

September 1987

#114

For the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost -- Matthew 21:28-32

Change of Heart, Change of Mind

He answered, "I will not"; but afterward he repented and went. — Matthew 21:29

Jesus makes it clear that he and John the Baptist derive their authority from the same source, then goes on to tell the chief priests and elders a parable. This story represents these religious leaders with their mock obedience by the second son. When asked by his father to "go out and work today in the vineyard," he said, "I will, sir," but then never went. This contrasts with the social outcasts -- tax gatherers and prostitutes -- who, repenting and hearing Jesus' words, are like the first son, who when asked the same question replied, 'I will not but afterward changed his mind and went.

Jesus asks the question, 'Which of these two did as his father wished?' No one really needed to answer. The religious leaders knew which one did the father's bidding, and said so. Perhaps they didn't see themselves depicted as the second son, and missed the point of the whole exercise. Had they seen the point, they might not have answered so readily. There is more than a little exasperation in Jesus' voice as he goes on. He wasn't finished with them: yes, they got the right answer, but they missed the whole point. He tells them that the tax gatherers and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of heaven before them, because those outcasts had believed and repented at the preaching of John. Their lives had formerly expressed the 'I will not' of the first son; but after listening to John and believing him -- seeing the need to change, to repent -- they made a genuine response; they 'changed their minds'

and went. These people sought to live their newly found or reconciled faith; they sought to fulfill God's will, as obedient children. The religious leaders, faced with the reality that tax gatherers and prostitutes would enter the kingdom of heaven ahead of them, were pricked right at the root of their smugness and their pride. Note, by the way, the Jesus doesn't say 'instead of but 'ahead of.' The tax gatherers and the prostitutes who repented at John's preaching, and who continued by following Jesus, had already experienced the kingdom made present, the reality of the kingdom of God within them. The door to the banquet wasn't closed yet, but the first guests were seated.

And what of us? What of our own condition? How often are we like the second son, rather than the first? Like those religious leaders of Jesus' time, we are all infected with a certain amount of pride, and, at one point or another, are sure we're "doing it the right way." We can easily settle into a comfort-able position of thinking that our path to heaven is free and clear, that our passports are stamped and our visas ready; and, of course, that the politicians or crooks or drug addicts or whoever else we're sure aren't following the "right" way couldn't possibly realize God's kingdom -- or at least not ahead of us, not without our wisdom and guidance!

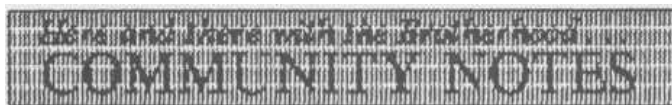
There is a good chance we encounter every day an opportunity to obey God's call for change; often, like the second son, we recognize and acknowledge the call but do not fulfill it. These opportunities may be as small as a

trivial task: sending a card to a sick friend -- or letting the opportunity slip by; following the call to a ministry of outreach or social action, doing something for the poor or homeless, being a volunteer at a hospital or nursing center — or tending to our own affairs . On a larger scale the call to change could be a call to a new job, career or vocation , a change that might alter one's life . The "comfy position" takes hold in the natural fear of risking a venture in a new or unknown area. How many opportunities have been lost? How many have not followed through on the Grail to ministry? How many

have not followed through on their call to ordination or to the vowed life? Each of us can only examine our own life and pray for the grace to discern what changes God is calling us to; in the strength of that grace, we can be like the first son in the parable and go forth to the work to which we are called.. We can be sure of God's blessing in this. o

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Br. Thaddeus David Williams serves on mission at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Sunbury PA, where he has an active and multifaceted ministry.



OXFORD ENGLAND

Br. Thomas Joseph Ross joined a group from the Diocese of Southern Ohio attending the Oxford Study Seminar, "Encounters with Paradox," at St. Stephen's Theological College. Speakers included Mother Frances Dominica, ASSP, founder of Helen House, a hospice for children; the Rt. Rev. Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford; the Rt. Rev. Conrad Meyer, Bishop of Dorchester; and the Rev. John Macquarrie. During the course of the seminar, Bishop Black of Southern Ohio preached at Littlemore Parish Church, where John Henry Newman had been vicar. The seminar was held at the original mother house of the Society of St. John the Evangelist.

CARACAS VENEZUELA

Superior General Br. Richard Thomas Biernacki served as registrar and master of ceremonies for the episcopal ordination of Bishop Omen A. Soto of Venezuela. Next month's 'Founder's Forum' will tell the tale.

IONA SCOTLAND

Br. Laurence Andrew Keller served as a summer guestmaster at a "cottage" retreat center on the Isle of Iona. More on this next month.

BOSTON

Before leaving for Scotland, Br. Laurence Andrew gave an illustrated talk on English cathedrals for the St. Hilda's Fellowship at the Church of the Advent. +++ Brs. Laurence

Aldan Bowley, Matthew Staples, and Postulant Ciaran Anthony Della Ferra walked in a 10 kilometer "From All Walks of Life" fund raiser for the Boston AIDS Action Committee, under the Pastoral Concerns Committee banner. The brothers raised over \$1500. The shady photo (below) shows the brothers trying to keep cool before the walk gets under way --temperatures were in the 90s and all were reported to have lobster-red complexions by the time the event was over. The day ended with the eucharist at Trinity Church, at which Br. Bernard assisted, and a take-out Chinese dinner at the 'Pembroke Priory.' +++ Br. Matthew attended the 4th annual Memorial Service and Candlelight Vigil for people with AIDS, at St. Paul's Cathedral.



