

We are a church with much to offer, yet we seem to be content to discuss the same things over and over. What's worse, when we do make a decision, we then invent ways around it. I may be treading on some toes here, but that seems to be one of my strong suits. If the Brotherhood hadn't made noise in 1982 there wouldn't now be a canon covering all religious communities. We have said, "Religious are dangerous" and in that role I feel I must speak out for those who still remain outcasts. Some are gay, some lesbian, and some are ordained women.

We Episcopalians want a church of ease. We want a church which will allow conscience clauses to get around the very canons we spend so much time, effort, and money in passing. Conscience clauses for some, at least... Because gays, lesbians, and women clergy are stuck in the back of the bus as the church's last niggers.

These gay deacons, priests and bishops—yes, some of the clergy actually are gay—have buried our dead; visited our sick and dying; baptized and confirmed our children and bound them in marriage; and ordained other clergy, gay and strait. Yet we continue to insist that the union of man and woman is the only way to have a meaningful relationship; and we deny that homosexuals are fit to minister. Jesus was single and chose to remain so. Was he less fulfilled or less human? Were his relationships without meaning? As we all stand under the judgment of that man who forgave everything, I cannot understand how anyone can have the chutzpa to line up, stones ready to throw!

In 1976 this church of ours changed its canons to permit the ordination of women. As the saying goes, "It isn't just a good idea. It's the law!" Why then are we still discussing what has already been done? Why are we developing

new ways to avoid the issue? Conscientiousness should be exercised in obeying and not in denying the canons of the church. If we truly believe the discipline of the Episcopal Church is contained in its canons, why continue to seek ways to get around them? Surely those whose consciences are tender should consider this well before making ordination vows!

We live by a double standard. We pamper the consciences of those few who will not accept the decision of the overwhelming majority. At the same time a sizable population of active Episcopalians is disenfranchised and excluded from full participation in the church—and not by canon, either the effort to canonize the exclusion of gays from the ordination process was defeated in Detroit. Maybe if there were a canon prohibiting the ordination of homosexuals there would be a conscience clause to ignore that, too!

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Gays and lesbians are, have been, and will continue to be servants of the church, some of them ordained. Women will continue to be ordained and soon, thanks be to God, they will enter the episcopate and share their gifts in the junior house of General Convention.

I pray for the day that the General Convention will get on to the real work of building up the church for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or their sex. Making all things new means just that—all things—even those which have been here since the beginning of time. RTB

For the 20th Sunday after Pentecost—Mark 10.17-31

The rich young man

Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Br Bernard Francis LaReau is a special needs teacher and computer cadre person for the Madison (Wisconsin) Metropolitan Schools. He is on mission to St. Luke's Church, for which he is acolyte master and a member of the Spiritual Life Committee. He serves the Brotherhood as director of Companions, and as a member of Council.

The story about the rich young man is one of my favorites. We find a freshness and vitality to it that brings us very close to the reality of living. As in many fine literary accounts, there is an economy of words in its telling. First, the sense of urgency—Mark writes, "A man ran up"—he is in a big hurry. There was an attitude of reverence—he "knelt" before Jesus and addressed him, "Good Teacher." The question he asked was basic—"What must I do to inherit eternal life?" And the response of Jesus is moving; Mark says Jesus held up obedience to God's law with obvious humility. The young man replied, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth."

The Gospel writer gives a touching insight: "Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.'" However, this story seems to end on a sad note, as Mark concludes, "At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions."

Call this response meaningless, emptiness, or even spiritual poverty. Call it whatever you will! I call it the sin of denial. There are many

who will read this who are also rich in earthly possessions, status in life, and popularity, but they find something missing and they know it all too well. They have permitted their lives to become lives of denial of God's will.

I have listened to people speak to me about not liking organized religion. Isn't this statement a denial? Are they forgetting the fact that, even on the natural plane, life is organized? A family is organized. Government is organized. We as humans must have some organization in our lives. The denial of life's main commitments can ultimately become a rough sea of chaos. Certainly I am not urging hasty, ill-thought-through decisions, nor denial which turns to indecision. (I usually sin with the latter.) But strive for a spiritual sense of purpose.

