
The Servant

Mar/Apr '89 #125

Founders Forum

The hardest thing to take

He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. — Isaiah 53

The most cutting word in this phrase is *rejected*. We have all dealt with rejection. Turned down, turned away, dropped out, unaccepted. It implies that one is unfit, unusable.

When church folk think of rejection, they think of Jesus. Jesus knew rejection in a way we can relate to; we all know the feeling. A person in a position of leadership often knows rejection; a person in public life often knows rejection; parents, after doing all they think is right, are rejected by their children. These instances occur more often than we think.

Every nail driven into the body of Jesus deepened his compassion, made him more understanding of humanity, more inclusive in his love, more perfect in his being here and now. If you are tempted to say, "What's the use of going on when everything seems to be going against me," try saying instead, "The very time I feel most useless may be the time I am needed most." What others think of you or feel about you is not



important. What you *do* is important.

If you can accept the rejection, unfair though it seems, you will be enlarged. Gradually, the feeling that you are being rejected will be

crowded out by the conviction that God can and will use you — young or old, successful or failing, sick or well. Remember the words Jesus quoted from the Psalms: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

The stone the builders rejected became the cornerstone.

The piece of marble that Michelangelo used for the Pieta was quarried out of the highest mountains of Carrara. It was the purest and whitest — a beautiful block of marble, but one that had been, in a way, rejected. It had been ordered by someone else and never paid for and was sent to Rome to be sold to anyone who could use it. This was the stone which became one of the greatest works of art the world has ever seen. We too can be transformed into a gift to others, to be used by God.

— RTB

For the Sunday of the Resurrection: Easter Day

Heavens above

Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. — Colossians 3.2

On Good Friday we relived the sorrow, the sadness, and the grief of Jesus' death. Death is the ultimate experience of separation and broken relationship. But today we celebrate

with the women of the Easter Gospel: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James. We celebrate the great joy, the good news--Jesus Christ has risen from the dead.

This past year has been a very difficult one in the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory. We experienced the sorrow and grief of the deaths of two of our brothers, John and William. Everyone who has experienced

the grief of a loved one's death understands the devastating emotions that Jesus' mother, and the apostles, and the many followers of Jesus must have felt at his death.

Christ's resurrection brings the good news not only to the women, the disciples, and Jesus' mother, but to all of us who have experienced this seemingly ultimate broken relationship, death. Jesus' death and resurrection heals our broken relationship with God and with one another.

One of my duties as a social worker in a nursing home is to be with the residents when they experience a problem. Recently I went to see a resident I'll call Joe, a very devout Christian. Joe's children had come to tell him that his wife had died. As I entered his room, he looked up at me with tears streaming, and told me that his wife "Sally is in heaven."

I had spoken with Joe about Sally when he had first been admitted to our nursing facility. Sally was in a nursing home in another state. When Joe and Sally had both been well, they visited a friend in this other nursing home, and Sally told Joe that if she ever became seriously ill, that was the place where she wanted to receive her care. When she became seriously ill, Joe followed her wishes.

Death seems the ultimate experience of separation and broken relationship.

Sally had been ill for years, and no longer recognized members of her family, but Joe took comfort in the fact that he had done as she had wished. When he became incapacitated, he wanted to be in a



facility near his daughter and grandchildren, which is why Joe was in our facility.

This man, who *knew* with all his heart that his beloved Sally was in heaven, was crying buckets, tears streaming down his face. Why this response? The fact that his wife was no longer suffering in pain was a reason for real joy, not a reason for tears. Also, he and Sally had been separated far too long for him to be crying over their separation — the real Sally had not been available to him for years.

When I had a chance to talk with Joe, he shared the real reason with me. Joe, an invalid in a wheelchair in a nursing home in New Jersey, was feeling guilty because his wife couldn't have understood why he had not visited her during her last few days on earth. Joe knew that Sally's relationship with God was whole, even now, complete, but he feared that Sally did not understand why Joe wasn't there with her. Joe felt that Sally must think that he didn't care. Joe felt not only the separation of death, but he also felt guilty, because their relationship had been broken by circumstances beyond his control, that she couldn't understand. Sally

had died, and Joe had not been there.

Even if we understand why Joe couldn't be there for Sally, most of us also know the empty feeling of opportunities we have missed, of times we have failed to be there for others we care about, of times we have let others down, that we cannot recover now. We may forgive Joe, but it is a problem for us to forgive ourselves the same guilt that Joe felt when Sally died. And yet, the good news that we celebrate this Easter Day is that Jesus' resurrection brings life out of death, and also healing to all those relationships that have been broken in all sorts of ways. Being in the heaven that is Sally's, and the heaven that will be ours, heals our broken relationships not only with God but with one another, in ways that we cannot imagine right now. In the words of Saint Paul, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then, face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood." (1 Cor 13.11-12) Just as Sally will be fully known by Jesus in her risen life, so too, she will be able to understand and know Joe in ways that Joe cannot see yet, but will also know some day. One cannot be in God's kingdom and still hang on to childish misconceptions and resentments so common to this life. One joins God in heaven; * one also joins God in forgiveness.

