
The Brotherhood
of Saint Gregory

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a religious community of the Episcopal Church
Published six times a year.
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The Servant

Jan / Feb '90 #130

Founder's Forum

Angels, angels, angels

This is the time of angels. Christmas is just passed—one of the few times we speak of angels. And yet they are all around us, all the time.

The Scriptures are filled with visions of angels; good angels, bad angels. Our Sunday School lessons of years ago and now portray these beings with feathery wings and white robes flying about or just hovering in the sky. Ever met any angels? Sure you have. You've met them on the soup kitchen lines and in the 'homeless shelters. You've met them in places you'd least notice. Your parish priest could be an angel.

Recently we sang the hymn "I sing a song of the saints of God" and heard about finding them at tea and in shops and so forth. It's the same with angels. Granted there were several select ones at the birth of Christ. They were the Christmas types, probably wearing a red

mantle of ribbon on their robes! The angels of Christmas.

Well, let's talk about the angels of every day. In the theater angels assist in the financial area. Angels for a given show help to see to it that the show goes on. But the church has such angels, too. Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Jr, the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. These angels see to it that the work of the Lord goes on.

Now there are bad angels out there; some spend their time looking for the "split" in the Church and the dividing forces which are "at work." Anyone who was at the meeting of the House of Bishops last fall will tell you that the Holy Spirit *was* there. There was communion and there was reconciliation. The good angels are seeing to it that the show goes on.

Try as we may we cannot fight the wind of the Spirit. It blows where it wills. The Rev Canon James Gundrum often told me and others that "he tried to argue with God every day, but God al-ways won." The good angels are out there fighting the good fight. Let's think about that at this season of the year. Let's realize that the Christ child came into a world surrounded by good angels and soon found out that the bad ones were outside the stable door—waiting.

They're waiting for you and me and we have to be ready. At Christmas, in Lent, at Easter—all the time. God is around us daily inside the church and out-side. So are the angels. Look for them. They are often where you least expect them. Standing next to you and me.

—RTB

For the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

The God's-eye view

We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.—1 Corinthians 1.24

Foolish. Weak. Low. Despised All of those words could easily be used to describe the church in Corinth in St Paul's day. They were indeed foolish in the face of the eloquent Greek speakers, who worked and studied for years to perfect their art of saying nothing, or worse, saying evil things, but saying them beautifully. To the intelligent Greek pagan of the time, the very concept of worshiping a God who suffered as we do was madness; having him suffer and die

a painful death on a cross was total, mad foolishness.

In the face of the mighty Roman Empire, the church was weak indeed. A government such as Rome is all-powerful; its tentacles can reach out to strike anyone. The Christian people of Corinth, for the most part, certainly fitted the description of the low and despised. They were, to be sure, nonentities in the social structure of the Empire. Most

people just wrote off Christianity and Christians as another short-lived sect.

But God does not see through human eyes. Where now is the eloquence of the great Greek speakers, whom people would flock from miles around to hear? Where now are the great people of the Roman Empire? Where now, indeed, is the Roman Empire itself? All have passed into the dust of history. All but a few of the eloquent speeches of the Greek philosophers have been lost to his-

tory. All but a few of the monuments of Roman power are crumbled to dust, or preserved only as museums of a dead past.

But where now, on the other hand, is the foolishness that Paul preached? Where now is the weak church of the Corinthians? These are not dead. These live unto the ages of ages to shame the strong and the wise of their time, and of ours.

In our times, in the 1930s, *the* government of Germany was strong. It was perhaps even more powerful than the Roman Empire, because of more efficient control of the means of industry, communication, and travel. Its leader, Adolf Hitler, was for a time the master of most of Europe, and threatened the whole world.

