

October 1987

#115

For the 20th Sunday after Pentecost -- Matthew 22.34-40

—What is the greatest commandment?—

Once the Pharisees were meeting with Jesus . One of them , who was a lawyer, put a question to Jesus in this way . 'Master, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'

That lawyer must have thought he had Jesus on the spot. I can just see the rest of the troops standing by, looking on and ready to pounce on every word that Jesus spoke.

But Jesus, who had always put the element of love first in his way of life, may have leaned back and smiled -- not a smile of contempt, but a smile of caring and sharing this part of the Law with these people. His answer. 'Love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. And love your neighbor as yourself.'

'Love God -- with heart , soul and mind.' In this day and age, how does this fit in? "All your heart ...' If you think of the heart as the very core or essential part of our being , then to give love is to give this essential part or Gore back to God on the Lord's Days. I say *days* because each day we live is the Lord's.

'With all your soul. . .' What is the soul? The soul is the unseen thread that binds the physical matter and the spiritual nature together, the very thread of life itself. It is our lifeline to God the Father, given us by God the Son, in whom is life. We must reveal the love of God that is shown to us, shining in the depths of our soul.

With all your mind ... a Because we have free will , we have the ability to direct our wills in loving ways. No matter what we do, or how we think, or pray, we must pray with our whole being -- heart, soul and mind, created by God.

Think about Jesus on his way to Jerusalem, on his way willingly to endure rejection, humiliation, and death, so that our sins might be forgiven. His selfless act of infinite love -- there is no greater love — guarantees our forgiveness through that love. We must learn to put love first in heart , soul and mind.

'Love your neighbor as yourself.' My neighbor and myself are equals . My rights are not over my neighbor's rights, nor my neighbor's over mine. We must treat one another as members of God's family . We can not hold things against one another and think we still are in love, with each other or with God.

It is God's nature to pour out love on us: 'From that fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.' (*John 1:16*) In love, God created us; in love, provides for us; in love, redeems us; in love, grants us eternal life! 'Grace upon grace! Overflowing love! *That* is the greatest commandment. o

Br . Bernard Francis LaReau serves at St . Luke's, Madison , Wisconsin, as acolyte master and member of the Shepherd Program . He is on the leadership team for the Diocese of Milwaukee for a pilot project for the Episcopal Church's study of the Catechumenate . At General Chapter he was appointed to the Brotherhood's Council, and is Director of Companions for the community .

Perambulations of the Principal: Caracas , Venezuela

July took me to Caracas for the ordination and consecration of the Rev. Onell A . Soto as Bishop of Venezuela. I was privileged to serve as master of ceremonies as well as deputy registrar of the General Convention. Preparation began weeks before, when the Letters of Consecration were ordered . These consist of a sheepskin parchment, which is given to the new bishop, and one of paper which is sent to the Archives in Texas. These documents, with sealing wax, a stove and a pot are brought to the site of the consecration. And so, armed *with these tools*, I made my way to Caracas .



The great service was held at the Iglesia Santa Maria . Many of those present had never witnessed the consecration of a bishop and it was exciting to be involved in setting up the space and assisting in the translation of the canonical testimonials into Spanish.

There were sixteen bishops present , and Lutheran, United Church of Christ, Baptist, and Methodist ecumenical guests were joined by Roman Catholic Archbishop Gonzalez of Venezuela . The strong faith of the local participants was evident. Three young people traveled eight hours in a country bus -- just for the joy of being there!



The weather could not have been clearer. The church was decorated with arrangements of local anthuriums and orchids. Music was provided by the *Agrupacion Choral*, and they were wonderful. The service was followed by a reception on the lawn, and consisted of a traditional Venezuelan meal — shredded, spiced beef, plantains , rice and beans, and flan for dessert .

Excitement and joy prevailed. The presence of Bishop Soto's mother and father , who had come from Cuba , added to the joyful experience. I am honored to have been there and to have been able to share with the good people of this beautiful country. I pray God will bless the ministry of Onell Soto among the people of Venezuela . -- RTB

COMMUNITY NOTES

General Chapter 1987 — Graymoor Friary , Garrison New York

General Chapter is an annual time for the members of the Brotherhood to gather for prayer and fellowship. This year, Chapter was a week long, and included a series of meditations on the vows, and on what it means to be a religious brother in the latter half of the twentieth century . Chapter was held at the Graymoor foundation of the Society of the Atonement. It was here that Father Paul Wattson and Mother M. Lurana White founded religious communities in the Episcopal Church, which later were to seek corporate reunion with the Roman Catholic Church. The emphasis at Graymoor is ecumenism, and we, as Episcopalians, were warmly welcomed by the Atonement Friars and Sisters, who still hold a special place in their hearts for their Anglican roots. While at Graymoor, we shared several significant events in our communities' lives . We were more than guests/hosts — we were brothers and sisters and friends.

