
The Servant

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Founder's Forum

Reaching the end of your cincture

As many of you know, a great deal of the tradition and custom of the Brotherhood comes from our association with the Visitation Nuns in our early years. One of the traditions of that order was—and still is—the Superior's Conference. Usually given in person, these were talks on various subjects, mostly based on either the rule of the community or the Scriptures. This custom has been continued in the Brotherhood of St. Gregory, the spiritual offspring of the Visitation order.

These Conferences are given to the brothers by mail as they are needed (or as I am inspired). What follows is an adaptation of my Conference of April 1988.

Especially in these times, whenever we hear about poverty we either think of the poor among us or those people in long black robes, living with neither money or possessions or any of the other amenities of life. Let no one tell you that poverty is easy to live with "in the world." We are all stewards of our time and talents and gifts and possessions. Our Patron, St. Gregory the Great, said that we could and should use what God has given us but we must never count it as our own; it is simply here for us to use, share, and enjoy as stewards.

Overextension is a word used these days by many people, both in the church and the world. Granted, many of us are in positions where we have no choice. Our work demands this kind of overextension—the job has to be done. It takes a while to reach the end of our rope, but the end comes and I believe there are several telltale signs to note:

You are doing everything in your parish or mission or cathedral. We hear phrases like "there just aren't enough people here anymore" and "it's always the same people running the Church Fair" and "where are the new choir members." The problem here is that we who serve—clergy and lay—reinforce this notion by continuing to do all the work ourselves. We protect our turf—meaning well but blindly depriving others of the chance to serve.

Out of this comes our actually thinking that no one else can do this difficult work. We see this in our offices, in our clubs and organizations. Whenever it happens it often reaches the point that no one *will* come forward and volunteer. We remove any and all opportunities for new persons to get involved. We choke ministry.

Your stewardship is to God, the giver of *all* you have. But that stewardship mandates care for yourself as well—your body and soul—and care that you do not become the *only* one "who can do the job." Poverty mandates that we take time to renew our energies to re-create. This means letting go.

Vows of poverty are not owned by religious. All of us should live in the spirit of poverty by virtue of our baptism. Taking care of ourselves really means that we are no use to anyone and to God if we are worn out and exhausted. We need to look at the total picture and re-assess what we are doing.

0 Pull back from the committees and let someone bring a fresh approach to the work.

0 Take a Sunday off every once in a while and visit another parish.

While poverty (and chastity) imply care for ourselves as well as others, we also need to allow others to learn what we know so they can take over what we do and we can rest and be re-charged.

Don't think for a moment that we as religious are exempt from grappling with this issue. As I mentioned earlier, this Conference was given to the brothers last month. Why? Because several of us—myself included—need to hear these words. We need to step back and let go so that others may serve and grow and learn.

May God give us strength and vision to look beyond the veil of obligation to the open portal of devotion, so that we may truly serve the needs of the church and the world. —RTB

Retreat and advance

"Come with *me* by yourselves, to some lonely place where you can rest quietly." (For they had no leisure even to eat, so many were coming and going.)—Mark 6.31

Br. William Francis Jones is a volunteer crisis intervention worker for Covenant House's Nineline. This is a runaway hotline, intended to prevent running away by helping callers see the alternatives. Nineline also helps runaways get shelter or in touch with those agencies that can help them return home.

We all need retreat time—time to get away from it all. Time to get right with God without interference.

The passage from Mark's Gospel can be seen as a comparison between the feeding of the five thousand and the eucharist, Christ giving himself under the form of bread, making five loaves feed five thousand. But at another level it tells a story of disciples going on retreat, only to find themselves in the middle of ministry.

So here are the apostles getting ready for a retreat in the desert. Picture Simon Peter, reflecting about the time to be spent away. Scorching sun, swirling sands, surreptitious scorpions. Great. Makes you want to run right out into the desert. But Jesus would be with them. He would compensate for anything they lacked, and Peter knew this.

However, God had other plans. No quiet desert retreat this time. As they set out toward the desert, some of the people who were following Jesus saw them leaving, and decided to follow on the land as Jesus and the apostles sailed off to that desolate place. There goes the retreat!