Yes, "Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor...and come, follow me." Why did this make the young man so sorrowful? Could it be that the young rich man may have put the cart before the horse? He upheld all of the laws, but did he do so for the right reason? Was his purpose right? Could it be that one, like the rich young man, could do all that God asks and still not have the true humble purpose of love for the Creator at heart?

Kerygma Komer

Tradition II: The New Pharisees

Gamaliel the Pharisee reasoned: "That which is of God will endure." (Acts 5) The rabbi meant well by this; but it isn't a useful tool in discernment. Much that is not of God has survived a good many years, while good things seem to pass away. Only when we have reached the Last Day will we be able to look back and see what has prevailed. For the present, the attitude of "watchful waiting" or "constructive engagement" usually proves to be destructive.

In the first part of this article, we examined the difference between tradition and custom. Few doctrines have been "handed down" (that's what *tradition* means) from the earliest days of the church. These have been established in the Creeds. The customs of the church, on the other hand, vary over the years, and usually involve discipline, not doctrine. Articles XX and XXXIV of the Articles of Religion set the limits of the church's power to define tradition and custom: the church can not impose as necessary to salvation what is not supported by Scripture, but it can require for good order that which does not conflict with Scripture.

This means that traditions which do not derive from Scripture can be changed by the authority of the church. Tradition itself is not—and cannot be—a source of authority, nor can it stand as a reason not to change. To argue that "tradi-

tion offers no precedent" for a given change is to argue that one can't do something new because it has never been done before: which is tautology, not reason. It is meaningless to argue, "You can't paint the wall red because it's always been white."

Tradition is not the code of accepted actions, but the expression of the church's exercise of authority over time. Authority resides in the living body of the church, not in the codified record of laws. Only the "law of the Medes and Persians cannot be revoked." (Daniel 6.8) *Stare decisis* is not an end in itself: precedent may guide, but it ought not bind.

We find this uncomfortable. We want things set in stone; we want unchanging codes, not the *ad hoc* approach the Holy Spirit seems to call for. When we give in to these feelings we become the New Pharisees.

In general, the Pharisees get a bad press. They meant well. They wanted to protect the Law by building a fence around it, to see to it that the Law was kept pure and undefiled. What they lost sight of was that the end of the Law was not the Law, but God. Like the man who buried his master's gold in the ground, thinking he was doing a good job by keeping it safe, the Pharisees missed the point that the Law was not there merely to exist, but to promote justice and charity, mercy and righteousness. The Law was not meant to become in itself an object of devotion and debate.

The word *hypocrite* has come to mean "one who doesn't practice what he preaches." But when Christ applied it to the Pharisees he meant, "someone who loves to argue about the Law rather than obey it." The leaven of the Pharisees—which is hypocrisy (Luke 12:1)—expands the Law, causing it to rise like bread, with the gaseous bubbles of debate.

While orphans starved and widows wandered homeless, while the lame and blind went begging, while disaster struck, the rabbinic debates went on: Why was this man born blind? Was it his parents' sin, or his? How did the people of Siloam sin to cause the collapse of that tower? Why do you not wash your hands properly? Why do you eat with sinners? Why do you dare to forgive sins? Where did you get the authority to do these things?

Does this sound familiar? Examine the major accusations made by our Lord against the Pharisees, and see that they still apply, God forgive us, to the church: we stand in judgment (John 8.3-15); and we replace God's will with our traditional understanding of it (Mark 7.1-13).

The Pharisees of Jesus' time were obsessed with issues of Sabbath and diet, while today's Pharisees seem obsessed with sex and sexuality. It is amazing that a subject which occupied so little of Jesus' time should occupy so much of ours. Shouldn't that give us a clue? If our Lord had been so concerned with sex and sexuality, could he not have made himself more clear on the subject?

I earnestly pray that the church will use the authority given it to fulfill the commands of Christ: to forgive, to heal, to love. It is not the primary function of the church to set up codes of proper and improper behavior. That is a job for the Pharisees; they seem to be still busily at work. Jesus used his authority to go beyond the Law, to protect what the Law was meant to

protect: human beings, their lives, their souls. The Pharisees saw the Law as an end in itself. They resolutely stood, guarding the door to heaven, checking the credentials of all who tried to enter. They didn't hear it when the door closed shut behind them. —TSH

In defense of orthodoxy

Some bishops will go very far to protect what they consider to be traditional teaching on sexuality. Even the unconscious use of ancient heresies seems not to be beyond them.

