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For the Third Sunday after the Epiphany -- Matthew 5.-1-12

Some Thoughts on the Beatitudes

That the Gospel account of the life and ministry of Jesus do not agree in detail should be a surprise to no one. In fact, great insight can be drawn from that very disagreement for in comparing the Synoptic texts we stand to learn more about God than we anticipated.

The Beatitudes occur only twice in Scripture, in the Gospels of Matthew and of Luke. And, strangely enough, both record them in about the same time and place. Early in his public ministry, Jesus was making a tour of the towns in Galilee, healing the sick and teaching in the local synagogues. It is then and there that he called the Twelve. But that is where the parallel stops.

Matthew places the Beatitudes at the beginning of a lecture which has come to be known as the Sermon on the Mount: an appropriate title, as we are told that "he went up the hill" in order to deliver it to the crowds. Luke, on the other hand, says "he came down the hill with them and took his stand on level ground." Not an insignificant difference, when you look at the contents of the two sets of Beatitudes. Luke records *four* Beatitudes and they are clearly aimed at illuminating the presence of God in everyday terms. Jesus likens poverty, hunger, sorrow and oppression (in short, the daily living conditions of his audience) with the blessing possible only through perseverance. And he carefully chooses the spot from "which to teach the crowd these things: *in their midst*". He, too, experienced these human circumstances, and he gave the revelation that God loves and respects even so wretched as they, *in order to reassure them*.

Matthew, on the other hand, takes a different perspective. It almost seems that his was a middle-class audience, while Luke's was poor. Anyone versed in public speaking *learns early on* that you must always know your audience, and Jesus was no exception. If, indeed, he was not speaking to an impoverished crowd, then what he tells them makes absolute sense. Middle-class people have the advantage of being able to afford the luxury of looking beyond their immediate circumstances the poor do not. And Matthew's Jesus gave his middle-class audience what they needed: goals to strive for (contained *in nine* Beatitudes).

Matthew tells us that Jesus went up the hill; he needed *to stand above* the people *to* make the point of the authority which his teaching carried. He wanted them *to* realize that his words contained the power of direction. Hear for yourself what he taught them.: appreciate your need for God's blessing each day; be humble: strive to see that justice is done; show mercy to those around you; deal honestly; make your being an instrument for peace among those with whom you *live*; and again, in all adversity, persevere. □

Br. James E. Teets is a life professed member of the community: he is the Brotherhood's coordinator of public relations and a member of Council. Last year he was appointed by the Presiding Bishop as administrative assistant to the executive for World Mission at the Episcopal Church Center. He also serves in several liturgical capacities at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields, New York City.

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We would appreciate receiving your publication for our files.

In the Valley

Then Jesus said to him, 'Begone Satan! For it is written. 'You shad worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve .''
—Matthew 4.10

We fashion our lives in the 'valley of decision' each day , as we come to terms with the issues of our lives . We stand still or we mature in terms of our choices and the decisions that lead us this way or that. Hard choices hold within themselves the possibility of both growth and maturity .

There is an old Chinese proverb to the effect that the longest journey begins with a single step. The journey to our destiny begins with a single choice, a single step somewhere in the valley of decision.

On the Mount of Temptation Jesus met the issues of his life -- dramatic decisions, much the same as the decisions of our lives. It was there on the Mount of Temptation that Jesus made decisions which affected the rest of his earthly life. John Baillie has said,

"in moments of moral choice we have our deepest dealings with the universe." In our choices between good and evil , better and best, we have significant dealings with God. Jesus made that clear on the Mount of Temptation. He did not operate in a vacuum; he was involved with the deepest parts of the universe. He was dealing with God , with God's will and purpose -- and so are we when we walk in the 'valley of decision .'

Heavenly Father .

Help us to understand that our destiny is linked to our day-to-day choices, and make us willing to choose in a spirit of loyalty to the best we know . Amen .

-- RTB □

Here and there with the Brotherhood

COMMUNITY NOTES

BOSTON MA: Br . Bernard Fessenden has been commissioned as a Lay Eucharistic Minister, a ministry he will exercise through the Church of St . John the Evangelist .

MT. CARMEL IL: Novice Br. Michael David Elvestrom took part in the Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, at St . John's Episcopal Church . He also served as cantor at the ordination of the Rev . Keith R . Roderick to the priesthood, at St . James, McLeansboro.

CHICAGO IL: The Rev . Edward Ramon Riley , newly admitted as a postulant in the Brotherhood, hosted a vocational workshop in his parish, All Saints' Church . The community's vocations director, Br. Stephen Storen, gave a presentation, and Br . Bernard Francis LaReau, and novice Brs . Randal Anthony Elliott and Michael David were on hand to answer questions and share in the fellowship of the parish family .



In the photograph , right , Br. Stephen responds to questions from the All Saints' parishioners .

(l. to r.) Edward Ramon , Randal Anthony,
Stephen, Michael David and Bernard Francis .