In contrast, Maximilian Kolbe was a poor, simple Franciscan priest who was thrown into the infamous concentration camp at Auschwitz and there was killed, a martyr to his faith. In further contrast, Karl Ritter was a young man, born in a small village near the Swiss border in 1920. Karl was a farm boy of average intelligence. He never would have set the world on fire, but he could have worked the family farm as his father and grand-fathers did before him had circumstances been otherwise. Karl, like most Germans of that part of the country, was raised in the Roman Catholic Church. He took the Gospel message to heart. When he saw the few Jews in the area being harassed and persecuted, he began secretly to take

a few to safety on the Swiss side of the border. Word passed through the grapevine, and by early 1937 this courageous 17-year-old was running a small but efficient underground travel agency. As often happened, the wrong people heard of his enterprise. One day an agent of the Gestapo came for him. He was never seen or heard from again.

We all know what happened to the seemingly all-powerful German government and its leader. Both went up in flames in 1945. And what of the others?

What is foolish in the eye of the sinful may not be foolish in the eye of God

The Roman Church has declared Maximilian Kolbe a saint. Karl Ritter has not been so honored, but we can be sure that he is now in the presence of God along with Maximilian Kolbe and all the saints of heaven. So it is even with us today. Few, if any, of us will be called upon to suffer martyrdom as did Stephen, Paul, Agnes, Lucia, Polycarp, Maximilian, or Karl.

Some of us may be intelligent, perhaps brighter than most, but we dare not boast of our wisdom. Human wisdom is transitory, but God's wisdom is eternal. Most of us are simple-minded compared to the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

At one point, Nietzsche proclaimed, "God is dead!" God had, as it were, the last laugh. Nietzsche is dead—he died in an insane asylum. What happened to his great wisdom? If any of us are rich or powerful, we dare not boast of our wealth and power. Howard Hughes was rich and powerful, but when he died he was a physical and mental wreck. His wealth did him no good, and his power was gone.

So, my friends, we must not be too ready to judge people and things according to the standards of this world. What is foolish in the eye of the sinful—and that is all of us may not be foolish in the eye of God, for God does not see with human eyes. What is weak in the eye of the sinful may not be weak in the eye of God, for God does not see with human eyes. What is low or despised in the eye of the sinful may not be low or despised in the eye of God, for God does not see with human eyes. No, what is foolish or weak or low or despised to us poor mortals may be wise and strong and high and honorable in the eyes of God, and it would be our shame were we to fail in our shortsightedness. May we strive always to have a God's-eye view, valuing most what seems of smallest worth.

Br Charles Kramer preached this homily at St James' Chapel, the Cathedral Church of St John the Divine.

The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

Healing inside out

Power came forth from him and healed them all. —Luke 16.19

The stories of Jesus' healings are familiar to anyone who regularly goes to church or reads the New Testament. However, this very familiarity can blind us to the power and the full meaning of Jesus' healing miracles. Most people see Jesus' miracles as magic tricks—as evidence that Jesus had some sort of magical power, like a wizard or a sorcerer. This attitude misses the point. Jesus' healing miracles were manifestations of the power of God acting through Jesus'

humanity—through Jesus' human self. They were not the tricks of a divine magician.

Have you ever known someone who has been a healing presence in your life—who gave you a sense of spiritual, emotional or physical well-being? This person may have been a close friend, a doctor, teacher, pastor, spiritual director, therapist, or a complete stranger. Some-how, when you were in the presence of this person, you were aware of a healing

power that went forth from them, a power which soothed and comforted, a power which forced you to confront some difficulty in your life, a power which gave you courage and hope.

Jesus' healing power was like this though on a higher and more perfect level. This power was rooted in his love for all whom he healed. Jesus' healing power aimed not just at physical healing, but spiritual wholeness. "Those who were troubled with unclean spirits were

cured." Jesus' healing power was the love of God made manifest, overthrowing the powers of darkness. Jesus healed people not through magic but through love.