Three days of Chapter were spent in part on meditations on the vows . Presentations -- by Brs. Thomas Joseph Ross, William E. Bunting and Roy Tobin — were introduced with readings from Benedict, Francis de Sales and Meister Eckhart, and concluded with selections from Thomas Merton and Rene Bozarth. Lively discussions followed, and it became clear to all of us that the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, far from being outmoded, are capable of giving new answers to every age, so long as they are liberated from merely external observance.

Another guided workshop was a response to the Superior General's charge of last year, to study and respond to a scriptural passage (Matthew 9:35--10:42) and examine four aspects of the religious charism: bridge builder and friend, proclaimer, healer and harvester. Out of the workshop, the group leaders (Novice Br. Edward Ramon Riley, and Brs. Tobias Stanislas Haller, Bernard Fessenden, and Bernard Francis LaReau) put together this statement:

To be a brother is to be a bridge builder and friend. Brothers build bridges between and with others . They assume a relationship with God, that allows God's Holy Spirit to be the bricks and mortar of a living bridge . Brothers build bridges, and then cross them, moving on to other streams . They cross the bridges, and they allow others to cross over to them.

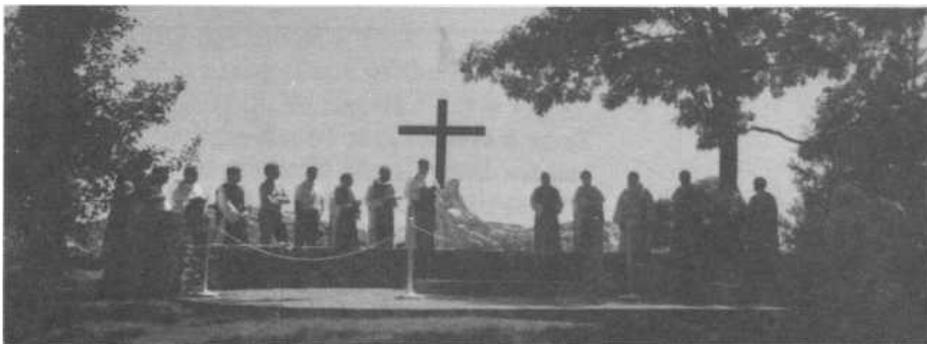
To be a brother is to be a proclaimer. Brothers are open to the Holy Spirit in their lives and works. They listen, and then have the faith to proclaim what they hear in a spirit of love. They trust in God, and do not fear to speak as God gives them utterance.

To be a brother is to be a healer. Brothers plant seeds of healing to which God gives growth _ Brothers set bones and bandage wounds, but it is God who heals. The act of reaching out, the planting of the seed, may not bear fruit for many years , and the brother may never know the importance of his actions; but in humility and trust he moves on to bandage other wounds, to touch other hurts .

To be a brother is to be a harvester. One sows, another reaps, and brothers are co-workers with each other and with God. The brothers' harvest may be in witnessing, in facilitating, in gathering. Brothers gather the seed that may be used for food, or for another crop .

Our presence at Graymoor was more than just a use of "the plant," and we are grateful that while at the Friary we were able to experience some of the life of the Atonement family , and have them share with us . Early in the week, one of the oldest members of the Society of the Atonement, Fr . John Baptist Schaad, died, and many of our brothers attended the vigil service. He was 95, and had been 62 years in profession. We couldn't help thinking that, in a few days, two of our

General Chapter 1987 - A Week in Pictures



A noonday prayer for ecumenism at the tomb of Fr. Paul .

