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**#137**

*Note: due to the press of the Superior General's responsibilities with the Executive Council and General Convention, there is no "Founder's Forum" this issue.*

*For Good Friday*

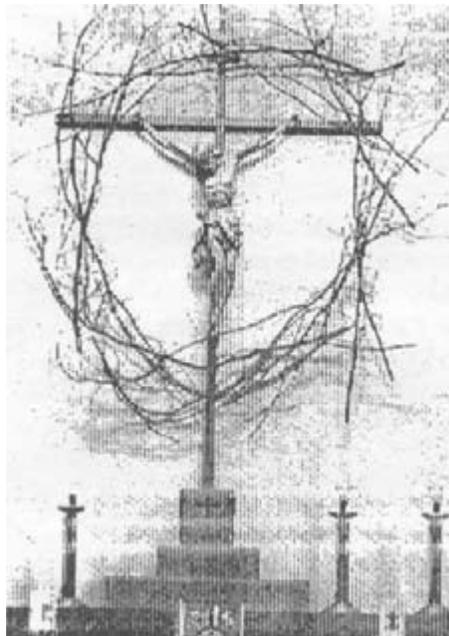
## Is anybody there?

*Innumerable troubles have crowded upon me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. Psalm 40:12*

At this time of year there are many broadcasts of "Holy Week movies," including the NBC mini-series, "Jesus of Nazareth." In all the years that I have watched movies about Jesus, I have never been able to watch the entire crucifixion scene. I always end up closing my eyes. It is too painful to watch the innocent Jesus being nailed to the cross.

We observe Good Friday not to face the pain of the crucifixion, but to *be* there: to be with Jesus as he suffers for our sin. Since Elizabeth Kibbler-Ross has published her books on death and dying, health professionals have become aware that the indignity of dying can be transformed by not allowing the patient to die alone. Being there—just being there—makes a difference.

Nurses can verify that pain is lessened, or at least is easier to bear, when the patient is not alone. The only time in my life that I have been in prolonged, intense pain was during labor for my first child. It was a long and difficult labor, and Garie was pressing against a nerve rather than descending into the birth canal. Chris was a wonder-



ful coach. Things were not going easily, but they were certainly bearable. The doctor suddenly announced that an emergency C-section was necessary, and Chris was whisked out of the room without even a chance to say goodbye. All of a sudden the pain I was feeling became more than I could bear. I started to panic. I was all alone. Just as suddenly, I felt a

hand in mine and a soft voice announced that the contraction was half over. The student nurse who had been observing the birthing process had taken my husband's place as my coach. She wasn't Chris, but I was no longer alone!

On Good Friday, we keep Jesus from being alone, and on the first Good Friday two thousand years ago Jesus was not alone, either. Jesus was crucified with two others. One acknowledged the injustice of Jesus' sentence and recognized that Jesus' kingdom was not of this world, a concept that Jesus' own disciples seemed unable to retain between their brief moments of comprehension.

Jesus was kept company by his mother, Mary, and many other women followers. The beloved disciple had also dared to keep our Lord company. An old tradition tells of Veronica, who cared for Jesus by wiping his face. Jesus had many signs that God was present through the loving people who did not abandon him at this hour of trial. Even so, Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46)

**Perhaps Jesus  
could not feel  
God's presence  
because our sin  
prevented him.**

Couldn't Jesus realize that people who loved him then and who love him now, are here for him? Perhaps he could not feel God's presence because our sin prevented him. Our sin can blind us; perhaps it blinds others too; perhaps that is the worst thing about it. In the words of Psalm 40, "For innumerable troubles have crowded upon me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see."

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. But the works of the flesh, or *sin*, as listed in Galatians, are strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, envy, and the like. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, it was our anger, hatred, resentment, bitterness, and self-absorption that held him to the wood, that was the power behind the nails. How could he see God's loving presence in the Holy Spirit or in those around him? When one's arms are forced out and away by another's anger, hatred, resentment, and bitterness, one cannot hug or feel the love of someone else's hug. To acknowledge or feel a hug, one must be able to bend one's arms around the other person.