Medical science has become more aware of the connection between physical health and emotional and spiritual health. Any change in a person's emotional or spiritual well-being can have a dramatic effect on their physical well-being. Jesus' healings demonstrated this on the ultimate level. Jesus did not merely perform physical healings; he de-livered people from the power of Satan. Continually we hear Jesus pronouncing forgiveness to those he heals. Physical well-being was certainly among the results of Jesus' healing ministry; but the healing was much deeper, and more profound i t worked from the inside out.

We as the Body of Christ are called to continue that healing ministry in the world today, yet the church exercises this ministry so poorly. Healing ministry involves far more than occasional healing services, or visiting people in the hospital. Physical illness or emotional distress

may be the occasion for healing, but healing is first and foremost the healing of the spirit, the cure of souls.

As members of the Body of Christ, we need to seek and accept the healing that Christ offers. It is no coincidence that in Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs, the first few steps in the healing process require one to admit one's powerlessness over illness, and to ask God, in humility, to remove it. Everyone whom Jesus healed knew their need of healing. Yet in our society of rugged individualists, where "God helps those who help themselves," it is difficult for us to admit our need for the healing love of God, or our dependency on others for that love even though this is where the healing process begins.

The healing power of God is not magic. It is rooted in God's love. Jesus' healing power was a manifestation of the love of God in action. It was first and foremost the healing of souls. The physical and emotional healing which followed was an outward and visible sign of the fundamental interior healing.

Three women healed

Some of the afflicted sought Christ out, others asked his help, still others found healing as an unexpected gift. Consider three women who experienced the healing power of Jesus. All knew their need for healing, but approached Jesus in different ways. The woman with the hemorrhage (Luke 8.43) knew her need, feared to ask, but had the faith she would be cured; the gentile woman with the dying child (Mark 7.25f) insisted that Jesus be true to his calling to heal *all* of God's children; and the arthritic woman (Luke 13.11), bent for many years, was simply *there*, present for God to act. Faith, justice, and patience all know God's love, God's healing.

—TSH

Br Christopher Stephen Jenks is the community's director of vocations.

Kerygma Korner

God first: A tithing catechism

Part 3

The first two sections of this series dealt with the tithe in the Old Testament and the Gospel. We now move into the Apostolic period—the one in which we still live!

What did General Convention say about the tithe?

The 1982 resolution reads:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the tithe be affirmed as the minimum standard of giving for Episcopalians; and be it further

Resolved That we Deputies and Bishops do hereby pledge ourselves to tithe, or to work towards tithing, as a minimum standard of our own giving and of our witness in the world; and be it further

Resolved That we do call all of the Church to join us in accepting the biblical tithe as the minimum standard of Christian giving.

If the tithe is such a basic concept, how did we ever lose sight of it?

That is a complicated question—one for which we have to go back to the early church in the apostolic age. If you're willing to join me for the trip, it's an in-

teresting example of how ideas and customs develop in the church. We have to start with the record in the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and some other very early documents.

How did the early church come to adopt the tithe?

At first, the tithe was not part of the church's discipline; the earliest church relied almost entirely upon free will offerings. As Richard Hooker pointed out, in his famous work on ecclesiastical law, the apostolic church did not depend upon the tithe, but "their estate was dependent upon the voluntary devotion" of the church's members. (IV.2.3)

Why was that?

It is hard for us to understand, but people in the apostolic age lived in immediate expectation of the end of the world—that they were living in the "last

times" and that they would not die before the Second Coming. The question of financial support for institutions was the furthest thing from their minds. This kind of belief can be liberating! I suppose the closest we come to that sort of experience is in what happens to some people upon learning they have a fatal illness, and have only a certain time to live. For many, such knowledge is very depressing and demoralizing, but there are those who find it liberating, and who spend their remaining days gloriously.

