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#136

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Founder's Forum

On beyond Twelfth Night

Ours is a dark world, a world filled with problems and danger, robbery, muggings, death—yes, death in many cases. And the church stands in the midst of all of this trouble—offering what? We offer discrimination against those who are "different." We offer a Jesus molded to our own way of thinking; a Jesus whom *we* have designed. We have placed his plaster replica in a stable surrounded by tacky statuary Magi. We trivialize the powerful infant, and when he grows up, we keep his image as small as he was that night long ago. We lose sight of the fact that things we consider so terrible are but a speck to the eye of God! I cannot believe that the God who gave us this Jesus is too small to handle the problems of all people. God is just not that small!

The Episcopal Church stands with the tools to make the world right. The Episcopal Church stands shoulder to shoulder with the best and the worst. We have a light that we can let shine. We still have a chance. That chance is to step forward and offer Jesus and his church to the world in new terms that can be understood in this age.

I was tremendously privileged recently to hear Bishop John S Spong in a lecture at my parish church in White Plains. He gave some real insight into the plight of the church in the 90s. One of the pieces of this puzzle which made the most sense is this: "If the church does not get away from fussing about whether the Prayer Book should be revised and whether women should be ordained and like issues, it will

not be around in 50 years. We must get down to the real issues."

Let's celebrate Epiphany in a new way this year. Let's let the light shine. Our church has so much to give. We really care about the problems around us and within us. Out there is an environment aching and dying. The church can be a leader in this and other causes—and what better time to think about the world which this savior came to save! This powerful child was a light shining in the darkness, a light that changed lives. Now it's our turn. Beyond Twelfth Night is a world waiting in darkness. Let our light shine now, too.

RTB

For Ash Wednesday

Observe a holy Lent

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. . . assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. — Joel 2:15

These words were uttered by Joel four hundred years before the birth of Christ. Little is known about Joel, but it can be certain that he was a prophet and lived in Judah. At the time he spoke these words, there was a plague

of locusts threatening Judah, threatening as an overshadowing cloud from the top of the mountain of Zion itself. Locusts travel in great swarms, like an invading army, Joel says, and can be absolutely devastating. They will devour all vegeta-

tion. When they are done, and are driven by the wind into the sea, their dead bodies are cast up by waves upon the shore. The stench from their bodies putrefies the air and produces disease. The devastation they cause would have

left Judah a wasteland, unfit for human habitation.

In the face of this threat of destruction Joel calls for the people to repent and to pray to God for deliverance. God hears their prayers and accepts their repentance and stops the locusts, driving them into the sea.

It is appropriate this lesson be read at the beginning of Lent. Here in Maple Valley, in the foothills of a great mountain range, you can appreciate the people's concern more fully. On my first visit to Seattle in 1973, I was completely awe struck by the view of Mount Ranier, snow-covered and visible miles away. The vicar of St George's and I were driving across the floating bridge from the University of Washington. Our plan was to go across one floating bridge and return on the other one. As it turned out, we never came back on the other floating bridge. As we travelled from the University across the bridge, Mount Ranier suddenly appeared as if from nowhere.

There it was, Mount Ranier in all its majesty and splendor. I wrote in my diary, "It was just fabulous. Words cannot describe the tremendous feeling you get when you see these beautiful scenes. You feel so close to nature—not nature itself—one can feel a real closeness to God amongst these surroundings. It was just fabulously breath-taking."

After what I have just described, picture Mount Ranier, suddenly. There is a humming sound that gets louder and louder. You cannot hear your television sets; blaring stereos are overcome by this tremendous sound. The sound is heard throughout the countryside, in the valleys, the forests. Nowhere can you escape this sound. People are running from their homes to see if they can find out what is going on. The sound reminds many of science fiction movies: the sound of spaceships landing. People look at one another. Then suddenly they look toward the mountain. It is no longer white with snow. It is covered with all sorts of creatures. They don't realize what it is. Mount Ranier is covered with an invading army of insects.

The beautiful white snow is completely obliterated. The trees cannot be seen. Many of the

trees have already been chewed to the ground by the invading army of locusts.

Everyone is at wits' end. Suddenly, one among you shouts out the words of our text. One of you becomes a prophet.

Blow the trumpet in Maple Valley!
Call an assembly! Gather the people together. Notify the congregation. Assemble the elders. Gather the children. Between the porch and the altar let the ministers of the Lord weep, and say, "Spare, O Lord, your people."

I have brought this scene to you in this manner so that you might better understand what the prophet Joel was talking about four hundred years before the birth of Christ. What happened then could happen again. Perhaps some other drastic occurrence; it is important for us to know that these things can and do still happen. Just read your newspapers. Invading armies, insects or soldiers, marching through other nations; hostages being held; earth-quakes, fires, floods, volcanic eruptions—all these, and others too numerous to mention, still take place.

In Lent we can learn an important fact about ourselves. We usually don't think disaster can strike us; only others. So when it hits us we don't know how to deal with it.