Jesus understands when we cannot feel his loving presence. He understands what it means to feel alone. He has been there. He knows what

it means to be nailed to the cross. Even so, he carries us.

*Sr Clare Connell was the first sister to make her profession in the new community-in-formation. Clare ministers as chaplain to the Hospice Program at Community Medical Center In Toms River, New Jersey. The cross in the illustration was decorated by Br Michael David Elvestrøm.*

### *Meeting the Community*



## **From Harlem's heart**

*John Peter*

I was born on March 28, 1950 to James and Jennie McDowell Clark. My mother was originally from Ashville, North Carolina; she attended Tuskegee Institute between 1934 and 1945; and in May of 1945 she moved to 115th Street in New York City to live with some friends. Her first son, Richard, was born in 1946; her second, James, in 1949. I came along in 1950; her last son, Dennis, was born in 1951. I never knew James and Dennis from birth, though my prayer is to one day meet them.

Four years of living in crowded conditions in Harlem resulted in my brother Richard being placed with a family in the Bronx and me with the Anderson family in Brooklyn. The Andersons were Episcopalians and they took me to their parish, St Augustine's, Brooklyn, regularly. I will always remember Mrs Anderson's daughter, Louise Miller, who told me to be strong

in this world, that I would have to be a man and learn how to take the rough road and the ups-and-downs of this life.

At the age of ten I was placed with the Allen family in the Bronx, in order to be near my brother. Mrs Allen tried to remodel me, even going so far as having me rebaptized into the Baptist Church—it didn't work. At 16 I began attending St Peter's Episcopal Church, Westchester Square, and I was confirmed there in 1968.

St Peter's began a new chapter in my life, as I started participating in activities such as the Young People's Coffee House (the Bronx Press Review gave this a very good rating), the Boy Scouts, and also became an acolyte (this has been very special to me, as I love to assist the clergy in the celebration of the eucharist).

After I graduated from high school I went to a private college and then took a job with the Iron

Corporation for one year, then on to the title insurance business with Security Title and Guaranty Company for 15 years, followed by positions with a law firm, and finally taking the Civil Service test for audit clerk. I am now a senior audit clerk, working in the same office for 14 years.

I assisted at St Peter's from 1966 until 1973, at which time I accepted a position on the acolyte staff of the Cathedral Church of St John the Divine, Manhattan, where I stayed for eight years and eventually became the Bishop's Verger. In 1980 I applied to the postulancy of the Brotherhood. From the cathedral I moved on to St Augustine's parish on the Lower East Side of Manhattan; at the present time I am not attached to any parish and am looking for a new parish home.



# With joy about thine altar

*Kevin James Jensen, BSG*

*Kevin James recently moved to New Hampshire, to take up a position on the staff of a nursing home. He is now looking for a parish at which to serve.*

Until recently I had been a member of the parish of St. David of Wales in Portland, Oregon. Bishop of Oregon Matthew Bigliardi sent me there five years ago. St. David's is a small inner-city parish and as such those who are members wear many hats; being a brother meant my keeping a large hat tree around!

Sunday was the main business day of the week. I served at the altar at both the early and late services. I would arrive at the church at seven AM to open up the building and to get the coffee hour set up for the eight o'clock service. After this I would check up to see that all was in readiness for the early service. Next I spent some time going over the lessons. Candles were then lit and the service began, at which I read lessons, served at the altar and administered the chalice. Following the service I helped "clean up" and "set up" for the late service.

My job as acolyte master meant that at the late service I had to be a "do-all and end-all." First a check

to see if everyone who was to serve was there, and if not, to replace them; then see to it that they were vested. Next came a check-up to see that candles were lit and everything was in readiness. Then I would look after the needs of the clergy. During mass I was master of ceremonies and would also administer the chalice. I was also called upon to preach from time to time. When the service was finished I assisted with the ablutions and that was the end of the day.

One of my greatest joys was to teach the Bible study group, which met on Tuesday night at the church. I spent Monday and Tuesday getting prepared for class. Tuesday night our small group of six got together. Each week a lively discussion would take place. The group focussed on two points: What does the passage mean, and what does it say to us today? The Bible study was the most meaningful job I did at St. David's.