WHITE PLAINS NY

Br. Richard Thomas met with the clergy of the Westchester IPC, and spoke to the group about the religious life in the Episcopal Church as it is today, and in its historical perspective. He answered questions such as: Who is applying for membership? What are the interests of applicants and how are their gifts used? What are some of the options for married men and women? What are some of the new developments in the religious life? + + + Br. Richard Thomas is working with the homeless shelter at Grace Church, where he prepares and serves the Wednesday evening meal -- creative menu planning is the watchword.

MANHATTAN

Brs. Stephen Storen and George Keith attended a seminar on "Healing and Spirituality" sponsored by the Center for Christian Spirituality of the General Theological Seminary. + + + Br. Stephen led a workshop on the Brotherhood and the religious life for the weekly meeting of Integrity/New York at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields. Our thanks to Mr. Nick Downen, president of I/NY, for providing the time for this workshop. + + + Br. John Peter Clark has attended two workshops on AIDS sponsored by Trinity Church. He was also recently honored by the N.Y. City Department of Human Resources for over ten years of service to the city.

ALBANY

Postulant Christopher Stephen Jenks attended the first anniversary celebration for the Sacred Sites and Properties Fund of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The event was attended by representatives of over 40 grant recipients, and ended with a service at the Sweet Pilgrim Baptist Church, which had received a grant for roof and foundation repairs for their landmark building.

MENDHAM NJ

Commemoration Day with the Sisters of St. John Baptist has remained a tradition for the Brotherhood. This year, Brs. Richard Thomas, James E. Teets, Stephen, William, Francis Jones, Tobias Stanislas Haller and Postulant Christopher Stephen attended. Br. Richard Thomas was organist, and several of the brothers assisted in the sanctuary.

HASBROUK HEIGHTS NJ

Br. William Francis represented the men's religious communities at the Presiding Bishop's "Vision Conference" — part of the process being undertaken in preparation for the next General Convention. The assembly divided into eight groups, and carried out the task of trying to find ways to enable the mission of the Church. Responses varied considerably. Br. William Francis reports that one group asked, "Where is Jesus in all of this?"; two others "felt that Jesus had not been pointed out to be at the center of the process," but that the remaining five groups, which were very affirming, had faith that the entire process had as its motivation Jesus, and him, alone at the center. The conference ended with the eucharist celebrated by the Presiding Bishop. Brother enjoyed being a part of the conference.... I am sure that the road to Detroit, rocky as it may be, is that much easier because we are traveling with the Holy Spirit as our guide.*

PHILADELPHIA

Postulant Christopher Stephen attended a conference, "Preserving Our Historic Religious Properties," as part of his work on sacred site conservancy. Topics included the nature of religious community, legal issues surrounding landmark designation, and aspects of financial and technical assistance. While in Philadelphia, he visited the First Baptist Church, the Arch Street Methodist Church, and Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church.

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

Br. Thaddeus David Williams attended diocesan convention as an alternate delegate for St. Matthew's, Sunbury. + + + Br. Thaddeus David is now a licensed lay eucharistic minister.

VIRGINIA

Brs. John E. Nidecker and Edward Munro attended the diaconal ordination service at Tnaro Church. + + + Br. Thomas Martin Little has been promoted to Master Sergeant, uSMC.

ROCKVILLE MD

Province HI brothers were joined by the Rev. Henry Fukui, provincial chaplain, for a quiet day which ended in a birthday party for the good father. Barbara Munro, Br. Edward's wife, baked the birthday cake.

HARRISBURG IL

Br. Michael David Elveistrom has completed a set of white vestments for the newly built chapel at the University of Portland, Oregon. He was recently feted at a garden party by three of the missions with which he works, in thanksgiving for his ministry. Mrs. Marie Bauman supplied the beautiful garden locale. In the photograph are members of the team, ministry from the three missions of St. Stephens, Harrisburg; St. James, McLeansboro; and St. James, Mahon. Martha Ferguson, Fr. James McEvers, Fr. Keith Roderick, Linda Nelson, and Br. Michael David. The chasubles and altar cross are Michael David originals. □



Companions' Corner

Companion Fred Duncanson writes:

I am one of those rare creatures known as a 'cradle Episcopalian' — I have been active in the church for as long as I can remember. I attended college at M.I.T. and medical school at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York City ... I am now an assistant professor of medicine at New York Medical College and co-chief of infectious diseases at Metropolitan Hospital Center, New York City.

I attended the Institute of Theology at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and I am now an M.Div. student at New York Theological Seminary. I am a candidate for ordination in the diocese, and an active lay reader and chalice bearer at Grace Church, White Plains.

I believe that I am called by God to be an instrument of his healing love and grace through the art and science of medicine, through prayer, and through the laying on of hands. I believe that God is broad enough to use any and all means to heal the people God loves. I want to be... an instrument of his healing. I believe in the healing power of *the eucharist* and have witnessed the power of prayer in God's healing. I feel especially called to minister to those who suffer from AIDS. AIDS is truly one of the greatest evils Satan has inflicted on humankind, and I trust in God for its cure.

Another Companion of the Brotherhood with an active ministry is Grosvenor Calkins, of Boston; or, as we know him, "Grove." He is an organist and musician, is busy in many ways, and is a dedicated helper. His motto might be the title of a local radio program, for which he is co-host 'As Young As You Feel.' Besides being organist at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Boston, he is a visitor and music maker at the Sherrill House Nursing Home, plays for the weekly midday service in the Tremont Temple Baptist Church Memorial Chapel, and for the Women's Church Service League, Grace Church, Newton. He is on the faculty of the Community Music Center of Boston, instructor in organ, and library arranger. He also teaches at the Boston V. A. Medical Center, and keeps his fingers nimble as typist at the Newton Free Library.

So, hats off to a pair 'of willing, active workers in the vineyard! Anyone desiring further information on the Brotherhood's Companion program should write to

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