The reason we can't deal with it is our tendency not to include God in our lives. We set God aside as we do a garment. Only when we need that coat or scarf do we go and fetch it from wherever we left it. So we do with God. We cast God aside, out of our lives, only to be taken out when the thermometer dips—and out comes God, scented with mothballs and cedar.

This is one of the disasters that can confront us: we can't control our emotions any more. We run to a psychiatrist, and all sorts of counseling sessions to get our act together. What we really need is not a psychiatrist, but Jesus Christ.

A seminary professor once said that study for the degree of Master of Divinity should be called the study of map making. If we look at a map we can find out where we are. As we plan our trip, we can only go as far as

the map shows places to go. We can only go as far as the map indicates. We must wait for someone to map out the unexplored regions before we can proceed.

This too is true in our religious life. We can only go so far on our own; we need helpers to point us in the new directions. We can study the Bible, the early church writers, and read about the saints, to see the paths charted out there, the paths they took. As we read what they have done in their lives we can expand our journey a little further. Perhaps in the future we will explore a little, and someone will read about our journey and maybe be guided to a closer relationship with God in their journey of life.

Lent is part of that journey, that course of travel that we as Christians have to take. It is a time to look at our lives to see where we are and how far we have to go to reach our goal. You might call Lent the fork in the road. Our goal is to stop and look at our lives, render a decision, and get on with the journey.

We are being called to observe a holy Lent: to self-examination and repentance, by prayer, self-denial and sacrifice, and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word. This is the fork in the road for us as Christians. What have we done with our lives so far? How far can we go before we have to wait for new explorations before we can get on with our journey?

Part of the journey is obeying the Lord's command: That we "love one another." This is the beginning of the journey. It is time for us to wake up—to put love into our lives and through love in our own lives a closer loving relationship with God. Love is one of the roads on the map of life with God. Let's use this Lent to discover "Love."

This sermon was preached by Br William Bunting at St George's Church, Maple Valley WA, in 1980. William died in 1988, in his 7th year of profession.

Meeting the community

A journey north



Michael-John Austin, n/BSG

This is the first article in a new series. Several readers had expressed interest in knowing more about the members of the community, and we will be providing short autobiographies on a regular basis.

I was born in a small town in Cameron County, Texas, called Brownsville. The date was February 5, 1951, at 10:32 AM. At an early age I was told that I had been adopted. As a small child, I lived in a town called Harlingen, now a major resort spot in the southern part of Texas.

When it was time for me to go to kindergarten, my mother took me to the Episcopal Church. Because of my birth date falling either too early or too late, they would not accept me. Mother then took me to the Lutheran Church in town, which was more than happy to take me in. My mother and I were baptized, and formally accepted into the Lutheran Church. It was at this tender age that my mother told me that I said I wanted to become a pastor. In 1959 we moved to the southern part of California near San Diego. Dad went to work for National Steel Shipbuilding. I was enrolled into a Lutheran school in Imperial Beach and there attended the same church. While at St Peter's, I sang in the choir and served at the altar. It was during this time that my desire to become a pastor grew.

A few years later I entered a preparatory school for seminary in the eleventh grade. The only synodical school available on the West Coast was Concordia Oakland, California. I signed my letter of intent and off I went. What I was about to experience was going to change my life for ever! Simply stated, the next four years played an enormous role in my mental and theological development. Concordia was a two-year high school-and two-year prep school for ministry. I entered Concordia a narrow minded individual with pre-conceived ideas of right and wrong. I left Concordia Oakland a much better person for having been there. I often find myself thinking about the people I met, the challenges I faced, the love I experienced. I thank God for them all!

In September 1971 I continued my education as a junior at Concordia River Forest, Illinois. I did my student teaching at Gloria Dei Lutheran School. This saw me into my senior year. During this time and up to now my need to minister has taken the path of music. During my ministerial training, music was required of all semi-

narians. In 1971 I won the Junior Bach Festival at Berkeley University and opened the Bach Festival that year playing the organ. Currently I am the assistant organist and choirmaster at Church of the Atonement, Chicago.

From 1975 to 1989 I was employed by Continental National Bank. The last six of the fourteen years spent at Continental were involved in education and training. Of those six, three were managerial. In September 1989 I resigned to start my own business.

In May 1989 I applied for postulancy in the Brotherhood. I was made a postulant in March 1990 and novice in August. My involvement with the Brotherhood has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. The Brotherhood is centered in Christ and its focus is based upon the spiritual growth of the individual. The special uniqueness of individuals can only be surpassed by what the Brotherhood holds in common. That being acceptance, affirmation, confirmation, love, and a sense of family and wholeness.

Letters from readers

Gregorian responsory

Please know I enjoy your newsletter and read every one, not wanting to miss a single tidbit or beautiful insight.

