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In our continuing effort to affirm our belief that the religious life, the "regular" life, life lived under a rule, is something for all Christians to live, we present the second portion of an article by the wife of a member of our community.

The Lord really does work in mysterious ways! The stereotype of a brother is someone who is single, celibate, and often Roman Catholic. But wait; Brother Joseph Thomas is a junior professed member of an Episcopal community, the Brotherhood of St. Gregory. He is well and truly married, as well. But he has taken vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

What a blessing! I watched my husband over the twenty years of our marriage grow and stretch toward this ideal. In our early years together, when life was hectic and difficult Joe would say, "I wish I was a monk!" We laughed, and said, "Impossible!" And wasn't this only a wish to escape to a quiet, prayerful, spiritual place where the world couldn't hurt or bother one?

Time passed. Both of us were looking for peace, spiritual rest and strength to cope with life in general. Joe began to listen to this need for the church, for prayer, and for Christ to become real in his life. In this society, in this church, when a man begins to feel a spiritual hunger he often thinks this can be fed only by becoming a priest. True to this way of thinking, Joe began to think that seeking ordination was the answer.

And then, at a lecture one night, he found out that the Episcopal Church has religious, communities of Christians bound together under rules of life as brothers and sisters. He wrote to the various communities, looking and searching for someplace that would be an answer for him. One community stood out, because it allowed married men to

become brothers. This was the Brotherhood of St. Gregory. We prayed about it and investigated the matter. Finally, after a long time of prayer and application, Joe was accepted as a postulant.

How has our life changed because of this? Our house has become prayer-soaked: as Joe does his four daily offices, the house is filled with prayer. Our children watch and listen and absorb. The miracle is the fact that they are teenagers and are proud of their Dad's new vocation. They have seen the power of prayer work in their own home. We have found that spiritual peace that gives us strength to cope with the world.

Brother Joseph Thomas is not a monk; he does not live in a monastery. He is a brother, a friar -- he lives and works in the world. He is a contract administrator for a large company. His ministry is wherever he is. Being a brother does not hinder or take away from his family life or work life. Often it enhances it.

I am blessed with a husband who had a spiritual need, a need to serve his Lord, and who found an avenue by which to do it. Being a religious person makes Joe a whole, complete and happy person. How many wives are lucky enough to see their husbands really fulfilled? It's a blessing! And what fun to introduce him as Brother Joseph Thomas -- my husband!

Delphy Irvin is a Companion of the Brotherhood of St. Gregory. She works as a therapeutic recreational director.

AM I MY BROTHER'S (SISTER'S) KEEPER?

Our column "Community Notes" often lists the various ministries of the brothers. I have just become involved in one which I would like to share.

Through St. Bartholomew's Church in White Plains, where I serve as director of music, I have been volunteering at what is called the White Plains Post Office Shelter. After much red tape with the city fathers, the "guests" are housed in what was once the lobby — there are 19 beds, and the old postmaster's office has been turned into a kitchen/office; there are two showers and a bathroom. Many local churches and synagogues supply linens, towels, toiletries, clothing and most of all, nightly meals. This whole operation is



**Sheltering the Homeless
Is Our Responsibility**

under the wing of an organization named SHORE — which stands for "Sheltering the Homeless is our Responsibility." St. Bartholomew's provides the core of overnight volunteers and John Colon, a Friend of the Brotherhood and member of the vestry, works with me on a team.

A glimpse: It's Friday night, 9:00 p.m. and we arrive to set up for the opening of the doors half-an-hour later. Water is up for coffee and tea, snacks are in place, the cots have fresh sheets and blankets — the doors open and the guests arrive.

Dean is a regular, becoming threadbare as the days progress; he is 20. Rufus arrives, he has diabetes and carries

his own cans of tuna with him — he helps us label the bags of soiled linens. There's Jack who we have nicknamed "Hulk Hogan" — the resemblance he bears to the wrestler is striking. The "Hulk" has a home, Jack doesn't. Another comes who immediately asks me to find him a detox center. He has a place to live — his father "just can't take him any more." We found him a local center and pray he'll use the thirty—five cents we gave him to take the bus in the morning. He asks many questions, but the main one is "Why are you here? We're losers — why do you bother?"

The night goes on — I say Compline and read some of the life of Mother Teresa (which seems appropriate at the time). It is 3:00 a.m. — time to make sandwiches for the guests to take in the morning, a guarantee they'll have lunch. At 4:00 a. m. a policeman from a nearby town arrives at the door with a 17-year-old whose alcoholic aunt has "flipped out" and flipped him in the street — his clothes were thrown in a garbage can filled with rain water. She had insured his fate for the night. He was an overflow, but we housed him on a couch until wake-up at 6:30 a.m.

"As you have done it to the least of these... you have done it to me." Those words — the power in them. I can't help thinking that this ministry helps me to understand the vows I took over sixteen years ago. "To meet Christ your brother. .. in every man, woman and child, no matter who they be." Those are the same words each member of the Brotherhood hears at admission and profession — to bring the comfort of Christ to those we would serve. And each time we extend a hand, in that touch, I know that the Christ in us greets the Christ in those we serve.