Certainly the early Christians had all the benefits of this belief, with none of its drawbacks. Given that viewpoint and belief, there were many who sold their real estate and "laid the proceeds at the

apostles' feet." Wealth was seen not only as soon-to-be unnecessary, but as an impediment to salvation—and few who had money were eager to undergo the ex-

perience of squeezing through the needle's eye. The commands to store up treasure in heaven, and to be generous to the poor, and share with the community of faith, were given extra "oomph" by the sense of an imminent Advent of the Just Judge.

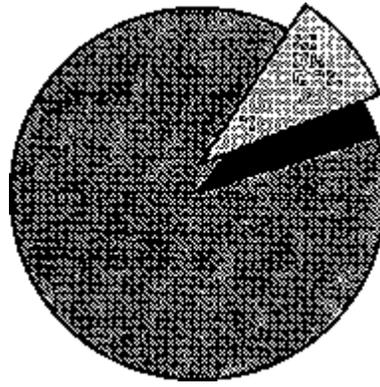
Did everyone follow this practice?

Liquidating one's real estate for the good of the church was a common practice, but it was not required. The story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) shows that this contribution was voluntary. This unfortunate couple didn't suffer for *keeping* some of their money, but for *lying* about it.

Then the early Christians didn't tithe?

Observant Jewish Christians still maintained the obligations of Temple worship, in prayer, in the Temple tax, and presumably in the tithe—just as they continued to observe the dietary laws. As long as tithes were being paid to the Temple—since the early church did not have a structured clerical class, or extensive buildings or institutions—there would be no suggestion of—or need for—tithing to the church, at least for Jewish Christians. The Gentile Christians, however, did not come from a tithing tradition—and were considered by the church to be essentially free from all but a few of the requirements of the Law of Moses. They were sometimes appealed to by Paul for contributions to support the needs of other communities. These would appear to be the first "suggested donations"—not formal tithes, but exhortations to generosity. (2 Cor. 8) Given Paul's tendency to set legislation against charism, one would hardly expect him to stress obedience to a Jewish tradition—especially given the sense of the impending Last Day: a feature of the apostolic church we must always keep in mind.

Eventually, though, as time passed and the Last Day seemed to be delayed, even in the Jewish Christian communities one can see the glow of fervor



begin to fade, and exhortation for financial generosity, and moral behavior in general, becomes more frequent. The Epistle of James shows the need for preachers to hammer away at these issues, using threats—rather than promises—of the Last Judgement.

So how did the tithe come in?

Two important transitions took place. First, as I've already noted, it became more and more apparent that the world was not ending immediately. People who were expected to survive to the Last Day died—and the church was at some pains to explain why! (1 Cor 11.30) As an outgrowth of this changing point of view, the church began to become more structured. It was alright to have wandering apostles and itinerant prophets and preachers when the world was on the verge of ending, but as communities grew, and the first generation of apostles and evangelists began to die, the church realized that in order to preserve the faith and serve human needs a more orderly structure was wanted. We can see this process at work in the period of the Pastoral Epistles. A specialist class of clergy bishops, presbyters, and deacons—emerged to take the place of the earlier apostles, prophets, and teachers. This kind of structure cost money to organize and maintain, and used money to carry forward its charitable works.

So, by the middle of the second century, we find evidence that regular giving has reemerged as a way to support the

work of the institutional church—even before the clerical class is as well defined as it is now. For example, in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (also known as the *Didache*) the following passage describes how people are to support the prophets and teachers, who are beginning to settle down as parts of communities rather than continuing a missionary life:

Every true prophet who wishes to settle among you deserves his food. Similarly, a true teacher also deserves, like the laborer, his food. Take, therefore, every first fruit—of the produce of wine press and threshing floor, and of cattle and sheep—and give it to the prophets. For they are your high priests. But if you have no prophet, give to the poor. If you make a batch of dough, take the "first fruit" and give it in accord with the commandment. Similarly with a jug of wine or of oil, take the "first fruit" and give it to the prophets. And so with money, and clothing, and every possession—take whatever "first fruit" seems appropriate to you and give it in accord with the commandment. —Didache 13.1-7

This is still exhortation, not regulation. The "commandment" is the Old Testament tradition, which the members of the church are encouraged, but not required, to observe. The contribution is a thankful response to the benefit the community derives from having a resident prophet or teacher—someone they can count on as a permanent part of the community. Later, these prophets and teachers were replaced by bishops and deacons.²

So the church is becoming "established." What's the other change that contributed to the tithe?