VALYERMO CA: Brs . James E. Teets and Tobias Stanislas Haller attended the second "Life in Jesus: Ministry, Mission and Order" conference -- this time held at St. Andrew's Priory , a Roman Catholic Benedictine monastery . The intent of this gathering of members of religious communities was to provide a forum for continued dialogue after the first conference in Duxbury MA last September , and to allow attendance by communities either based in the West, or who had *been* unable to attend the East Coast meeting. Fr. Andrew Rank, SSP, president of the Conference on the Religious Life, again acted as convenor; Mother Suzanne Elizabeth, CSJB, gave the opening address; and the Rev. Richard Valantasis reprised his role as facilitator. The meeting was blessed by the presence of the Rt. Rev. Frank T. Griswold, III, chair of the House of Bishops Standing Committee on Religious Communities. His concern for the continued renewal and development of religious life in the Episcopal Church is evident, and a general sense of optimism for the future pervaded the meeting .

Br. Tobias Stanislas gave a brief presentation on canonical history, similar to that given in Duxbury . In the ensuing discussion the relation between religious communities and the institutional church structure was discussed. It was pointed out that monastic communities have traditionally maintained a certain distance from the institutional hierarchy _ This was particularly true in the time of the Desert Fathers and in the 19th and early 20th centuries , as episcopal suspicion of and antagonism toward Anglican religious orders developed. While this is undeniably true, it must be pointed out that religious communities whose historic goal has been the building up of the institutional church, such as the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Jesuits — and the Brotherhood of St. Gregory — have had to develop a much closer relationship between themselves and the institution they were serving -- even when the service involved sometimes painful reform and renewal.

It is our hope that continued dialogue among all sorts of religious communities can be carried out in an increasingly collegial atmosphere. Part of the conference was de-



voted to a discussion of various mechanisms by which such a collegial environment could be created.

BALTIMORE MD: Br. Thaddeus David Williams attended the Open House for the Joseph Richey House, a hospice to be operated jointly by Mt. Calvary Episcopal Church and the All Saints Sisters of the Poor . On All Saints' Day, Brs. John E. Nidecker, Edward Munro, and Thomas Martin Little attended the dedication and blessing of the facility.

During the procession from Mt. Calvary (at which Br. Edward serves) to the hospice, the All Saints Sisters chanted the Litany .

NEW YORK NY: Br. Thaddeus David visited the Big Apple and had lunch with Brs. Richard Thomas, James, William Francis Jones, Tobias Stanislas, and novice Br. George Keith. After lunch, the visiting Pennsylvanian friar stopped off in Lower Manhattan to spend some time with Br. Stephen Storen. +++ Brs William Francis and Charles Kramer served as tellers at the Diocesan Convention.

BRONX NY: Br. Earl Christian helped serve at the St. Andrew's Parish Homecoming-Loyalty Sunday brunch.

MT. VERNON VA: Br. Edward joined Br. Thomas Martin at St. James' Church, preaching at two services and giving a presentation on the work of Joseph Richey House. Br. Thomas Martin later attended the annual workshop for the training of those working at the shelter for the homeless.

HARRISBURG P k Br. Thaddeus David attended a workshop at St. Stephen's Cathedral for the commissioning of previously licensed Lay Readers and Chalicists as Lay Eucharistic Ministers. □

A Model for Diversity in the Religious

The purpose of all Christian life is to approach nearer to God. As the *Outline of the Faith* says, 'The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.' The religious life is one of the means by which this reunification is accomplished. We offer the following model of the variety of forms of religious life in the hope that it can serve as a sign of unity in diversity, rather than division.

Essential to the idea of redemption is the call to repentance: the recognition that we are fallen and need to return to Christ, whose salvific act in becoming one with us enables us to become one with God. Part of this recognition of our fallen state involves our attitude towards what has been called "the world" — including lust for possessions, power, and misuse of sexuality. In one view, there is a progression (a,b,c) from the world (K) to Christ (X). On this "ladder of perfection" the traditional religious life was assumed to be "more consecrated" than other forms of Christian life.

But there is more than one way of dealing with "the world." In addition to the way of negation, there is the way of transformation; both are equally valid ways of dealing with the fallen state. For example, the teaching of the Church is that sexuality may be dealt with in two ways: celibacy and matrimony. Similar paths exist for dealing with wealth and power, and all other worldly attractions, and there is often a wide range of possible choices. The Christian may turn away from the world in rejection, or turn the world itself around in transformation.

The important thing to note, however, is the return to Christ. The initial direction is towards an ideal of negation or transformation, but the individual who seeks Christ must eventually turn away from these ideals, transforming or rejecting them after they have served their purpose. Failure to do so leads to any of the numerous heresies that plagued the early Church, or to idolatry or egoism. As we said in an earlier issue, "At heaven's gate we must shed *all* our habits; even a cincture is too wide to go through the eye of a needle."

We hope that this may serve as a model to religious communities in their efforts to cooperate. The spectrum of possible response to the world of sin is broad and filled with still untried possibilities. The other point to note is that the further along we are upon our own paths, the closer together we grow, as we approach the One who is above all, even Jesus Christ our Lord. □

