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#141

Founder's Forum

The life of prayer and the world of action

It's no small wonder that prayer has a bad name in the world of action. People today are always amazed to find there are still religious praying "for those who cannot pray." People are still amazed "that the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood say four offices a day! But, praying can become a habit—we aren't always aware of what we're saying. We forget what *praying* cost our Lord.

The biblical view of prayer is that it leads directly to action. The idea that prayer is for escapists—to be alone with the Alone—is simply a mistake. Again and again Jesus sought the Father in

prayer. He sought the Father's will in the sick and the marginalized of society.

It carried over to the apostles. They were at prayer when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Later Peter went up to pray and was caught up in the vision of God's acceptance of the Gentiles. He later lost his life while in ministry to those same Gentiles. Prayer is no retreat from the world of action. If anything it plunges us into the very heart of that world.

Prayer and action belong together. Each serves the other. Prayer without action misses the point of prayer and never arrives at its fullness. On the other hand, ac-

tion without prayer is always unimaginative, imprudent and lacking the power of the Holy Spirit. Prayer leads us into creative action.

Prayer is the way we can turn the unlimited resources of God towards saving the world around us. When we truly pray, we open the floodgates of the largest dam in the world. We are not the power. We do not have to be powerful in our-selves. All we have to do is be an opening and let God to the rest.

RTB

For Advent I

A child is coming

Advent is my favorite time of year. The reason is that Advent has so many meaningful facets. One of these is it's being the beginning of the church year. Chris, my husband and my rector, likes to wish the children "Happy New Year" on the First Sunday of Advent!

Secondly, Advent is the beginning of the story of the good news of Jesus. Since it is the beginning, it is a perfect time to share our faith with our children. Little

ones are excited about any activity which reminds them that it is almost Christmas. Garie and Adam (our children) also look forward to the lighting of our family Advent wreath each night during Advent at dinner. There is something special about a meal eaten by candlelight, and during Advent all our dinners are candle-lit.

After the meal, we share an Advent devotion which includes a reading from the Bible, a story about children getting ready for Christmas, and the singing of a

Christmas carol, before we put out the candle or candles on the wreath. It is a very special time of closeness in our family, as we learn about God's love in sending us Jesus.

The birth of a child is the beginning of family life, and so the third facet of Advent is that Advent is a celebration of families. This is the one facet of Advent that the secular world celebrates as the meaning of Christmas. Families are won-

derful and worthy of celebration, but reducing the meaning of Christmas to one of the facets of Advent is a shame. That, however, does not change the fact that the celebration of family is part of Advent. The Incarnation, the human birth of God with us, would have been artificial and false without the sustaining love of a family. Remembering that, and celebrating that it is in our families that we can first experience the love of God, is an important part of Advent.

But Advent is the time *before* the birth, the time of preparation. Advent is the pregnancy. If you have ever waited for the birth of a child, you know how much work there is to be done in Advent. When we prepare for the birth of a child, we have to buy baby clothes (or take them out of storage). We have to *assemble* the new or repair the old baby furniture: the cradle, the bassinet, the crib, the high chair, the changing table, the car seat, the infant carrier ... the list goes on and on. A special room is lovingly deco-rated, and that means painting and wallpapering and putting up curtain rods and curtains.

Preparing for a baby also means time-consuming visits to the doctor. Obstetricians like to teach mothers-to-be about waiting, by letting them sit in their office

while he or she delivers someone *else's* baby. It is a wonder that everything gets done in nine months!

I believe that the most important facet of Advent is that it is not *only* a time of associating with and remembering how Mary and Joseph prepared for the birth of the Christ Child so many years ago. Advent is *our* preparation and working and waiting for the second coming of Christ, who is God Victorious. Advent is time for us to rededicate ourselves to caring for Christ's body that was born in that first Christmas, and lives in Christ's Body, the church. Advent is our time to prepare ourselves and one another for the Advent of the kingdom of God.

There is a story that Saint Francis of Assisi pointed out to Leo that "either we shall all be saved, all of us together, or else we shall all be damned." Having chosen salvation for ourselves, now is the time for us to *work*, to reach out to others with God's love, so that *all* peoples will be ready for Jesus' birth. It is time for us to be doing service to others. It is time for ministry and stewardship. It is time to prepare. It is Advent.

As any good parent knows, no matter how much work was done during the pregnancy, no matter how difficult the

birth process (that's why it's called "labor"), all the preparation for the birth is a piece of cake compared to the work of caring for a child. Well, the Child arrived with Jesus' birth so many years ago. During Advent, we are challenged to care for the Christ child, the Body of Christ, not only through money but also through ministry. That is how *we work* to prepare *all* God's people for the second coming of the Christ.