■ Ione Grable, Orlando FL

The Sep/Oct issue of *The Servant* contained a Founder's Forum article relative to "objections." Although there are a couple of good points, I am singularly unimpressed by the logic, mason, discipline of thought, to say nothing of the poor application of catholic theology. A balanced, reasonable discussion of these

topics would be helpful, but this is skewered, inflammatory and judgmental approach. [sic] Please remove me from your mailing list.

■ The Rev David M Driver, Flushing MI

Thank you and God bless you all. We enjoy; and we knew Br John Nidecker. May he rest in peace . . .

■ The Correll's, Germantown MD

The commentaries appearing in *The Servant*, which treat current issues, are in-

formed by the spirit of the Gospel. This kind of courageous application of and witness to the Gospel is needed in the Church, as an antidote to a legalism which is both self-righteous and judgmental, that is, all head and no heart.

■ The Rev H. Norton, Baltimore MD

Right on! I noted, read, marked, and inwardly digested your "thesis" . . . I have been thoroughly confused by the charges and countercharges flying about, and, thanks be to God, your article has given



me a lucid, concrete basis for accepting women in both the priesthood and the episcopate ...

■ The Rev Robert W Quarles, Clinton AR

I read your article ... on reason and thought it was the

best I had ever read on defending the ordination of women. I was wondering if it could be reprinted in *The Light Between the Mountains*, the newspaper for the Diocese of Idaho.

■ Marilyn Watkinson, Buhl ID

From a recent issue of *Light Between the Mountains* ... I picked up a reprint of your article about reason and tradition in the Anglican Communion. Interested not only in women's history, but in general issues of historiography and the church, I greatly appreciated the several important clarifications you offered ... I would like your permission to reprint your article in the newsletter of The Episcopal Women's History Project ... Thank you very much!

■ The Rev Sandra Hughes Boyd Editor, The EWHP Newsletter Princeton NJ

Por este medio le damos las gracias por las vestimentas que ustedes gentilmente y por mediación del Padre Ricardo Potter y el Br James E Teets, nos enviaron ...

Many thanks for the vestments and God bless.

■ R P Moises Quezada Mota La Romana, Rep Dominicana

Thank you for your issue #134. Keep us in your prayers; we will do the same! Keep the good work. God bless you.

■ Fr Juan, St Matthew's, Nat'l City CA

Just a note to let you know how moved I was by your wonderful poem on Human Irresponsibility and Divine Response (*Servant 135*). Deep thanks—simply, beautifully said. I hope you are submitting this elsewhere ... It deserves broad circulation for the benefit of those who will read it—and save it—as I will. All best to you!

■ Barbara Braver, NY NY

Here and there with the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood ...

Community notes

Province I

Br Roy Tobin

begins his new job as a social worker for the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. He will be working with families in crisis. + + + He also attended the diocesan Convocation on AIDS, at which Bishop Harris gave the keynote address. The diocese is training local parishes concerning the needs of people who are HIV⁺/AIDS.

Br Laurence

Andrew Keller attended the service for the completion of the National Cathedral, Washington DC. While in the Capital he had the opportunity to visit with old friends and enjoy the city.

Br Bernard Fessen-

den has begun his new job as a psychiatric nurse at Bourneswood Psychiatric Hospital. + + + Br Kevin James Jensen joins Province I from Oregon. He began his new job as director of food services at Milford Nursing Home. He is presently living at St Gregory's House in Manchester NH. + + + Brs Christian Williams and Kevin James attended the New Hampshire diocesan convention, for

which Christian was a delegate from St Matthew's, Goffstown.

Postulant Charles

LeClerc finished his required work for a degree in hospitality sales management. While on vacation he visited Christian and Kevin James.

Brs Laurence

Andrew and Donovan Aidan Bowley attended the trustees and advisors meeting of the Iona Cornerstone Foundation, which has begun an ambitious building and fellowship program.

The Province

Vocations Day was held at Parish of the Messiah, Newton MA. Most of the province attended, and explored the religious life with guests. Companion Grove Calkins played the organ, and the eucharist was celebrated by the Rev Edward Franks. It was a beautiful day, the food was plentiful and everyone had a good time. + + + The brothers also attended the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Diocese of Rhode Island.

Province II

We ask your

prayers for the repose of the soul of one of the Brotherhood's dearest friends, Companion Cecil Berges, who died last fall. She was a strong supporter of the community, and together with her sister Marion Pierce, offered a ministry of hospitality and warm friendship to the brothers over many years.

"God First," the series of articles on the history of the tithe which appeared in *The Servant* has been produced as an audio cassette by the Office of Stewardship of the Episcopal Church. It is available through the stewardship catalogue which was sent to all parishes in December. The Brotherhood is publishing a printed version of these essays. On the back cover is an order form for the 24-page booklet containing the text of the five articles.

Convocation

All are invited to

attend the festival eucharist at the communities' patronal convocation, Saturday January 26, at 3 PM, at Graymoor, Garrison NY.