In *The Servant #116* we discussed the error implicit in Bishop Sims' statement that "the divine image in humanity is incomplete without both man and woman." This form of Arianism denies that the individual human being is a bearer of the divine image.

Bishop of Eau Claire William C. Wantland—better known as a canon lawyer than as a theologian—has fallen into the opposite doctrinal error. In a debate with Bishop of Newark John S. Spong, he stated, "No individual can represent the whole human race ... It is only in the conjunction of male and female that the whole human race is represented." (quoted in *The East Tennessee Episcopalian*, June/July 1988)

This astounding statement is a modern manifestation of Apollinarianism, which, like the Arian error above, undermines the doctrine of the Incarnation. Christ—an individual man who derived his complete human nature from an individual woman, Mary his mother—redeems the totality of human nature. In addition, to imply that humanity is *only* to be found in "the conjunction of male and female" denies the complete humanity of each individual person!

It is ironic that the same notion—that a man or woman alone cannot represent the human race—is used by some supporters of the ordination of women. Bishop of London Graham Leonard pointed out the falsity of this idea, in comments made after the passage of synod legislation which will eventually permit such ordinations in the Church of England.

Interestingly enough, it is the traditional doctrine of the Virgin Birth (which some liberal thinkers would like to toss out) that assures us of the totality of the human nature expressed in each individual man and woman. Adam and Christ—in fall and redemption—represent the whole human race; as does Mary the Virgin Mother, sole source of Christ's humanity.—TSH

In the next, and final section of this essay on Tradition, we will examine in depth the nature and source of authority in the church.

Well done, good and faithful servant

Br John E. Nidecker—xx VI 1988

I, John, brought to this day by the grace of God and none other, do here in the presence of God, of you, and of these my brothers, profess to follow Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and by the Holy Spirit, through the doctrines, disciplines, traditions and creeds of the church. I do hereby vow to follow, for the remainder of my natural life, the Rule of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory... I make these vows of my own desire, and here give my life over into God's hands, that by his most gracious favor I may be, with our beloved patron Gregory, a servant of the servants of God; in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.—The Rite of Life Profession

James, Fr. Fukui, John, and Tobias Stanislas, at St Anne's, in 1981



Br John E. Nidecker died of congestive heart failure on June 20, in his twelfth year of profession in the Brotherhood. At his death he was our oldest brother.

Br John was a Lay Reader for over 50 years, first in the Diocese of New York, then in the Diocese of Washington. His business career included management positions with Sun and Cities Service oil companies until, in 1969, he was appointed Special Assistant to President Nixon and later, President Ford. *The New York Times* said of him: "Mr. Nidecker touched off a major investigation of influence-peddling by South Korean officials in the 1970s. As [he] was returning from a Presidential mission to Seoul in 1974, a South Korean security officer handed him an envelope as a farewell gift... The envelope turned out to contain \$10,000 in American currency. Mr. Nidecker turned it over to the American Embassy, which returned it to President Park Chung Hee. Two years later a chain of other attempted bribes... led to a Washington scandal."

Retirement meant beginning another career—in service to the church. After making his profession in the Brotherhood he was appointed assistant superior and later served as provincial of Province III. He was the first editor of *The Servant*, and began the Brotherhood Vestment Exchange, still one of our major ministries.

Br John gave in to failing health reluctantly. In 1984 he retired from administrative responsibilities in the community. He continued the

work he had carried out for some years in a team ministry with the late Fr Henry N. Fukui, serving missions and parishes in the MD/DC/ No. VA area—Fr Fukui as celebrant and Br John as preacher, catechist, and administrator. This ministry thrived until Fr Fukui's death this spring. Br John continued to serve others during his illness, making numerous visits to hospitals and nursing homes in the Rockville area.

At a memorial service held at Christ Church, Rockville, Brs Richard Thomas Biernacki, James E. Teets, Luke Anthony Nowicki, William Francis Jones, Tobias Stanislas Haller, Thaddeus David Williams, Edward Munro and novice Br William Edward Orce joined the hundreds who came to pay their respects to a man who had touched each of their lives.