Advent is a time of joyful preparation, of working and of waiting. Like preparing for the birth of a child and like caring for a child after the birth, it is an all-consuming work. But, also like preparing for the birth of a child and like caring for a child after birth, it is a joy-filled gift. *Mara-natha! Come, Lord Jesus!*

Clare Connell was the first sister to make her profession in the new community-in-information. She ministers as chaplain to the Hospice Program at Community Medical Center in Toms River NJ.

Meeting the community

Taking care



Bernard Fessenden

I was born in Pittsfield MA to William E and Mildred Briggs Fessenden, their second child and only son. Raised a Roman Catholic and rather a sickly child, I was cared for at Saint Luke's Hospital, operated by the Sisters of Providence. I attended Briggs School and, for the first four years, had the same teachers my father and sister had had in this system. We were members of Saint Mark's Church on West Street. I was baptized in the hospital and, conditionally, at the Immaculate Conception Shrine in Lebanon, New York where my parents lived for the first few months

of my life. My parents then moved in with my grandfather, when his wife died.

My father advanced himself in the General Electric Company and was promoted to a position in Hudson Falls, where we lived for a year, at which time they bought a house in a neighboring town, South Glens Falls. I finished grammar school and attended all but the last two years of high school there. At this point we were transferred to Utica, New York and lived in Whitesboro. I graduated from Whitesboro Central High School in 1964, where I was active in various activi-

ties including a capella choir, theatrical productions, Future Teachers of America, the ski club, the debate club, and others which I have forgotten.

When I graduated, I tried my vocation with the Benedictines at Saint Anselm's Abbey College in Manchester, New Hampshire. It was obvious to them and to me that this was not the place where God intended me to stay.

I returned home after a month, worked as a postal carrier for the Christmas season, and prepared to enter college at the State

University of New York, Oneonta. While in college, I went to Utah with the Newman Club. We were building a Catholic church, literally stone by stone, Saint Marguerite's in Tooele UT.

I left college and worked for a brief time in various jobs, but settled into one as an orderly at M.I. Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown. After about six months, I decided to move to Troy and worked in respiratory therapy at Saint Mary's Hospital, a Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul institution.

I then moved to Boston, where I worked at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, while training to be an ophthalmic technician. I was trained to fit contact lenses, do eye diagnostic exams, and refract for glasses.

I graduated from this two-year program and worked for a time for two ophthalmologists in their private practices. At this time I had an apartment in Boston and shared one with friends in Province-town. I decided that I really wanted to be on the Cape and moved to Hyannis. I worked as an orderly at the Cape Cod Hospital. After a year, I realized that it was difficult to advance there, and I re-

turned to Boston. I eventually found a job and settled in.

I began to work for Dr Richard Whiting, who had suffered a stroke. While caring for him, he encouraged me to consider studying nursing. When he died, his widow informed me that he had left instructions that she was to give me the money necessary to attend school. I entered the Boston Public School's Practical Nursing Program. Mrs Whiting insisted that I continue to rent from her for a nominal amount. I graduated from school and worked for three years at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, which affiliated with two other hospitals and became the Brigham and Women's Hospital.

I had hurt my back and was looking for something which was less strenuous when I was introduced to The Addiction Treatment Center of New England. I took a position there and worked as a staff nurse for three years, when I was offered the head nurse position. I worked with heroin users for a total of nine years, as a nurse and a therapist.

During this time, I bought a house with my friend and we had a spiritual awaken-

ing. It was in 1982 that I was led to the Episcopal Church and a few months later was introduced to Brothers Roy Tobin and William Bunting. Thus began my connection with the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory. I entered the postulancy in September 1983.

I have recently taken a new position as a staff nurse in a private psychiatric hospital, called Bournewood, in Brookline, Mass. This is teaching me more about psychiatric disorders and their treatment than I had thought possible!

During the years, I have worked with the Samaritans, a 24-hour suicide prevention center; the AIDS Action hotline; lectured at Boston University on suicide prevention; talked at Tufts University about the spiritual implications of AIDS; and guest lectured at Brookline High School on AIDS and addiction.

I entered the School for Deacons in the Diocese of Rhode Island, but had to take a year off due to illness. I am a member of SS Peter and Andrew Church, Providence. I made my life profession in the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory on January 26, 1991.