In the Epistle appointed for today, Paul reminds us that the good news of Jesus' resurrection can be enjoyed right now. "Since you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." We can start right now to try to see things as God sees them. To look with eyes of understanding and love; to forgive those around us, *now*. As we forgive those around us, we start living in God's kingdom right now, because in the kingdom of God all relationships are healed and made whole. Amen.

Sr Clare Connell, n/CSSG, is a novice in the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory and a deacon in the Diocese of New Jersey, serving at St. Raphael's, Brick Town. She is director of social services at Manchester Manor, Lakehurst.

For the Fourth Sunday of Easter

Amazing grace

It is through him that everyone who has faith is acquitted of everything for which there was no acquittal under the Law of Moses. — Acts 13:39

Many years ago, I was visiting a friend of mine who was rector of a small rural parish. The doorbell rang and my friend was confronted by two Jehovah's Witnesses who wanted to share a Bible verse with him. There he stood in full clerical attire, inside a portal clearly marked "St. Mary's Rectory," right next door to a parish church building with a prominent sign, and these strangers wanted to tell *him* about the Bible! What chutzpa, we thought! They even insisted that he accept a selection of their printed material. They acted as if they were oblivious to the numerous signs and symbols of the presence of the institutional church; they were single-minded in their evangelistic purpose. When they departed we looked at each other, astounded!

One thing most people will agree about is that Saint Paul wasn't afraid to speak his mind, no matter who his audience was. The sentence which begins this article comes at the end of a speech he delivered during a Sabbath service at a synagogue in the city of Antioch (but not Antioch in Syria, the Scripture is quick to point out; this Antioch was in the country of Pisidia, in the Roman Imperial Province of Galatia, in the heartland of what is now Turkey). Paul and his

companions had arrived in town a day or two earlier, at what was to be the furthest point on his current preaching tour, and he got right into the thick of things. The president of the synagogue invited this stranger to address the congregation, apparently not knowing what he was getting into. And Paul wasted no time. In typical style he presented his hearers with a synopsis of Jewish history, culminating with the Messiah's atoning death and resurrection. They must have been astounded!

Two unrelated stories? There's more here than simply two tales which happen to have taken place on Saturday mornings. Both speak to commitment, to evangelism, and to joy: timeless concepts all. It is interesting that the translators of the New English Bible chose the word "acquitted;" other translations use "justified" or "remitted," which, to my mind, speak more to forgiveness than to the lack of guilt or wrongdoing. To be sure, forgiveness is a recurring New Testament theme, but it doesn't convey the power of acquittal. When Saint Paul stood before the congregation in Pisidian Antioch he told them, in essence, that their continued observances were unnecessary, that that for which they prayed and longed had already happened and there was

no need to act as if things hadn't changed. Astonishing news!

While I do not share most of the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses, I have long admired their zeal and commitment. How many Episcopalians would get up early each Saturday morning and take to the streets to preach salvation to the saved? It's not our Anglican way to dwell on the obvious. But it should also be obvious to us that fundamentalism, together with non-Christian religions, are gaining more and more converts each year, and these people must be converting from something else!

From the moment of his conversion onwards, Saint Paul knew he had a message to bring to the whole world; it was so obvious to him that he couldn't sit still: the Jewish Law had been fulfilled and eternal salvation was indeed possible even for those who followed pagan religions. As of that moment, every person was acquitted, found "not guilty" before God. Exciting stuff! Paul could do no less than share this wonderful, life-changing news with everyone he met — should *our* response be any different?

Br James E. Teets is a life professed member of the Brotherhood and is the community's director of public relations and treasurer. He is the administrative assistant to the executive for World Mission at the Episcopal Church Center and serves at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields, Manhattan.

Here and there with the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood

Community notes

Province II

Brs James E. Teets and Tobias Stanislas Haller attended the Albany Chapter meeting of the Catholic Fellowship of the Episcopal Church. Tobias Stanislas is national president of the organization, and was invited to speak to the group on what the organization might do, particularly in a

diocese where the bishop is a signatory of the Evangelical & Catholic Mission's "Pastoral Letter" declaring that "the Episcopal Church is in rebellion" against the God-given "Order of the Church."

Thanksgiving Day weekend saw the province gather at Saint Augustine's House, Bronx NY, to share in a time of fellowship and festivity.