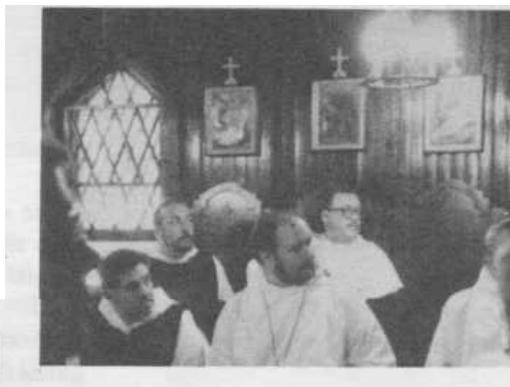


*Novices William Edward Orce .
Ciaran Anthony Deia Fera,
and Christopher Ste^phen Jenks .*



During an afternoon break.

*Brs . Bernard Francis (kneeling) and George
are commissioned by the Superior General*



*The brothers visit the
original Sisters' Chapel .*

*Br William is presented by the Provincials ,
before making his life vows of profession.*





Linda Marie Peters is admitted as postulant in the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory.



Br. . Ciaran Anthony is vested in the novice habit .



Brothers were attentive to Br. Thomas Joseph's presentation on obedience.



A lively discussion during the workshop on the vows

The Superior General's homily at the festival eucharist .



The meeting of General Chapter .





Labeling the September issue of The Servant ,



*Br. Christopher
Stephn enjoys a coffee
break .*

*Br. Michael David Elvestrom,
Richard Thomas Biernacki, and William E . Buniing.*



own brothers would be lying prostrate -- in preparation for their making of vows — in the same chapel where Fr. John Baptist's body was lying in state.

Another event in the life of the Atonement community, in which several of our brothers shared, was the profession of two Sisters of the Atonement, Gail Pasiuk and Ann McGurty . Atonement community members also shared in our liturgies, and were in attendance on the afternoon of the 15th of August, for the Festival Eucharist of St . Mary the Virgin, at which Br. William made his life profession of vows and Br. Michael David Elvestrom his first profession of annual vows .

Some musical cross-fertilization took place, too: Atonement Fr. Jeremiah asked for a copy of our " Peoples Communion Anthem" tape (a meditative piece by Br. Tobias Stanislas) and in return shared with us a tape of the "Jeans Prayer Mantra" by Fr. Louis Savary, S.J. , which is used by the Atonement community .

Other changes in the life of the Brotherhood also took place, some sad, and others more joyous. Postulant James Robert Davis, of Luray VA, announced his intention to withdraw from the postulancy; and the Brotherhood Council approved the release from life vows of Jason Jude Schellas and Anthony Francis Tornabene, with the consent of the Visitor, Bishop Paul Moore, Jr .

On a happier note — in addition to Br . William's life profession and Br. Michael David's first profession — Christopher Stephen Jenks, Ciaran Anthony Dells Fora, and William Edward One were received as novices . Council advised the creation of a "Western Province" to include all brothers not currently in Provinces I, II or III. Br. Thomas Joseph was appointed Provincial for this area, and will no doubt be doing a good bit of traveling in the near future' Br. William retired as Provincial II, and the Superior General appointed Br . George Keith to this position. He also appointed Br . Bernard Francis to fill the Council position vacated by Anthony Francis . Council also voted to make the third quarter Brotherhood Tithe Grant to St . Monica's Home, Roxbury MA.

Following an old established tradition (of at least five years) the Superior General named several new "Friends of the Brotherhood": the Most Rev. Edmond L. Browning, the Rt. Rev. Charles Judson Child, Jr. , the Rt. Rev. James D. Warner, the Rt . Rev. James W. Montgomery, and the Rev. Richard E. Downing.

Chapter actions included the election of Br. Bernard to fill the position on Council vacated by Br. Thomas Joseph,. who now holds a Council position ex officio as Provincial West . Chapter also approved the creation of the "Br. John E. Nidecker Continuing Education Scholarship Fund," which will be used to provide financial assistance to brothers enrolled in courses or programs designed to enhance their ministry. Anyone wishing to contribute to this fund may send a check to the Brotherhood .

Chapter was also a time for prayer and worship: the daily and festival eucharists were celebrated by Novice Br. Edward Ramon; and the four daily offices were sung in various chapels and on the grounds of the Ecumenical Center, including vespers in the Byzantine Chapel of the Holy Spirit, and a noonday gathering at Fr . Paul's tomb.

But a high point for the week was Morning Prayer in the original "postulants' chapel" of the Atonement Friary, during which Linda Marie Peters was admitted as the first postulant of the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory .

We are grateful for the time we spent together . But as friars committed to apostolic activity in the Church and in the world, we left Graymoor rejoicing in, and strengthened by, the power of the Spirit to guide us in our lives and works.