Compassionate action

Roy Tobin

Raised in an Irish Catholic family, I always felt that I was called to the religious life; little did I know that God would lead me to an *Anglican* religious community! Having spent some time in a Roman Catholic religious community in California, I was able to see the advantages that the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory offered for someone who wanted to retain a sense of individualism. I enjoy working in the Human Services field and the Brotherhood was a natural fit for me. The ministry in the Brotherhood has opened up—no special ministry is singled out—the ministry of each brother is supported.

After spending about five years at Saint Stephen's Mission in Boston, I got involved in AIDS ministry. A fellow Anglican needed a place to stay for a while; the man was HIV+. Brother Laurence Andrew and I took him in for about three months. This experience changed my life; I will never be the same again. Up until that point, AIDS was only a news article in *Time* or *Newsweek*, but now it was different for me—it was real and it involved real people. Eventually I helped found the South Shore AIDS Project, in Brockton. I have helped give people in the Brockton area an avenue in which to get involved with AIDS ministry. So

many good people have become involved in reaching out to those who are living with HIV.

I am also a social worker for The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, working with families in crisis with drugs and alcohol. I can see God working in the lives of those who are struggling with drugs. Some people are able to leave the drugs and alcohol behind. I know that I am able to do the ministry that I do because the Brotherhood is with me in support and love. And with your prayers, I can continue.

Here and there with the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood

Community notes

Annual Convocation

The community's Annual Convocation took place at Graymoor, the motherhouse of the Society of the Atonement. As in previous years, the Gregorian friars and sisters enjoyed the time spent with their Franciscan hosts, and the Covenant between the Society and the Brotherhood / Companion Sisterhood deepened.

This year's retreat was "Telling Our Stories and Sharing Our Visions"; the leader was **John McDargh** of Boston College. Dr McDargh led the community in exercises directed toward putting the brothers and sisters into closer touch with their individual spirituality. Several Atonement friars shared in the retreat, bringing enriched perspective and insight.

Another highlight was the annual visitation by Bishop Visitor **Walter D Dennis**, Suffragan of New York. Bishop Dennis, along with **Richard Thomas** and **Tobias Stanislas**, led a round-table discussion of the recent General Convention, which all three attended and described from different perspectives. The Bishop also participated in a meeting of the Brotherhood's Council, and was celebrant for the Holy



Retreat leader John McDargh

Eucharist at which **Donovan Aidan** made his life profession in the community, and **Roger-Michael, Ronald Augustine** and **Maurice John** made their first professions. Earlier in the week postulants **S Michael Phillips** and **Steven P Hill** were clothed as novices and given new names, **Francis Andrew** and **Benet**. **Virgil F Fortuna** of Rhode Island was admitted to the postulancy. In the Companion Sisterhood, postulants Carol A

Taylor and Claudia Girling received the novice habit as **Maria Carol** and **Claudia Michael**, and **Joan Knipple** of New Jersey was admitted to the postulancy.

The week was marked by the usual high-quality preaching: **Richard John, Ronald Augustine, Richard Thomas, Tobias Stanislas, Roger-Michael, Edward Ramón, and Francis Andrew** preached at the daily eucharists, which included an outdoor liturgy for healing, and a votive for all the departed commemorated in the intercessions of the community over the past year.

Chapter and Council met during the Convocation. Chapter enacted several amendments in the Rule, Constitution, and Customary; and Council approved the release from vows of **Earl**, who will become a Companion to the community.

On Sunday, several community members assisted in the celebration of the Atonement eucharist in Pilgrim Hall—reading lessons, and forming an impromptu musical schola for a service in English and Italian. As a further seal to the Atonement-Gregorian covenant, an icon of Our Lady of the Atonement (see back cover),