The second major factor in the Christian adoption of the tithe is the destruction of the Temple, and the separation of Jews and Christians into two distinct groups. This made all the traditional tithes and support of the Temple and its priesthood meaningless. The two factors came together by the end of the second century: the newly established Christian clergy became a substitute for the

1 "Inner spiritual community cannot exist long without an organizational structure." James M Gustafson, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels* (NY:Harper & Row, 1961)

2 *Didache* 15.1: "Appoint for yourselves, then, bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord... unassuming and not greedy, who are honest and have been proved. For they also are performing for you the task of the prophets and teachers."

Temple priesthood, and the church began to apply the old tithes to itself and its clergy as the new "spiritual" Temple. A clear description of this transition is in the *Apostolic Constitutions*:

Let [the bishop] use those tithes and first-fruits which are given according to the command of God, as a man of God; as also let him dispense in a right manner the free-will offerings which are brought in on account of the poor, to the orphans, the widows, the afflicted, and strangers in distress... Those which were then the first-fruits, and tithes, and offerings, and gifts, now are oblations, which are presented by holy bishops to the Lord God, through Jesus Christ.. For these are your high priests, as the presbyters

are your priests, and your present deacons instead of *your* Levites... (2.4.25)

We see here the regulated application of practical portions of the Law ("the command of God") to deal with the maintenance of the church and God's work in the world.

So people were beginning to support the church financially on a more regular basis?

One would like to think that; but the existence of regulations implies that they were perhaps not doing it voluntarily! Another reason for the emergence of laws governing donations was the fact

that fewer and fewer individuals were selling all they had and laying it at the feet of the prophets or bishops, though many left property to the church at their death. Eventually the church came to inherit a good deal of such property. And that further complicated things!

In the next installment, we will examine how the church came to deal with all the property it was inheriting, and what happened to the tithe.

—TSH

Here and there with the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood

Community notes

Province I

Br Christian Williams gave a talk on "Vestment Do's and Dont's" to the New Hampshire Diocesan Altar Guild. + + + Br Ciarán Anthony Della Fera is doing volunteer work on the Fenway (MA) Community Health Center Hotline. + + + Br Donovan Aidan Bowley represented Boston's Church of the Advent as a delegate at the diocesan convention. + + + Also in Boston, Br Laurence Andrew Keller was among a group of long-serving lay readers honored by Bishop Johnson at a service at St Paul's Cathedral.

Brs James E Teets and Tobias Stanislas Haller visited New England during what turned out to be a hectic weekend for the province. The province's regular meeting took place that Saturday, which occupied most of the brothers, but Br Matthew Staples was given leave by Provincial Donovan Aidan to act as local guide for the visitors. Tobias Stanislas' birthday fell that same day, and the province hosted a birthday dinner. The following day most of the brothers attended the main service at the Church of St John the Evangelist, Bowdoin Street, Boston, in support of Br Bernard Fessenden's blessing and sending forth to the Diocese of Rhode Island (where he begins studies toward ordination to the diaconate at the Deacon Training School). His new parish in Rhode Island

is St Peter's & St Andrew's, the Rev J Brian McHugh, rector.

As President of the South Shore AIDS Project, Br Roy Tobin participated in a "Cut-A-Thon" fund raiser, which netted over \$4,000 to help in work with PWAs. + + + Roy also attended a 5-day AIDS Conference for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He is now a Trainer in the state. He and Bernard attended the open house for the Hospice on Mission Hill, a residential program for PWAs. It is the only program of its kind in New England.