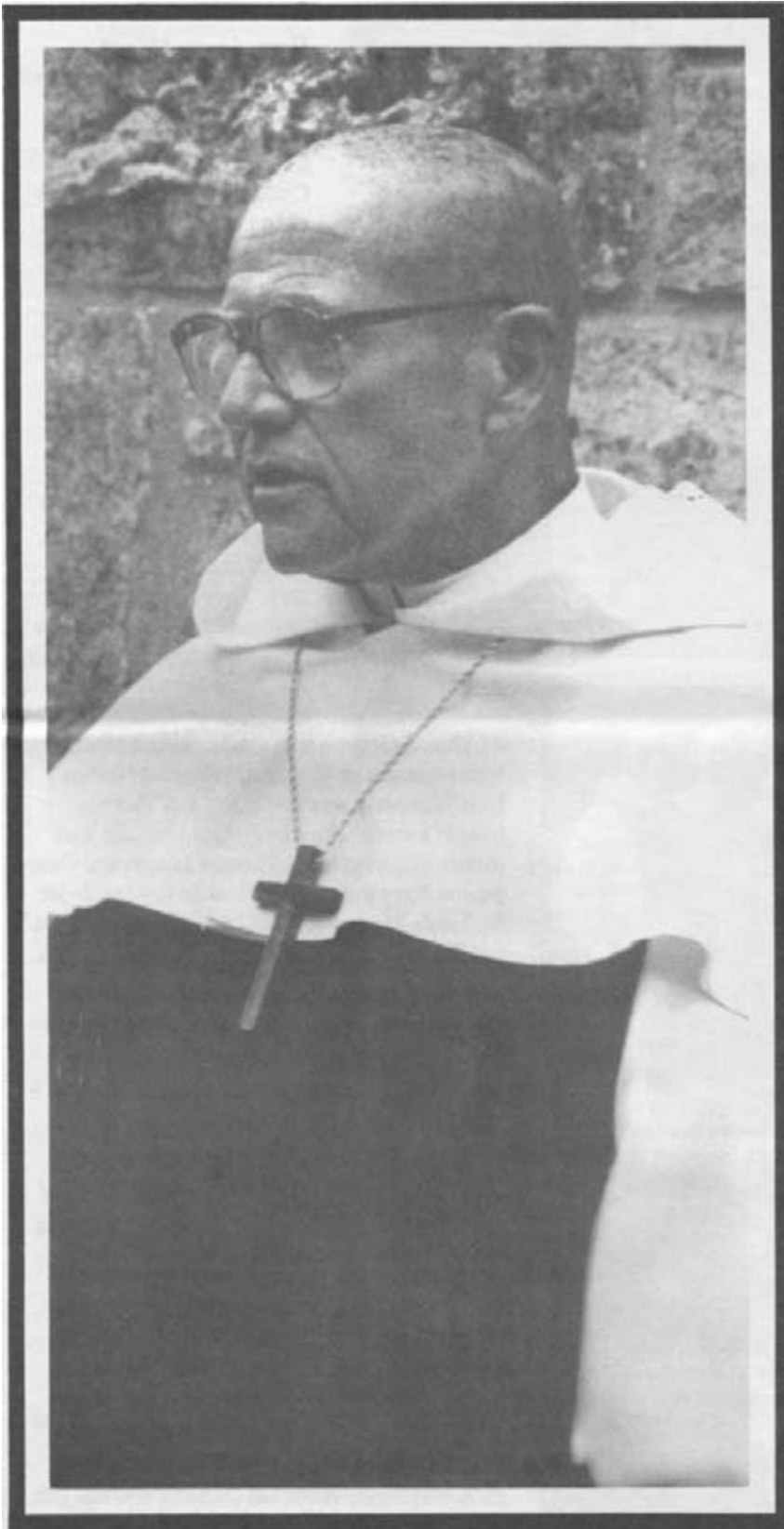
John, with Bishop of Washington John Walker and Br Edward Munro (then a novice)

At a private family service, Br John's ashes were placed in the columbarium at St Anne's Church, Damascus MD, next to those of Fr Fukui. The two had brought their team ministry to this parish in 1980-81 and, in their 18 months there, helped St Anne's to re-establish as a parish after a period on mission status.