Bishop Dennis and the brothers and sisters, at Graymoor, 1991

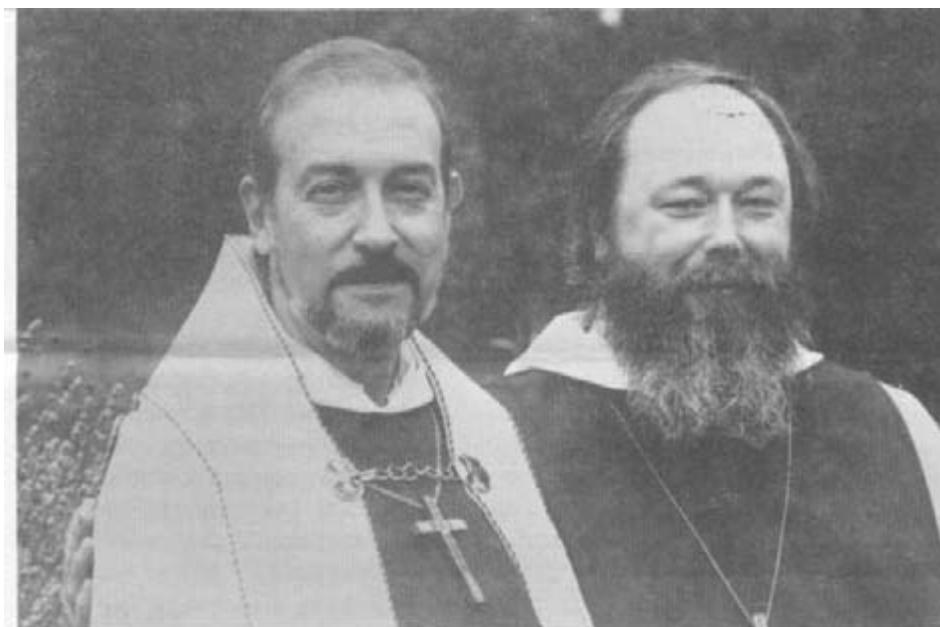
painted by **Michael David**, was presented as a sign of unity.

Province I

Novice **Benet** is the new president of the board of directors for the South Shore AIDS Project, an all-volunteer community group that provides "buddies" for PWAs and runs support groups for persons whose lives are impacted by HIV. The client population has changed from predominantly gay men to almost exclusively persons with substance abuse histories. SSAP is making adjustments to help meet the needs of this new client group. Benet replaced outgoing president and co-founder, our own brother **Roy**.



(i to r) Tobias Stanislas, John Peter, Richard Thomas, and Bishop Dennis



Richard Thomas and Donovan Aidan

Province II

Richard Thomas served as registrar for the consecration of Bishop **Julio Cesár Holguín** of the Dominican Republic. He presented the new bishop with rochet and chimere, cassock and sash, and a pectoral cross from the Brotherhood Vestment Exchange. + + + While in the Dominican Republic, he gave a recital on the newly installed Teller's Tracker (Opus 1, 1875) at Church of the Epiphany. The recital included works by Bach, Stanley, Wesley and Bruckner.

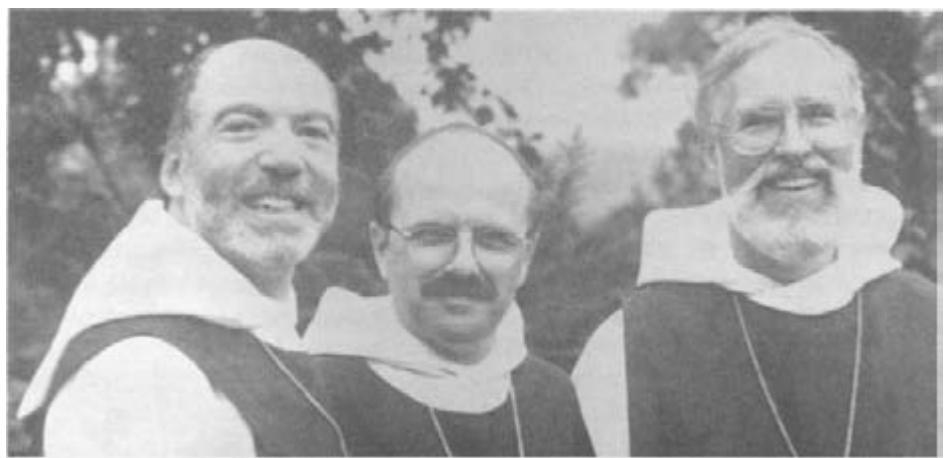
Novice **Christopher Thomas**, a Byzantine scholar with an interest in numismat-

ics, attended the centennial convention of the American Numismatic Association in Chicago this summer. He offered the invocation at the ceremony for the U.S. commemorative postage stamp for numismatics, and at the centennial banquet. While in Chicago he stayed with **Edward Ramón**, and preached at his parish, All Saints.

Clare attended the national conference on Spiritual Care in Hospice sponsored by the National Hospice Organization, in Saint Paul MN. The conference included presentations by Dr **Robert Coles**, Rabbi **Harold Kushner**, and **Ram Dass**.