If we have Christ in our hearts we must share him with others. We give what we know of the incomparable gift — compassion, love, caring and support. We have in us the tracing of the spirit of Jesus which helps us to meet everyday living, its ups and downs and all its turns. I have found the ministry to the homeless to be more of a witness than I ever imagined, because on each visit to the shelter I am always asked "Why are you here?" My reply is always the same: "I must be here; my Rule of Life demands it."

I am bold but I am also, as I have taught the brothers — "dangerous." And, through that danger, I challenge others to do the same. We are the messengers and we must bring the Good News and the salvation of the Gospel to others. We, as religious must understand that the Gospel is a course of action, not some pretty words on a page. We must be there when others need us and if the government won't do it we must.

When I mentioned my work in this shelter, one of my neighbors replied "But there are no homeless in White Plains." Indeed, the next time you hear that or a similar phrase, be assured there are homeless everywhere. I pray that this community of faith involved in sheltering the homeless never forgets that.

"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was naked and you clothed me, I was homeless and you gave me shelter ... the least of these... you did it to me."

How many have thought romantically that "if only I could have seen Jesus in the flesh ... " Jesus eats in a soup kitchen on Ninth Avenue in New York; Jesus sleeps on a cot in what was once a post office in White Plains.

*Richard Thomas Biernacki, BSG
Superior General*

Here and there with the Brotherhood...

COMMUNITY NOTES

January marked two special occasions for the Brotherhood involving the Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Edmond L. Browning. The first event took place in

WASHINGTON DC: Brothers Richard Thomas Biernacki, James Teets, Tobias Stanislas Haller, Edward Munro and Thomas Martin Little attended the service of installation for Bishop Browning at the Washington Cathedral. It was a spectacular service, with grand music from the Hymnal 1982, which had been dedicated the night before in a special service which the brothers also attended. The Superior General's talent as florist was brought out of retirement for the reception following the installation service -- he directed the arrangement of some fifty dozen antheriums sent for the occasion by the Diocese of Hawaii. Postulant Nicholas Sorg, who was unable to attend the installation service itself, did manage to get to the reception. We regret

that Br. John Nidecker, Provincial for the area, was unable to attend due to his health. We ask that our readers Keep him in their prayers as he continues to undergo the difficult recuperation from lung surgery.

NEW YORK NY: The following week the brothers of Province II turned out in force for a special service honoring the Presiding Bishop at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, at which he was installed as an honorary canon. The Evening Prayer service was essentially a "family service" for the staff at the Episcopal Church Center and their families -- Brothers Richard Thomas and Tobias Stanislas, who both work on the staff of the Center, brought along some of their extended family of brothers in the area: James, Anthony Francis Tornabene, John Peter Clark, William Bunting, Charles Kramer, Novice Br. Earl Christian, and Postulant George Keith.

++++ This year's Lesser Chapter services will be held at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields, Hudson and Grove Streets, in Greenwich Village, Manhattan, on March 8th. The day will begin with Morning Prayer, and culminate with a festival Eucharist at 4:00 p.m.

YONKERS NY : Br. Jason Jude Schellas has

received his Associate Science degree from Mercy College. Congratulations, Jason Jude!

MILWAUKEE WI: Postulant Randal Anthony Elliott has started work as sexton at the Central United Methodist Church here. We wish him much success in this work and service.

MEET BROTHER CHRISTIAN - THE BROTHERHOOD OF SAINT GREGORY (

Reprinted from the Connecticut Diocesan Altar Guild Newsletter)

There is great satisfaction in fleshing out a name with a real person. Several years ago, at Adelynrood•, we were urged to inventory our parishes for old but usable vestments--and altar appointments to send to Brother Christian at St. Gregory's Vestment Exchange. "He will make new what seems old and useless for parishes that are in need," the speaker told us. The very "make do" and thrifty nature of this project brought to mind an elderly monk. When Brother Christian, BSG came to address the Province I Altar Guilds this year he seemed boyish in comparison to the man I had imagined! His fascinating address opened to us a hands-on course in ecclesiastical history!

He began by urging us to protect vestments by using proper rounded hangers (never wire ones) , to apply embroidered designs to stoles and vestments by hand stitching (never machine zigzag) and, above all, to regard anything as usable. As Brother Christian's history lesson unfolded, samples of stoles and altar furnishings dating back to 1800 were passed around the room with both painted and embroidered symbols. We admired a cream white chasuble from the U.S.S. Hope with its appropriate orphrey of fish and anchors in gold. We learned that the swastika is a cross, and like the fish symbol was once a subterfuge for Christians. We were surprised that black appointments are being ordered from some dioceses for requiem and burial services.

St. Gregory's Vestment Exchange receives donations from as far away as Hawaii and supplies both local and distant churches. It fills unusual orders, for example, rose colored vestments used only on the third Sunday of Advent and on "Mothering Sunday" in Lent. The Exchange can recreate from veritable "rags" and create new special orders as well.

I no longer wonder who Brother Christian is. He's a real person, a fascinating historian and a stitchery wizard. He can minister to a world-wide need with your help.

-Betty Hartin, Trinity Church, Seymour, Connecticut