Wednesday night was mass and meeting night. I served at the mass each week, doing all the things

that one might expect. Following the service were parish meetings. I served on the Pastoral Care Committee which met this night. This committee assisted the clergy in calling on the sick and the shut-ins, as well as supporting the prayer chain. Hospital calls were also done on this night.

Saturday was a day of work and teaching. The altar guild (which I served on) worked in the morning. We cleaned the church and set everything up for the next day. In the afternoon there was confirmation/enquirer's class that I helped teach. This day was the work day around the building and grounds and I helped with that when I had time.

This is a thumbnail sketch of the ministry I had at St. David's. As Christians we are all called to be many things at different times and I hope that I fulfilled this ministry at St. David's well.

## *Here and there with the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood*

### Community notes

#### **Province I** Br Bernard

Fessenden continues assisting at SS Peter's and Andrew's, Providence RI. + + + Br Donovan Aidan Bowley continues his endeavors in cleaning up contaminated supplies of drinking water, and mapping natural resources by computer, as well as working with the archives of his department in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

#### **Province II** Late breaking

news (more in the next issue): The

Graymoor house of the Society of the Atonement (RC) has voted unanimously to accept a covenant of witness and prayer with the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory.

The community was out in force for the presbyteral ordination of Sr Clare Connell at St Raphael's Church, Brick NJ. Presiding for the Bishop of New Jersey was Bishop Walter D Dennis, Visitor to the Community, and Br James Teets was master of ceremonies. Br Kevin James Jensen was subdeacon, and Br Christian Williams made the vestments in which Clare

was clothed as part of her consecration; Br Richard Thomas Biernacki assisted with the vesting, and presented Clare with her profession cross (which had been removed for the ordination in accord with the rubrics). Br Christopher Stephen Jenks sang the litany, the sermon was delivered by Br Tobias Stanislas Haller, and novice Br Richard John Lorino was organist. Br William Francis Jones was bishop's chaplain, and novice Br Christopher Thomas Connell was one of the presenters. It was a great event the parish was filled to overflowing, and the joy of the Holy Spirit was evident.



*Bishop Walter Dennis and Sr Clare Connell, after her ordination.*

The following week, Br George Keith was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Richard Grein, in a service at the Cathedral Church of St John the Divine. Many of the community attended, and novice Br Christopher Thomas participated in the presbyteral laying on of hands.

Several members of the community attended the first eu-

charist celebrated by the new rector of our home-base parish, St Bartholomew's, White Plains, the Rev Philip Stowell.

### **Province West**

Br Michael David

Elvestrøm designed an impressive stage setting for a production of Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, produced at The Louisiana



*Bishop Richard Grein greets Br George Keith in the name of Christ.*

School for Math, Science and the Arts. The setting consisted of projections and constructions that grew into a forty-foot castle, which eventually burst into flames, in floor-to-ceiling animations.

## *A sermon for the ordination of Clare Connell, CSSG*

# **Shepherds and harvesters**

*"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ... " Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth ... And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."--Isaiah 6:5-8*

*Jesus had compassion for the crowds, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."—Matthew 9:36-38*

There was once a certain rich man, who had abundant possessions and great wealth. And he determined to himself that he would grow the very best wheat that could be grown. And so he went out and took account of all his lands, and chose the finest of his fields. And he had it cleared of all rocks and stones, and he fenced it around; and he sent out the laborers to plow the field and plant the seed, taking care that none

was wasted: for he was a hard man, and unwilling to part with a single grain. So he charged those sowing the seed to be careful and prudent in their sowing, for if they wasted any of the seed he would deduct it from their wages. And he commissioned experts in their fields to use only the best fertilizers and pesticides, according to their wisdom. And time passed, and the grain sprouted and grew, bearing thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

And the man went out to look upon his rich field, as it lay before him, golden in the sunlight. And his servants came to him and said, Master, shall we now put in the sickle and harvest your grain? For the time of harvest is come, and soon the winter will be upon us. And the master of that field said to them, By no means: You shall not touch it; you shall let it rot. You shall let the rain and snow and hail of winter beat it to the ground, and the

sun of summer parch it and the wind of autumn blow upon it, until there is not a grain of it left.

