

The Brotherhood

of Saint Gregory

The Servant

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RELIGIOUS ARE DANGEROUS - GENERAL CHAPTER 1985

Eternal Father of my soul, let my first thought be of you, my first impulse be to worship you. Let my first speech be your Name and my first action be to kneel before you in prayer. AMEN.

On Wednesday, October 9, 1985 a group of "dangerous people," members of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, gathered at the newly redesigned Briarwood Retreat Center on Cape Cod to begin the long retreat prior to General Chapter. Spread like a fishing net across this country, the brothers gathered to discern and identify the many and varied gifts used for the spread of the kingdom. The brothers examined the nature of gifts --gifts experienced, shared and witnessed. It was clear that the gifts God gives are not always expected or appreciated. The charge to be "dangerous" was driven home as we discerned that we, and all religious, must be the "dangerous conscience of the church."

The most significant aspect of the retreat was having both of the "Founders" present: joining Br. Richard Thomas Biernacki was Helen Joyce, former member and Superior of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary (RC) who was instrumental in the Brotherhood's founding and formation. Helen surprised Br. Richard Thomas with the comment that because of the great amount of time he spent at the Visitation Monastery (as organist and friend), she was sure that some of the spirit and ethos of the Visitation order "must have rubbed off." Using *The Golden Counsels* of St. Francis de Sales she paralleled parts of the Rule of the Brotherhood with that of the Visitation order. Besides giving tremendous spiritual insights, Helen joined Br. Richard Thomas in recounting stories of the early days: the long conversations and the writing of the Rule; the naming of the community and its first service (a Bible Vigil written by the then Mother Margaret Mary) held in the monastery chapel with the special permission of Cardinal Spellman, at which the first members of the community made their vows, and hands were stretched through the grill that separated the nuns from the main chapel, that Christ's peace might be exchanged; and the subsequent growth to a community of 32 members at this General Chapter.



The retreat participants, with Helen Joyce.

It was a joy for the brothers to meet the person who is really responsible for guiding Br. Richard Thomas in those early days, and for her to see some of the results of those nurtured sparks that have grown to a flame that glows, however dimly at times, across the country. It was a great joy to see the "Founders" together again and to be able to share their peace and dedication.

At the end of one of her talks, on the meditation practices of the Visitation order, Helen shared with the brothers the singing of the Jesus Prayer, in a form traditionally used by the Visitation nuns. These moments of deep meditation were filled with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and the brothers are grateful to God's servant Helen, a true contemplative, now active in the giving of her apostolic gifts, for sharing this rich and comforting responsive prayer-form with us.

Our thanks are also due to the Rev. Allen W. Swain, coordinator of the Briarwood Retreat Center, the Rev. Emmett Jarrett and the Rev. Thomas J. Davidson, who celebrated the daily eucharist with us.

The one sad note in all of this is the absence of our beloved Brother John Nidecker, who was unable to attend Chapter due to his continued convalescence from major surgery. We ask your prayers for his swift return to full health.

#### GENERAL CHAPTER

The General Chapter of the Brotherhood convened on Friday evening with a Gathering Service at which the community renewed its baptismal vows, and experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in an affirmation of the charismata. Music by Br. Tobias Stanislas Haller was built around the "Veni creator Spiritus" -- and all the brothers were caught up in singing the refrain as they recalled together the Great Commission.

During Morning Prayer on Saturday, prior to the opening of the General Chapter meeting, eight brothers renewed their annual vows: Brs. Anthony Francis Tornabene, John Peter Clark, William Francis Jones, Stephen Storen, William Bunting, Roy Tobin, Charles Kramer and Laurence Andrew Keller. Four were admitted to the postulancy: Nicholas Sorg of Washington DC, Matthew Staples of Boston, Randal Anthony Elliott of Milwaukee WI and George Keith of New York.



Postulant Nicholas Sorg is admitted

Following this service the Superior General delivered his "State of the Brotherhood Address," which traditionally opens Chapter. In it he repeated the mandate, which was reinforced throughout the following days, to "be dangerous."



The Superior General welcomes Donovan Aidan Bowley to the novitiate

The Superior General announced several staff changes for the coming year. With the number of requests for information about the Brotherhood growing daily, the need for a vocations director has become apparent. Br. Stephen has been appointed to this position and has already become very involved with the Roman Catholic Eastern Region Vocational Directors Association. Br. William has been appointed Provincial for Province II, succeeding Br. Stephen. Br. Roy's work as the Director of Postulants and Novices has increased and Br. Laurence Andrew has been appointed Provincial for Province I. These brothers were commissioned at Evening Prayer on Saturday.