As they came ashore, Jesus' heart went out to the crowd. He taught them, giving himself to

them, showing them the Father. When it starts to get late, the apostles suggest that he send them off to the farms to get food, but Jesus feels for the crowds and doesn't want to send them away empty.

Jesus starts out with the five loaves and two fish and has the apostles feed the crowd. When all have eaten their fill, the apostles collect twelve baskets full of scraps—one for each apostle!

We do see the vision of the Holy Eucharist in this story: the blessing, the breaking and the sharing of the bread. We also see the bounty of the Lord. They had less than enough even for the Twelve, but when shared there was an abundance for five thousand and twelve.

But we also see that there is no retreat from ministry. We are to be ready to share our ministry—to teach, to give of ourselves when and where the need arises. We must follow God's priorities, not our own. We may seem exhausted, with hardly enough to accomplish the task, but in sharing the gifts we will find basketsful left over and to spare.

As Jesus gives himself to us, we are called to share *him* in ministry. In sharing we will find we can never exhaust the source of our strength.

A letter from the director of Companions

Companions' Corner

Yes, the big move went very well without much trouble. Thanks be to God, who has helped out once again with a little pleading on my part. All things came together without any big problems. God has been good to me—no doubt about it.

I'm waiting on a phone call from a friend. Her husband went off on a trip for their church. He is to return home by ambulance. We are waiting together. She's not an Episcopalian, but calls me now and then when she needs someone to talk to. We watched, we waited and *did we pray!* God willing, things will turn out o.k.

Little things are what we as brothers and Companions can help our neighbors with. Lend an ear and give some time when someone else is in need. That's what God calls us to do when we least expect it. My schedule is full, but still I sit and wait with a friend in need.

We often say in prayer, "Things done and left undone ..." What are we when we can't go that extra step in Christ—when a person only wants us to listen, watch and wait with them?

I feel that to do this for those in need is a true way to serve our Lord Jesus. I heard a priest once say, just before going out to celebrate the eucharist, "If I had to leave today there is nothing that wouldn't carry on without me." Now, at this parish there are many programs that relate to the lay ministers. The priest has worked hard to get the parish to use this method of shared responsibility. This put me to thinking.

A parent of one of my past year students came into my classroom at the public school where I teach, and asked, "Does God make a difference in our life? I see God makes a difference in *your* life. Look at the way you helped my *stupid* son. Why? Why? Why can't I do the same?"

We talked for over an hour and a half that day. Now both parents meet with me on Saturdays every other week and talk about you-know-who—God. I've no idea where this will lead, but it has to bring them closer to God. I pray for them daily and ask them to do the same for me.

My dear Companions, Christ has taught us to love. "Give until it hurts." That doesn't mean the pocketbook, but things money can't buy:

0 Love of God—Purity of heart
Peace with oneself—Faith in God—Willingness to serve—Understanding of others—Just plain love

Questions: If God's love were to shine through you, what would you see? What would another person see? Would we have a good picture to look at? Where does God let love shine through? Does God include and embrace people in high positions, or people without positions?

It is my feeling that God works through all of this, without a selection process or a method of measure. "Love one another as God has loved you." If we do not know God then how can we know how much God loves us?

Find God—let the love shine within and through you each day of your blessed life—for you, for the world, and for God.

Br. Bernard Francis
LaReau is the
Brotherhood's director
of Companions.

Here and there with the Brotherhood (& Companion Sisterhood)...

Community Notes

Province I

Br. Christian Williams hosted a provincial gathering at his home in Manchester NH. Also attending were the Superior General, and the Rev. David Henritzky.

Br. Laurence Andrew Keller has been visiting various parishes in the Boston area, and attending monthly meetings of the Boston AIDS Action Committee Pastoral Concerns Committee. He also attended the annual diocesan altar guild meeting.

Br. Roy Tobin is co-chair for the South Shore AIDS Project; he has started a new job working with mentally retarded adults. He was joined by Br. Donovan Aidan Bowley in taking part in the Good Friday Liturgy at SSJE, Cambridge. Donovan Aidan is involved with diocesan District 18 and the Iona Cornerstone Board.

Br. Matthew Staples was reader and chaliceist at his brother Richard's wedding to Margery Ann Purtz, at St. Paul's, Lynnfield MA.

