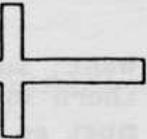


The Brotherhood

of Saint Gregory

The Servant



September 1986 #102

In the Cross of Jesus

And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow after me."

DO WE REALLY follow Jesus where he leads us? Or do we follow where it is convenient, only to turn away at the last second, before the denial of self, saying, "O Lord, that is much too hard for me to do"?

Do we really follow Jesus when he wants us to, or just when we are in the mood to? "Hot today, Lord; I have a headache."

Do we really follow Jesus in the way that he has chosen? "You want me to give up *what*, Lord"?"

Do we really follow *Jesus* with the right motive, or is there a hidden agenda? "Yes, Lord, I am doing this because I love you, and they will know how good I am."

Now we all know, none of us would make such statements as those above, right? Just that other person over there. That's the one who fails; not me.
Right, Lord?

Whether we want to or not, all of us are called to carry some sort of a cross. It may be in the form of a physical problem, a personal difficulty with a friend or a relative, or even that spiritual desert we all wander around in from time to time. Jesus is telling us that not only should we live with the pain of the cross, but that we should deny our natural inclination to be rid of the problem. We need to deny ourselves the luxury of complaining

about our problems, trials, aches and pains.

The other side of the coin is that there are trials we should deal with, but choose to avoid. Jesus' invitation is to deal with these trials in a positive fashion especially when we don't want to, even to the point of seeking them out.

"One came up to Jesus, saying, 'Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?' And he said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.' He said to him, 'Which?' And Jesus said, 'You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother, and, You shall love 'your neighbor as yourself.' The young man said to him, 'All these I have observed; what do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give, to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.'"

For this young man, the cross took the form of giving up his worldly possessions. He went away sorrowful, unable to accept the cross in that form. His riches were easier to bear than the cross of giving them up.

As a brother, I find I must do the will of God, in the manner in which God

wills it, because God wills it. Most days that is not easy; some days it is difficult; other days it appears to be impossible. But doing God's will is what a Christian is supposed to be all about. As a brother I am called to let go of some parts of my life and to take on other parts. In my ministry I work with inner city young people ages 3 through 14. I enjoy this ministry, but that does not mean that everything is always perfect. Trying to teach Sunday school to a group so varied in age and temperament is at times a cross. But I have followed the call, and picked up my cross. On those days when I slip, and the cross drops, Jesus is there to help me shoulder it again, and because of his help the load is light.

Peter was called to go where he did not want to go, and went. Paul was called to go where he did not want to go, and

went, suffering all the while with the thorn in the flesh. As a disciple, I must go where I do not want and suffer what I do not want to suffer. I must go willingly and joyfully. Sometimes, taking up the cross and following means abstaining from doing what we want to do.

Remember : Jesus asks nothing of us that he was not ready to do during his earthly ministry, and is not ready to do today. No matter how heavy our crosses may be, they are nothing like the cross he carried for us.

Br. William Francis Jones, who is due to make his life profession of vows this month, has just completed a year's assignment at Grace Church, Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Founder's Forum

Those who are active, practicing Christians know it works, because they've seen it time after time. But it is so because of some very specific reasons :

- It is the most joyous way to live. When you think about it, the most radiant person who ever lived is at its heart. Christianity is like fine poetry; it has a sheer beauty and a way of overcoming evil with love and joy.
- It is a difficult way, too. We cannot help but know that its values do not come with ease. As someone once said : "It's nice to have a rocking chair but it's also nice to have a walking stick when you want to move." In order to leave the rocking chair to walk, we need to discipline ourselves. The Christian life provides that guidance, that discipline.
- It is a life of pilgrimage and adventure. The true Christian is never

complacent and never "takes his ease in Zion." Granted, there are detours but there is always return to the road the road leading to the city of God.

- It is a way of companionship. We Episcopalians know the all-too-famous "coffee hour" following worship. But for all its worldly trappings, this is a true time for fellowship and sharing and ministering to each other. It is at these times of fellowship and gathering that we find the saints and the sinners. It is here we meet those to whom we would minister, and those who would minister to us.
- It is, finally, a way of dealing with and handling life. It is going the second mile, returning love for hate, joy for sadness.

Woven into all the points I mentioned is the reality of love; of the belief that Christianity works because it is alive and it works because we work at it. I have seen it work again and again. You will, too.

—RTB

Here and there with the Brotherhood...

COMMUNITY NOTES

DUXBURY MA : The brothers of Province I held a provincial retreat recently. Also attending were three aspirants to the community, and our director of vocations, Br. Stephen Storen. Topics in the meditations included spirituality and the ministry of the community, and vocational discernment.

In the photograph, left to right, aspirants John Clarke, Anthony Della Fera and Daniel Thaxton.