Numerous liturgical events took place at the Chapel of Christ the Lord in the Episcopal Church Center in late fall and through the winter. The Superior General, Br Richard Thomas Biernacki, and Brs James and Tobias Stanislas, assisted as organist, subdeacon, and cantor at the ordination of the Rev. Lynn Marie Coggi to the presbyterate. The Presiding Bishop welcomed the opportunity to fill in for Bishop Moore, noting that this was the first presbyteral ordination he had performed in

some time. It is the second ordination to take place in the Chapel at "815." + + On a more somber note, the brothers took part in a memorial eucharist for the Rev. Gene T. White, Jr., a colleague who had worked for a number of years in the office of the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief. A fund has been established in Gene's memory, under Bishop Furman C. Stough's direction, towards the purchase of a pipe organ for the Chapel. The old electronic instrument, which Br Richard Thomas fondly calls "the radio," has seen far better days, and is now almost unusable. This is a fitting memorial for Gene, who had a fine tenor voice and sang the mass and the Gospel beautifully. He will be greatly missed. + + + Br James was acolyte at the service in honor of Bishop David E. Richards, retiring as director of the House of Bishops' Office of Pastoral Development. + + + In December, the Presiding Bishop welcomed His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius, primate of the Orthodox Church in America, for the blessing of a new icon of the Mother of God of Jaroslav, which now hangs in the Chapel. Br Tobias Stanislas chose the lessons for the service, and read the Epistle; Br Richard Thomas was organist; and Br James was thurifer.

Brs James, Tobias Stanislas, and Christopher Stephen Jenks attended the special service in honor of the 40th anniversary of the presbyteral ordination of Br John-Charles, SSF. John-Charles is sometime Anglican Bishop of Polynesia, and is now a collegial member of the House of Bishops. Prior to the service, our brothers were invited for dinner at St Elizabeth's Friary, Bushwick, Brooklyn. This afforded time to renew old friendships with our Franciscan brothers, and to make new acquaintances. The eucharist was celebrated by Br John-Charles, assisted by Bishop Orris G. Walker, Jr., Coadjutor of Long Island, and the Rev. Michael W. H. Harris, archdeacon of Brooklyn and rector of St Thomas, where the service took place. Many clergy, religious and friends attended, and greeted a wonderful friend at the reception which followed.

On Saturday, January 7, the Rt Rev Richard F. Grein was installed as Bishop Coadjutor of New York, during a grand service at the Cathedral Church of St John the Divine. The Brothers of Province II attended, along with over 50 members of other religious communities, hundreds of diocesan clergy, ten bishops, a multitude of the faithful,

and a number of the curious! Among the bishops attending were the Presiding Bishop (celebrant), Bishop Donegan (first Episcopal Visitor to the Brotherhood), Br John-Charles, SSF, and Bishop Walker (coadjutor, Long Island, and preacher). We look forward to getting to know Bishop Grein better as he begins to work in this our "headquarters" diocese.

Province III and South

Br Michael David Elvestrøm gave a lecture/presentation and icon display in St Petersburg FL. He is working on four large icons for parishes, and a special project altarpiece for St John the Evangelist, Boston. He also completed a banner/lectern fall for the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church. + + + Michael David joined Sr Marie, SHN, in doing a presentation at the University of South Florida's Episcopal Center, on the religious life in the contemporary world.

Province West

Brs Thomas Joseph Ross, Bernard Francis LaReau, and Edward Ramón Riley, novice Br Alan Andrew Speer, aspirants Roger Goodman and Curt Kellum, and Companions Jerry Vogt and Patrick Schwing were joined by visiting Brs Donovan Aidan Bowley and Ciarán Anthony Della Fera (from Province I) for a Thanksgiving Day celebration at All Saints Parish, Chicago. The following day was spent as a Quiet Day led by Alan Andrew on the topics of silence, solitude, and service. At the Sunday eucharist, Alan Andrew preached.

Companions from northern Kentucky and the Cincinnati area were gathered together for an event sponsored by Br Thomas Joseph and novice Br Alan Andrew. + + + Companion Lillian Waites joined Br Bernard Francis for a Christmas celebration and time for fellowship.

On Advent IV, Br Kevin James Jensen preached at the eucharists celebrated at St David's, Portland OR. The theme of his sermon was "Mary as Advent's Last Word." The sermon picked up the idea that Advent IV always includes a lesson concerning Mary, as if to allow her to give us a final gentle warning, as a loving mother would, that the Lord is at hand.

**The Brotherhood will hold
its Patronal Convocation Eucharist
at Incarnation Camp and
Conference Center, Ivroyton CT,
on March 9, 1989, at 4 PM.**

**The celebrant will be
the Rt Rev Paul Moore, Jr,
Bishop of New York,
and Visitor to the Brotherhood.**