My beloved brothers and sisters, this anti-parable tells of the sort of God we *do not* have. This perverse agronomist is not the sort of Lord we worship. Ours is a God who will not let a sparrow fall, or a blade of grass perish without notice. Above all, ours is a God and Lord whose heart goes out to a people wandering without guidance, a God who wishes nothing to be lost, who desires not the death of sinners, who sends laborers to gather in the sheaves of grain, who searches for the lost sheep, and brings both sheep and sheaves home from pasture and harvest rejoicing.

It is auspicious that Clare's ordination should come in Advent, just at the beginning of the Decade of Evangelism, and a few weeks before the feast of the Incarnation. As we know, evangelism is not something for which Episcopalians are known for fervent zeal. Evangelism is a cup that many would gladly have pass them by, if it be God's will. But it is not God's will. God will not neglect the church, will not let the rich harvest go to waste. God will send laborers into the harvest. All will be gathered in, in God's own time. That is the hope toward which we look, in our pilgrim life as the church, in our hopeful Advent Season that has lasted now for nearly two millennia. That is our hope. But what is our present reality?

Look at the state of the world and the church today: The sheep are many, but in proportion to their numbers, many have wandered into track-

less ways and unprofitable pastures. So too, the harvest is rich, but in danger of going to wrack and ruin for want of being gathered in. And so, there is great need for shepherds for the flock and laborers for the harvest. But what sort of shepherds are these that come forward? And what manner of laborers volunteer?

Too many seem ready to admit that their lips are unclean, but expect a dab with a cocktail napkin rather than a hot coal searing their conscience. Their precious conscience is the one thing they will not risk exposing to the assayer's flames.

Too many of the shepherds seem less intent on guiding the flock and recovering the lost than they are on separating the sheep from the goats. Too many of the harvesters seem less intent on gathering the grain than on the later task of threshing and winnowing: separating the wheat from the chaff. And, truth be told, they seem more intent on the chaff than the wheat: their eyes and faces already seem to glow with delight—not from the warmth of the bakers' oven, but at the prospect of the coming bonfire in which the chaff is to be burnt.

Is this evangelism? or is it not rather kakangelism? Where is the *good* in the news these people bring? The fundamentalist sects are growing and thriving. Why? They provide a perch from which one may look down on others. And the same is happening in our own church. Even our dear Episcopal Church, with all its breadth and diversity, and its reputation for toler-

ance—even in our own church we hear discordant voices raised.

They call for dividing the pure from the fallen, the right from the wrong, the saved from the lost. Such calls may well build up the numbers of a church—but what sort of a church will it be? People long to hear the Word of God, but must it be the word of judgment rather than the word of forgiveness? Must it be the word of wrath rather than the word of grace?

Those who look with glee for judgment have overreached themselves. And I say, Woe to them who look for the day of the Lord: for who can stand in that day? Woe to those who call for authority, but do not submit to it themselves. Woe to those who rush into the house and slam the door to exclude others: thinking themselves safe, they find to their surprise that the snake bites their hand as they lean against the door. Woe to those who set themselves up, for in the day of the Lord all—all—will be brought low.

In pride, these would-be shepherds have forgotten that separating the sheep from the goats is the owner's task, not theirs. These earnest harvest workers have forgotten that the purpose of the harvest is to bring in the grain: and there is no grain, however fruitful, that does not have its coat and husk of chaff. There are none of us who will not lose something of ourselves in the coming flames, as the chaff of our sinful nature is stripped away and discarded in the flames that never cease. This volunteer militia has forgotten that those who take up the sword—even the



sword of God's Word, living and active — will perish by the sword: for it is a two-edged sword, and cuts both ways.

Our poor church: the people look to you for good *news*, and instead get a weather report gloom and tempest, storms and fog, fire and brimstone. We look for the good *news* of Christ incarnate, crucified and risen, and instead find something that sounds like the Sports Pages: The Newark Liberals have fallen ten points behind in the Eastern Division, and the Fort Worth Synodicals have lost their stadium franchise, while the Los Angeles Dodgers are dealing with "union" problems. Meanwhile, Phoenix doesn't know if it will be hosting the Series or not, and in the Roman league the Cardinals are in an uproar.

