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Little Things

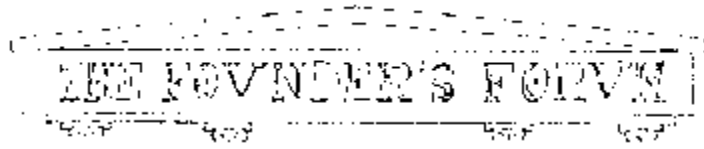
"He must increase, but I must decrease." -- John 3:30

These are the words of the forerunner, the bridegroom's friend who came to the wedding dressed in rags, sweaty from his roadwork: having leveled mountains and smoothed out the rough places. His was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Look, the Lamb!" What did his hearers come out to see? A reed bed swept by the wind? Surely reeds had grown by Jordan's bank long before the Baptist's cry was heard. An envoy in silks and satins? Not when his message was about a King born in a stable, a King who came foretold but unexpected. As our Lord became an infant, weak and poor as any newborn child, and at his death surrendered in utter weakness on the cross, bereft and forsaken even by God, so John the Baptist became small: his humility was complete; it was his joy, perfect and filled with delight, and he went to his death, a pointless, petty death, secure in the knowledge of having prepared the way for the Beloved.

He was the greatest on earth; and yet, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. What is it to be great, then? James and John, and their mother, pleaded for it -- asking for reserved seats at the banquet, high places for mighty rulers. But what did our Lord do? He took a child, a little girl or boy whose name we don't know, and said that this was what one must become in order to achieve salvation! "More folly from Nazareth," we can hear the Pharisees muttering. "What, turn around, turn my back on all my hard-gained wisdom, my accumulated proverbs and legal shrewdness? Nonsense!" The Pharisees didn't understand, and the disciples didn't either, because they were still arguing about greatness on the way to Jerusalem, even at the Last Supper! And what did our Lord do? He washed their feet, against the protests of propriety and order -- the very propriety and order he had come to upset: the propriety and order based not on love but on rank, not on charity but on rule, not on compassion but on compulsion.

We must decrease, grow small, in every way if we are to achieve the promise of salvation. We must become no wiser than a child, if we are to become children of God. Only a child's simple faith can accept the folly of the cross, the unlikely truth of redemption. We must become no bigger than a thread, the thread our fate depends on, if we are to pass through the needle's eye. We must love each other with the love that can come only from humility, a love that is not only affection-ate, but reverent; not only tender, but transcendent; not only human, but divine. For it is God whom we love in each of these the least of our brothers and sisters, and there can be no better object for our love than the One who is Love, even God himself. Amen.

Br. Tobias Stanislas Haller is assistant publications director at the Episcopal Church Center, and managing editor of Selected Sermons.



THE MANY FACES OF LOVE - A WORD "THAT CHANGES LIVES

Love is patient, love is kind, love endures all things. And love is more besides.

Love is constructive: where "patient" suggests a passive attitude, "kindness" implies activity. The gentle smile, the grip of a hand-shake, the sympathetic note --- these are constructive signs of love. Love is mature: people are supposed to grow up, not blow up. Yet, some consider themselves to be God's private "pets" and feel they have a right to blow up every now and then. Such love is Immature.

Love is enduring: love remains when all else fails, all else gives way. Even with its back against the wall, it refuses to yield.

Love is transforming: lives are changed when love is accepted from God and shared with others. The misled young become loving and patient parents. The frustrations of a relationship become settled and calm. The racist and bigot look upon others as brothers and sisters. The alcoholic finds new outlets for self-expression.

What we need to do is think of love not as a word but as an act. The word and the act are met at Calvary where God is seen as going all lengths to make himself known to the world, through his Son. In that cross you and I may learn of the nature of love. We may discover how to express real love to those around us -- our brothers and sisters. It is in Jesus Christ that we see the way to the Great Lover.

Richard Thomas Biernacki, BSG -- Superior General



Companions Corner

We would like to welcome several new Companions to the Brotherhood. At the Lesser Chapter meeting in March, Maryellen Jones and Barbara Venutolo,

both of New York, were admitted as Companions by the Superior General. On Sunday, April 14, Kay Sturm was admitted as a Companion at St. Michael and All Angels Church, Cincinnati OH, by Br. Thomas Joseph Ross. Mrs.

Sturm serves on the vestry, worship and music committee, and education committee and is a postulant for the perpetual diaconate. On the same day, at St. Andrew's Church, Bronx NY, Catherine Dinnen was admitted as a Companion by Br. Jason Jude Schellas. Also present at the service were Brs. James Teets and Tobias Stanislas Haller, who were visiting that day, and Brs. William Bunting and Novice Br. Earl Christian, who both serve in the parish. Other new Companions since our last Companions Corner include Lillian Waites of Monoma WI, and Elwood R. Newton of Philadelphia PA. Anyone desiring information should contact: Br. Luke Anthony Nowicki, BSG, Director of Companions; 10 Park Street #10-C, North Easton MA 02356.

JUNE INTERCESSIONS

Kalendar

2. Trinity Church, Stoughton MA
Holy Trinity Church, Collington MD
6. The Sacramentine Nuns
7. The Brothers of the Sacred Heart
9. The Rt. Rev. Andrew F. Wissemann
12. The Rev. Lynde E. May, IV
16. The Rev. Wayland E. Melton
17. The Rev. Canon George C. Stacey. Companion
24. The Community of St. John Baptist
27. The Rev. Henry W. Fukul
29. The Society of St. Paul

For the ill:

Br. John Nidecker, BSG

Verne Weed

Wes Sebren

For the departed:

Charlotte B. Morgan
The Rev. James Harold Flye

John Michael Tebelak
Sr. Hilary, SSM

Special Intentions for:

The Rev. E. A. St. John
The Visitation Nuns
Karl G. Sorg

The Sacramentine Nuns
Richard Clark Brian Taylor

Thanksgiving for:

The life profession of Sr. Catherine Clare, CSM
The golden Jubilee of Sr. Joanna, CSM