Province II

Br. James E. Teets was subdeacon at the ordination-anniversary eucharist for two of his colleagues at the Episcopal Church Center: the Rev. Canon Burgess Carr and the Rev. Brian Grieves, whose anniversaries fall on the same date. Br. Richard Thomas Biernacki provided music for the service, as organist in the Chapel of Christ the Lord.

This was a reprise of the parts Richard Thomas and James played a week earlier at the annual Ingathering of the United Thank Offering at the

Church Center. This service came in the middle of a week during which the UTO Committee worked on the 1988 grants list. We are pleased and "thankful" to say the Brotherhood Vestment Exchange is a grant recipient this year.

When Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu of Cape Town visited "815" recently he was guest preacher at a festive eucharist celebrated by Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning. The Superior General was again on the organ bench and James was consultant to the sacristy staff.

Br. Tobias Stanislas Haller preached at the Church Center—his first sermon delivered there—filling in for the Presiding Bishop at the service marking the beginning of the World Council of Churches' "Decade for Churches in Solidarity with Women." He was involved in planning Episcopal participation in the Decade—including writing "Easter Reflections" for the current *Journal of Women's Ministries*.

The annual meeting of the Catholic Fellowship of the Episcopal Church was held in late May. CFEC is devoted to the catholic tradition of Anglicanism, and the authority of the church to articulate a living doctrine, discipline and worship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. At the meeting, the Rev. Richard E. Downing, long-time friend of the Brotherhood, resigned as president, and Tobias Stanislas was elected; James was elected treasurer. In the evening, Tobias Stanislas gave an address on the history, theology, and sociology of the religious life, focusing on current renewal and revival efforts.

Br. Charles Kramer has been elected to the Congregational Council of Trinity Church, Wall Street, which is involved with matters of parish



Br. James (r) with Bishop J. Antonio Ramos, formerly of Costa Rica, now assistant for Hispanic affairs in the Diocese of New York, and associate director for the Latin America and Caribbean Office at the NCCC. Bishop Ramos was celebrant at the Easter Vigil at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields. [Photo by Cindy Beal]

life, including Christian education, stewardship, outreach, and liturgy. Charles acted as thurifer for the Ascension Day service presided over by the new Coadjutor Bishop of Long Island, Orris G. Walker, Jr. Br. John Francis Jones was on hand with his security crew.

Br. William E. Bunting attended the requiem for former Archbishop of Canterbury Arthur Michael Ramsey, at St. Thomas Church, Manhattan. William is going on sabbatical after almost 40 years' service at St. Andrew's Church, Bronx. He will be visiting other parishes and taking "time to reflect ... to think, to recharge, and to contemplate other fields to which the Holy Spirit may direct" his ministry. In his farewell to St. Andrew's, he said, "I have often kidded you about this being my last Sunday

when I was about to leave on vacation. I have often said to you that someday Br. William will leave St. Andrew's. That time has now come. You will be in my prayers and I hope I will be in yours ... God love you!"

Postulant Clare Connell celebrated her birthday with a gathering in Lakehurst NJ, to which several of the area brothers, and novice Sr. Linda Marie Peters (from Chicago) came. A side trip was made to the hangar which once housed the airship Hindenburg. How big is it? It makes the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine look cozy!

Province III and the Southeast

Since arriving in Raleigh NC, Br. John Peter Clark has begun to put down roots. He met with Bishop Robert W. Estill, and the Rev. Dr. Cyril C. Burke, chaplain at St. Augustine's College, where John Peter has joined the congregation.

Br. Michael David Elvestrøm has been painting and printing up a hurricane in Tampa FL, and had a work exhibited in a Florida Center for Contemporary Art show. His *Christus Rex* now hangs in the recently renovated chapel of the Episcopal Center of the University of South Florida, which just celebrated its 25th anniversary. The photo above shows the icon and white marble altar. Michael David did a television interview on his life as a brother/artist, illustrated with his icons and vestments.

Br. Luke Anthony Nowicki attended a special service on the healing ministry at which the Rev. Herbert O'Driscoll spoke. In June, Luke Anthony will begin a part time job as sexton at Mt. Calvary Parish, Camp Hill PA.

Br. Michael David is not baking, but applying ink to a lithograph stone in the university art studio.