BALTIMORE MD : Brs. John E. Nidecker and Edward Munro attended the celebration in honor of the 60th anniversary of the ordination of the Rev. Martin Davidson, OGS, at Mount Calvary Church.

NEW YORK NY : Br. James E. Teets has been appointed to the position of administrative assistant to the executive for world mission at the Episcopal Church Center. We wish him all the best in this new endeavor, and ask your prayers for him. + + + Br. John Francis Jones is assistant to the director of church and program properties for Trinity, Wall Street.

The Brotherhood Vestment Exchange : A Ministry For All Seasons

Nineteen eighty-six brought special joy and significance to the Brotherhood of St. Gregory, for one of our most important ministries of service and outreach observed its tenth anniversary. The work which eventually became known around the Church and the world as the Brotherhood Vestment Exchange was formally begun in 1976 at the behest of the community's founder, Br. Richard Thomas Biernacki, who, wished to respond in some meaningful way to a dichotomy he saw at the parish level: many congregations were blessed with an abun-

BRONX NY : Brs. James, Tobias Stanislas Haller, and John Francis were guests of the Rev. Basil Law at St. James Church. Br. Tobias Stanislas preached, and Brs. James and John Francis assisted in the Liturgy of the Word.

NORTH EASTON MA : Br. Luke Anthony Nowicki hosted a Brotherhood picnic. In attendance were Brs. Roy Tobin, Laurence Andrew Keller, Bernard Fessenden, and novice Donovan Aidan, as well as two aspirants to the community.

dance of vestments, chancel furnishings and hardware for which they no longer had any use, while many other missions and parishes were in great need of these very articles but had no knowledge of their availability. Of course, there is often a great distance between an inspiration and its implementation, so Br. Richard Thomas discussed the idea with Br. John E. Nidecker, a man whose talents for organization were well known, and soon Br. John had created a network for requesting surplus church supplies and also for making this service known to the Church at large.

In a very short while requests were coming in to Br. John's office faster than items were being donated, and Br. John initiated a storage and filing system to catalogue donations and hold requests until they could be filled.

Br. John directed the exchange from 1976 until 1978. But in 1978 a new opportunity was presented to the community in the person of then-novice Br. Christian Williams. When Br. Christian came to the community he brought with him experience in the creation of vestments and altar furnishings, and a desire to put his talents to use. He was also well versed as a sacristan and historian. As Br. John's expertise was needed in other areas of the community's life just then, Br. Christian took up the work as director of the Brotherhood Vestment Exchange.

New people bring new ideas to a job and Br. Christian was no exception! Very soon donations began to increase; orders on file for some time were being filled and new ones were coming in regularly. Part of Br. Richard Thomas' original concept was that the exchange should be a free service to the Church : that any necessary cleaning or repairs would be done at the community's expense, so that the requested items could go out with no strings attached. Even the mailing charges were covered by the Brotherhood; all that was asked of the recipient was that any known memorial be continued.

When one asks for redundant vestments and sanctuary furnishings, one never knows what one will get, or what condition they will be in! Over the years, Br. Christian's skill and imagination with a needle and thread have put countless chasubles, copes, stoles, frontals and fair linens back into service, when they had been thought to be unusable by their original owners. And even when something is beyond use in its original form because of severe scorching, stains or other damage, Br. Christian could often see a potential beyond its current condition: for

example, damaged fair linens became corporals and purificators, and retired chasubles multiplied into active chalice palls, and gave up their orphreys in the cause of restoring a superfrontal.

More recently, the Brotherhood Vestment Exchange has become active on the ecumenical scene. Br. Christian's records of donations reveal supplies received from a variety of non-Episcopalian parishes and from the Roman Catholic Sisters of Charity. And the Brotherhood's response has been in kind : need, not denomination, has always been the only prerequisite, and the records show the exchange's response to Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Congregational parishes, as well as to schools, orphans' homes, a county jail and the chapel of a state penitentiary.

The Brotherhood Vestment Exchange serves the Church on an international level as well. The exchange has been able to help congregations in Canada, the Bahamas, and Cuba, as well as the Dioceses of Namibia (Church of the Province of Southern Africa), North Kigezi (Church of Uganda) and Pusan (Council of the Church of East Asia).

Sources of donations are just as diverse : many diocesan altar guilds have contributed in various ways over the years, and many ECWs have made the exchange their disburser of choice when unused vestments turn up. And along with the parishes, religious communities, individual clergy, and lay people who have helped in the past and continue to do so, we are pleased to number the Bishop of the Armed Forces and the Presiding Bishop (retired) of the Episcopal Church.

The Brotherhood of St. Gregory asks that you join us as we continue to serve the Body of Christ through the Brotherhood Vestment Exchange. Contact Br. Christian at: St. Gregory's House, 25 Allen Street, Manchester NH 03102.

—Br. James E. Teets