Province II

Sister Mary Benigna, VHM, who spent more than 40 years at the Visitation Monastery in Riverdale NY, celebrated her golden jubilee in October. Born Nora Geraghty in County Mayo, Ireland, she came to New York as a young adult and entered the Riverdale monastery, making her first vows in 1939. In 1969, she was one of the Sisters of the Visitation who helped Br Richard Thomas Biernacki in forming the rule of life for the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, and was present at the first Brotherhood profession service, which was held in the Visitation Monastery in 1969.

On Saturday, October 14, Province II joined several thousand other Episcopalians who attended "The Recognition, Investiture and Seating of the Fourteenth Bishop of New York, the Rt

Rev Richard F Grein," at the Cathedral Church of St John the Divine.

The Rt Rev Walter D Dennis, Jr, Suffragan Bishop of New York, has accepted the position of Episcopal Visitor to the Brotherhood. His decision was confirmed at a meeting with Br Richard Thomas during the House of Bishops' meeting in Philadelphia. The Rt Rev Paul Moore, Jr, had been the Brotherhood's Visitor from 1972 until his June retirement announcement. Bishop Dennis accepted this office with the permission and endorsement of Bishop Grein, diocesan of New York.

Bishop Dennis was invited by Presiding Bishop Edmond L Browning to preach at the opening eucharist of the November Executive Council meeting at the Episcopal Church Center in New York. James and Tobias Stanislas attended the service, and Richard Thomas made the event more lively with the addition of organ music and a full selection of hymns. It was a good opportunity to add another "welcome" to the many Bishop Dennis has received upon accepting the role of Visitor to the Brotherhood.

James represented the Brotherhood at the 114th Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of New York, working as staff to the convention. Members of the religious communities function as tellers, to staff the polling machines, and to assist with other work as may be neces-

sary; we have always been pleased to roll up our sleeves and pitch in!

Postulant the Rev Christopher Thomas Connell had an article published in the October issue of *The Numismatist*, "Christian Icons on Byzantine Coins."

Province III

Br Thaddeus David Williams is now on the staff of Church of the Messiah, Baltimore. He has also completed the six-session course, "Doing Theology in the Age of AIDS."

The province gathered for a Quiet Day in late October, at St Andrew's-in-the-Valley near Harrisburg PA. The theme was, "The Spiritual Life: Real or Fantasy." Br Luke Anthony Nowicki,

host for the retreat, presented the fast conference, "Spiritual Life—Why and How?" Br Edward Munro presented the second, "Is Spiritual Life Necessary—and How Can It Be Used?" In the after-noon all the brothers took part in a third presentation on their individual experiences as members of a community.

Province West

Brs Thomas Joseph Ross and Alan Andrew Speer, and Companion Jerry Vogt attended an organ recital and service of evensong at Christ Church Cathedral, Lexington KY. + + Alan Andrew served as a volunteer at the National Episcopal AIDS Coalition Convention, which met at Christ Church,

Cincinnati. He now serves at Grace Church, Florence KY.

Novice Br Roger-Michael Goodman is back at the books at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. He is serving as organist/choir director at All Saints, Chicago. + + Novice Br Damian Curtis Kellum attended a three-day seminar on child assault prevention in Fairfield Bay AR. He is now serving as a volunteer for the Ozark Legal Services.

Br Michael David Elvestrøm had a liturgical "fashion show" of ten of his chasuble designs, with an exhibit of icons, and a slide presentation/lecture. The chasubles were modelled by his students at the Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts, Natchitoches LA.

Evangelism

is where Christ happens...
is the synapse
in the mind
of the church...
is where the church
meets the world...
is where we find the other
and know we are one...
is the root-tip
that searches in the dark...
is the vine that climbs
to the light...
is the hand that reaches out...
is the Word made flesh
dwelling among us
full of grace and truth.

—TSH