I said it before and I'll say it again: our poor church; our poor Christ—for it is Christ's body that suffers here: still our wrongs weaving new thorns to pierce his wounded brow and draping a robe of sorrow over his bleeding shoulders.

In the midst of this turmoil I hear God's voice: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I hear another voice in response, a quiet voice, a slightly reluctant voice, but a steady voice: "Here am I. Send me." For not all of those responding to God's call for laborers are of the "sorting" sort, the separating sort, the divisive sort. No; thanks be to God that some of them at least are of the seeking sort, the gathering sort, the uniting sort.



*George is vested after the manner of priests, in a chasuble made by Br Christian Williams*

For they know that people come to the church because they are hurting and hungry. They know that those who are hungry will gnaw even on stone if that is what they are given instead of bread. But these good servants will not so treat those who come to them. They will give bread to the people. *They* will give the people something to eat.

The people are searching, some of them, for companionship: which means *with-bread-ness*, the loving togetherness of those who break bread together. The people are suffering with famine, not just lack of bread but lack of hearing the comforting Word of God's forgiveness and love. And so they come to the church, to be fed on God's word: for no one can live by bread alone.

Others—some who have been apart from the church for a time—return with a hunger they can not identify: they come not because they have seen signs, but because they have eaten in the past their fill of the loaves, and now return, pleading, "Lord, give us this bread always."

They all come seeking bread, but find much more: like the animals who came to a manger one night and found a child instead, drew back, and gazed with tender eyes at their creator. For the food we seek, the bread we crave is Jesus himself, come down from heaven, Christ incarnate in human flesh, Christmas dawning in our souls.

Jesus said, Pray the lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest. And the Lord said, Whom shall I send? And Clare's voice, echoing many others from all our history, answers: Here am I, Lord. Send me.

And so, Clare, I give you this charge: *Do the work of a shepherd*: But as you do so, remember that you are at the same time a sheep yourself. For even the great shepherd is himself a lamb, and a lamb with the marks of slaughter upon him, giving up his life for the world. And as he does so, a saving stream of living water flows from his side, and he becomes the light of the City of God: Walk in that Lamb-light as a child of God among the children of God. And may the God of peace who brought again from the dead this Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal cove-

nant, equip you with everything good for the doing of God's will.

And, as it is God's will, *do the work of an evangelist*: Bring people the good news of salvation: that we are forgiven our sins as we forgive those who sin against us; and that God loves us. Give people a gracious word to feed them, not a stone of judgment to weigh them down. As dear Canon West once said, "God really does love us, you know; he has absolutely no taste." May the Love of God strengthen and uphold you in spreading the Word of God.

Finally, *do the work of a laborer* in the wheat field: Go joyfully into the harvest to cut and gather and bind the sheaves. But as you gather the grain, do not be overly concerned or worried that you must gather every grain: you are not alone in this ministry, and something must be left for the gleaners: they are careful, and will not miss a single grain. Leave something for Ruth.

And as you gather the wheat and bring it back to be winnowed, don't then store it up in bigger barns: don't let the numbers of church members be the goal of your harvest. Take the grain and grind the grain, and make it into bread. People talk of - *indelible* ministry; and that is good: just don't get involved in *inedible* ministry: *Feed the sheep, feed the lambs*.

And, as you celebrate the holy meal, as you celebrate the eucharist, for the first time, and every time you take and offer and break that bread, be conscious that the bread which you break is the communion of the Body of Christ: it is the bread which came down from heaven for the life of the world, in mercy broken; and it is the sacramental reality of the whole Body of Christ in each of his members in the church: the people of God, who, gathered from the four corners of the earth—like grain once scattered on the hillside now made one in the bread you hold in your hands—are united into the blessed company of all faithful people, the mystical Body of Jesus Christ, to whom be all honor and glory, henceforth, and for evermore. *Amen*.

*Tobias Stanislas  
Haller is editor of  
The Servant.*