Obituaries ordinarily close with a list of surviving family members, but Br John was not an ordinary man. He is survived by his wife, Jeanne, and two sons, Arnold and Stephen; but he is also survived by thirty brothers and two sisters in Christ, and by countless men, women, and children who loved him and whose lives were somehow made better by his presence.

Here and there with the Brotherhood...

Community Notes



Br John E. Nidecker—v VI 1988

Canada

The triennial meeting of the Conference on the Religious Life took place in Toronto, at the convent of the Sisterhood of St John the Divine. Br William Francis Jones attended as a guest representative of the Brotherhood. Workshops on peace and justice, evening socials with Bishop Frank Griswold and at Holy Cross Priory, and time for sharing with members of various Christian Communities formed much of the agenda.

Br Tobias Stanislas Haller, while in Detroit doing service in "the booth" at General Convention, was invited across the river to Windsor, Ontario, by the Rev Canon William J. Millman, and preached at his parish, St Matthew's.

Province II

Novice Br Christopher Stephen Jenks has finished his full time studies at Columbia University, and is now working for the Religious Properties Program of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, helping with a grant program and writing for *Common Bond*, a news-letter on preservation of religious buildings. In late June he gave a lecture at St Peter's Church, Manhattan, on the history of the parish and the neighborhood. The parish is celebrating its 150th consecration anniversary, and has initiated a drive for repair of the aging building. Across the river in the Diocese of Long Island, he attended the consecration of the new coadjutor, Bishop Orris Walker. Christopher Stephen currently serves at St John's, Flushing, Queens.

Br James E. Teets has completed a course in business management at N.Y.U.'s School of Continuing Education. He received an "A" as his final grade. Congratulations!

Province III

Brothers and families gathered at Br Edward Munro's home in Bowie MD for a cookout. Also present was Fr Gustavo Mansilla and his family; Kathleen, TSSF, from England; Hector Coronado; and Bruce Henger, who is in Edward's deacon training class. The brothers attended a quiet day at Christ Church, Rockville, led by Fr Mansilla. Meditations focused on "Knowing God," and "Who is my neighbor?" from a liberation theology perspective.



(above l to r) Br Edward Ramón, Alderman Eugene Schulter, and Mayor Eugene Sawyer—Arbor Day '88 (Photo: Katharine Morse-Chappell)

(right) Mother Ann and the Gregorians.

(below l to r) Kevin James, Bernard Francis, Linda Marie, Fr Olsen, Edward Ramón, and Thomas Joseph



Br Luke Anthony Nowicki staffed the School of Christian Studies booth at the Central Pennsylvania diocesan convention.

Province West

Br Edward Ramdn Riley took part as an officiant at the blessing of trees in a Chicago municipal beautification project.

Brs Thomas Joseph Ross and Bernard Francis LaReau, postulant Alan Andrew Speer and Companions Jerry Vogt and Mary Ellen Clare, attended a service at St Stephen's, Covington KY. Several weeks before, they had paid a call on Companion Kay Sturm, for an evening of fellowship. They also joined the sisters at the Convent of the Transfiguration (Cincinnati) for Evensong and supper.

Br Thomas Joseph was chalice bearer at a festival eucharist at Trinity, Covington; Bishop Don Wimberly was celebrant, and Thomas Joseph's rector, the Rev Robert Hufford, was master of ceremonies. Thomas Joseph and Companion Jerry traveled to Chicago to join novice Sr. Linda Marie Peters and postulant Clare Con-nell for Memorial Day with Br Edward Ram:n.

Postulant Alan Andrew attended the Men and Boys Breakfast at Ascension-Holy Trinity (Wyoming OH), representing his parish, Calvary Church. He also represented his parish at a conference on inclusive language.

Br Bernard Francis will be working on the Prayer Committee for the Faith Alive weekend at St Luke's (Madison WI). He is also planning to take part in the catechumenate training program being developed.

Br Kevin James Jensen hosted a gathering in Portland OR. Kevin James' rector, the Rev David Olsen, served as guide for the sights of Portland. Events included a memorial eucharist for Br John.

Br Kevin James made his Cursillo, and has just served on a diocesan team in Portland.