Province West

Provincial **Thomas Joseph** led a quiet day for the Northern Kentucky chapter of



Roger-Michael, Ronald Augustine, and Maurice John

Stephen's, Covington. + + + Companions from Ohio and Kentucky met to discuss the Companions' Rule. The evening started with dinner in Companion **Kay Sturm**'s home. Afterwards, the Rule was discussed, and several changes were proposed. These were presented to the Chapter at Annual Convocation by director of Companions **Bernard Francis**, and referred to Council for action at its October meeting. + + + All Saints' Chicago was the scene of the quarterly quietday, led

by **Thomas Joseph**; brothers, Companions and friends attended.

Ted Novack, SA, visited for four days with **Bernard Francis**, in Madison WI. The first day, naturally, Ted ordered some cheese to be sent back home to Graymoor, and enjoyed a tour of Madison, including the university area and the capitol. On Saturday it was "country time" and the friars went to an Old Time Corn Roast, and off to look for sandhill

cranes along the marsh (they spotted one). They ended the day at Saint Denis' Roman Catholic Church. On Sunday, Ted was a guest at Bernard Francis' parish, Saint Luke's, and he received a warm and wonderful greeting. That afternoon they visited the Cave of the Mounds; and on Monday visited the Mississippi River, enjoying some abundant and inexpensive food in a river-town eatery.

Kerygma Korner

Convention vignettes

The Episcopal Church came through General Convention strengthened at its core. Refusing to invoke law in answer to complex pastoral difficulties holds true to the best of Anglicanism, and—as far as I'm concerned—the Gospel.

- I was there helping the Episcopal News Service provide secular reporters with information, canonical history, and blow-by-blow commentary on action in the Houses. There were two large TV monitors, one for Bishops, the other for Deputies, rather like large aquariums, one salt, one fresh. The salty bishops, recognized by their bright coloration, tended to nip at each other's fins, and splashed about a bit more than the deputies. Reporters sat by the monitors taking notes, and I'd fill in gaps. I hope never again to have to explain "a vote by orders"!
- I had several good conversations with a priest from Episcopalian United, whose news coverage, and that of the Episcopal Synod/Prayer Book Society, was well-balanced; the editorials were another matter. Some of the tirades against the Supplemental Liturgical Texts, and on the subject of sexuality, were very weak; the criticism and theology were undistinguished—and sometimes amusing! In one editorial error I'm sure he'll never be allowed to forget, Dr Peter Toon wrote in *The Source* about "Christ and the Church, His bridegroom"!
- It was strange as well to see the Synod bishops flip-flop. A few years ago they were defending their right to decide

who was an appropriate ordinand. One of their leaders had called the diocese "the basis of the Catholic Church . . . the Catholic Church in Miniature, yes, but also in entirety . . . Not a political entity, but a Divine Entity" (Bp Stanley Atkins). Yet in Phoenix—where the question was not sex but sexuality—they *protested* the suggestion that the dioceses be allowed to decide who should be ordained.

- In one stirring debate, several bishops rose to say they wished to have their names added to the list if Bps Righter and Haines were censured for having ordained noncelibate homosexual persons. Bishop Dennis gave a very sharp and stirring indictment of the concept of censure, pointing out that our canon law doesn't provide for it.
- A revised canon on religious communities, which the Title III revision committee asked me to frame, passed. This revision corrects several errors and inconsistencies, and includes a new section dealing with solitaries.

General Convention needs to be simplified; but how? The number of—or deadline for—resolutions could be limited. The paper ballots and printouts of resolutions could be replaced with electronic media. But the great question remains: Why have two houses?

Normally such a structure (as in Congress) balances equal and proportional representation. But in General Convention each diocese has more or less equal representation in *both houses*.

The existence of separate houses impedes discerning the mind of the church. Bishops don't know what the deputies are doing, and *vice versa*. Debate in each house is not heard in the other: so the sometimes excellent reasoning in one house does not serve to inform the other.

Why not explore a one-house legislature consisting of all bishops, three clergy, and three lay deputies from each diocese. Employing electronic technology, all votes could require a simple majority *in all three orders*. This would preserve the only real virtue our current structure provides, the assurance of consensus between orders. For matters in which a clearer mandate is desired, where the current "vote by orders" is used, a two-thirds majority in each would suffice.

Some clergy might feel unenthusiastic about disagreeing with their bishop to his or her face; but clergy and bishops might find it salutary to confront each other a little more often, face to face. I understand the bishops value the collegiality of their house; and it is appropriate for the bishops to meet *in interim sessions* to develop pastoral letters and deal with other matters in their portfolio.

I left Phoenix glad to be an Episcopalian. Painful as some of the moments were, frustrating as the process was at times, all in all, this is a church I would not trade for any other.

TSH