On Sunday, October 13, at St. Peter's Church on-the-Canal, Buzzard's Bay, the rector, the Rev. Michael Hartwell was celebrant at a festival eucharist. The Superior General received the life professions of Brs. Kevin James Jensen and Luke Anthony Nowicki. At the same service the Superior General received the first professions of Brs. Thomas Martin Little, Joseph Thomas Irvin and Bernard Francis LaReau. Helen Joyce, whose vision, love, wisdom and support have meant so much to this community, was designated an honorary Companion and Friend of the Brotherhood and was presented with a parchment certificate signed by the entire community.



Brs. Kevin James Jensen, Richard Thomas Biernacki and Luke Anthony Nowicki

Also named as Friends of the community were: the Most Rev. John Maury Allin, the Rt. Rev. Alexander D. Stewart, the Rev. Canon Richard J. Anderson, the Rev. Onell Soto and the Rev. Gerald G. Alexander.

We were very honored to have two members of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, Fr. Russell and Br. John, sent as representatives of their community by the Rev. Thomas Shaw, Superior. Others attending the service included Grosvenor Calkins, Companion; Fr. Davidson, and the Rev. Canon W. B. Wirtz; and Br. Jerome of the Order of the Holy Cross (RC). Another guest, who served as Deacon of the Mass, was Br. Luke Anthony's rector, the Rev. Thomas Schulze.



"A word to the wise!"

The Superior General's homily concerned Abraham and his following of God's commands. The analogy was made that religious and all Christians must be open to God's guidance. Using the foundation of the Brotherhood as a pivot point, Br. Richard Thomas spoke of waiting for God's "marching orders" and the fact that all of life



Commissioning of new staff members

from beginning to end is an act of faith in "pioneering." He mentioned that the Brotherhood is one good example of lay ministry, and that in our work we can be secure in God: "My times are in your hands."

Br. Richard Thomas once again delivered the mandate to be dangerous" -- especially in an age when the very mention of vows causes raised eyebrows. "It would be a tragedy if the still small voice of God's wisdom and direction were not heard at this time," he said. "Take the Pilot with you, who knows the marching orders from the outset -- and who will shape your entire voyage accordingly. He knows the sand bars, he knows the ice-bergs. He will sail you into the harbor where your anchor is cast for eternity. Let his mighty nail-pierced hands hold the wheel and you will be safe. Even though you may not know your final destination, you will know your Pilot. And -- all will be well."

The Brotherhood of St. Gregory's General Chapter was a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led and Christ-centered experience. As one of the brothers said: "Renewal takes place with every new member as he enters the community." Those words sum up what the Brotherhood of St. Gregory is all about: renewal in the religious life and in the church. We will be, we are, the dangerous conscience of the church, and each brother left this General Chapter filled with the Holy Spirit, and with the Jesus Prayer on his lips. Vowed to work as "Servants of the Servants of God," we ask your prayers as we continue to walk the road of service to Christ's holy church, with renewed vision for the years ahead.



Breakfast on the last day of the Chapter meeting

**The members of  
The Brotherhood of  
Saint Gregory  
wish you a blessed Christmas**

DECEMBER INTERCESSIONS

**Kalendar**

1. The Church of the Advent, Boston MA
7. The Rev. Robert J. Vanderau
8. Br. Richard Thomas Biernacki, BSG  
Br. Laurence Andrew Keller, BSG  
The Rev. Andrew Mead
15. Br. John Francis Jones, n/BSG
16. Br. Jason Jude Schellas, BSG
17. Garlan Schoenrock, Jr., Companion
19. Br. Roy Tobin, BSG
25. The Sisterhood of the Holy Nativity  
The Oblates of the Incarnate Word
26. St. Stephen's Church, Boston MA  
St. Stephen's Church, East Haddam CT
27. Church of St. John the Evangelist, Boston MA  
The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine  
The Society of St. John the Evangelist

**For the ill:**

Br. John Nidecker, BSG	William T. Haller
Erica Hanick	George Salem
Virgil Williams	Charles Fessenden
Milton Reed	

**For the departed:**

Charlotte B. Morgan	Kim Herbert
Maria Evangelista	Br. George, SSF
Kay Hurley	

**Special Intentions for:**

The Rev. E. A. St. John	Rick Belanger
The Visitation Nuns	The Sacramentine Nuns
Charles Mitzenius, OHR	Linda Williams
Fr. Ted Daniels and Holy Redeemer Chapel, Landover MD	

**Thanksgiving for:**

The life profession of vows of Br. Donald Thibideau, CSJ in the  
Community of the Servants of Jesus (Lexington, Kentucky)

The life profession of vows of Brs. Kevin James Jensen and Luke  
Anthony Nowicki, BSG

The first profession of vows of Brs. Thomas Martin Little, Joseph  
Thomas Irvin and Bernard Francis LaReau, BSG

The reception into the novitiate of Br. Donovan Aidan Bowley, n/BSG  
The admission of postulants Nicholas Sorg, Matthew Staples, George  
Keith and Randal Anthony Elliott, p/BSG

The 25th anniversary of the ordination of the Rev. John Toomey



*The Brotherhood of St. Gregory ~ 1985*