issue, works as a therapeutic recreational director in a nursing home in New London CT.

**Hear, O Shepherd of Israel,  
leading Joseph like a flock;  
shine forth,  
you that are enthroned upon the Cherubim. -- Psalm 80**

Lent is a time for thinking about the Good Shepherd: the divine One whose life was an answer to the question asked in Advent, "Tell us, art thou he who is to come to reign over thy people Israel?"

Let us at this time remember the plight of the Church in the lands of our Lord's earthly ministry. The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East has been beset by wars and turmoil, revolutions and natural disasters. Yet it has endured in faith. Each year a special offering is collected in other Churches of the Anglican Communion around the world -- on this day which commemorates a moment in which human history was forever altered on a hill outside Jerusalem. Let us pray that this Church can continue to bear witness to that moment. Be generous in your offerings, and send them to the Good Friday Offering, at the Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York NY 10017.



MARCH INTERCESSIONS

1. St. David's Church, Portland OR  
Br. Michael DelMolino, BSG
4. The Rev. Richard L. May
15. Br. Kevin James Jensen, BSG
25. Br. William Bunting, BSG  
The Congregation of the Servants of Christ
28. Br. John Peter Clark, BSG
30. Br. John Nidecker, BSG

For the ill:

Br. John Nidecker, BSG      Christian W. Flohr, III      Mildred Ross  
Felitia Hernandez                      Nelson Kliesroth

For the departed:

Charlotte B. Morgan              Ruth Leverich              Ethyl Geyer  
Clyde Chapman                      Linn Chapman              Ray Odell  
Betsy Rodenmayer              The Rev. Pastor G. Sotolongo  
Katherine Johnson                      Evelyn Haller

Special Intentions for:

The Rev. E. A. St. John                      Mary O'Keefe  
The Visitation Nuns                      The Sacramentine Nuns  
Donovan Bowley                      Norman Cole              The Rev. Jeremy Bond  
Leslie Morgan

Thanksgiving for:

The 25th Anniversary of Hillspeak  
The appointment of the Rev. Alen Jones as Dean of Grace Cathedral,  
San Francisco  
The Brotherhood of St. Gregory, as it continues to grow -- we ask  
your prayers especially on the 12th of March --  
the commemoration of our Patron, St. Gregory the Great