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#143

Founder's Forum

The hands of Jesus



On December 26, 1991, Marion Pierce, beloved friend for almost 20 years, died. Marion was one of those wonderfully talented people who create great art with their hands. Her Christmas ornaments are some of the most creative pieces you will find anywhere. I have a treefull. Hands—those wondrous hands God gave us. They can create beauty or wreak havoc. They can heal and they can kill. As Marion lay dying in the hospital, I was constantly aware of those hands. I held them many times during the several weeks she was ill. They were gifted hands—given artistic talent by God. She used them well. I'm going to miss those hands. I miss *her*.

Hands are revealing. Palm reading is an old and distrusted cult, but it does take note of the hands. A musician's hands are tender and sensitive; those of one who labors are calloused and strong; those of an invalid are weak and nervous. In the carpenter's shop, Jesus learned the ways of labor. Through work, he gained knowledge of the toils and burdens of working people.

His were also healing hands. Many a diseased body felt that wonderful touch. He touched a leper and the leper became clean. He used those hands to break the bread and deliver the eucharist to us. With those hands he anointed the sick and gave sight to the blind.

Hands are used in so many ways to illustrate so many things. Hands signify security. They signify trust. "No one shall snatch them out of my hands." Hands also suggest guidance. As I have said many times, that guiding hand of God is always there. The hands of Jesus are there as we walk by faith. It has been



said that it is better to walk with God in the dark than to follow a known road.

Hands suggest fulfillment. "Our times are in God's hands"—who never leads us into the wilderness without preparing the strength for us to make the journey. Those hands lead us to attain "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

It is only under the mastery of Christ that human life comes to its best. I know it was that way for Marion. It is that way for all of us. Hands; creation: a life well lived. Let the hands of Jesus guide our hands in the years to come. We can't go wrong.

Thomas and us

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

We seem to forget about that little band of followers who were called Jesus' disciples. We in the 20th century have had, for the past two Sundays, a festival air about us. On Palm Sunday we sang "Hosannas" and on Easter, "Alleluias!" But in between these two Sundays we seem to forget what happened to his followers.

Since our Lord was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, the disciples scattered, afraid for their own lives. Those were anything but joyful days. They watched the events unfold before their eyes, always from a distance. They were a stunned and frightened group. What could they do?

There were the trials, the scourging, the carrying of the cross to Calvary, the nailing of our Lord's body to that cross, the agony he suffered upon it. They watched him die; they saw his body put into the tomb. All this they watched from a distance.

Then last Sunday—the Resurrection—our Lord's body not being in the tomb. The women finding the tomb empty. The heart-rending cry: "They have taken away our Lord and we know not where they have laid him!"

Then in the upper room Jesus suddenly appears to the disciples. Not all of them were present. Thomas was not there. Perhaps Thomas had to get away from everyone. He wanted to be alone. He had to think. He had to question. Thomas always questioned our Lord's words. He once asked Jesus how they could know the way. Our Lord's reply was "I am the way, the truth, and life." Thomas was the Man from Missouri—"prove it to me!"

Perhaps Thomas had now given up. His beloved master and teacher was dead. How could he get along without him? The other disciples sought him out. They told him they had seen the Lord. Thomas could not believe them. He had to see

him; he had to touch the wounds, thrust his hand into the wounded side. Then he would believe. But first he tortures his mind with his questioning for another whole week, perhaps again on his own, off in his solitary disbelief. Finally, he thinks it might be better to be with his friends and the other followers of Jesus. Perhaps being with them would help. He could not stand being alone with his unhappy thoughts.

He goes back and joins the others. And we all know what happens: Jesus appears. He shows Thomas his wounds, wounds he now is too 'ashamed to touch. He falls on his knees and exclaims "My Lord and my God!"

Like Thomas, we too often question; we have traumatic experiences that shatter our faith. We may lose it momentarily or for several months, rejecting all our faith, our belief.

**Lord,
I believe,
help my unbelief...**

Our Lord—God—knows our needs, our anxieties, our frustrations. Our Lord surrounded himself with people who represented every possible situation humankind could get into.

There was Peter, an unstable fellow jokingly called the Rock, first to confess the Christ, yet quick to deny him, then afterwards loving him so much the more. James and John, brothers, Sons of Thunder, who argued over which one would sit next to Jesus in his kingdom; constantly arguing among themselves—typical brotherly love. Philip: patient, hesitating, always estimating the cost

would be required to feed the multitudes if necessary. Andrew, the brother of Peter, was the first to follow the Lord. Judas Iscariot, the treasurer, always complaining about how much things cost, he sold Jesus cheap, getting only 30 pieces of silver. And of course, Thomas, the one who always questioned our Lord's words and who demanded to see and touch the wounds of the crucified Christ. These disciples represent segments of all humankind. We find a part of their characteristics in all of us. Is it any wonder our Lord knows our needs?

Let us do as Thomas did: whose faith, once shattered, became a reality again and strengthened him to go out and spread the gospel. Let us spread the gospel, too, first by letting Christ come into our hearts and minds and into our lives, then through us into the community by our actions. Our constant prayer at all times being: "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." We will have our doubts, our anxious moments of anxiety and frustration. But as soon as we let him, God will appear to us and help us over the rough roads. Then, unlike Thomas, we may believe without seeing the Risen Christ. As our faith becomes stronger each day, our constant prayer to the Father should be: "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." Then we may exclaim with Thomas: "My Lord and my God!"

This sermon was preached by William E Bunting, BSG at St. Andrew's Church, the Bronx, New York, on Sunday, April 10, 1983. William died on October 12, 1988.

Meeting the community



Bless the work of our hands

Peace to you. I now live in Natchitoches, LA where I find my vocation and min-

istry as brother, artist and musician. Life in our town is quiet, and people hold onto the old traditions of the South—those of cooking, church and community, culture, and hospitality. We use "Sir" and "Ma'am" on an hourly basis. Here too, is Trinity Parish, with a venerable, fine and sturdy brick structure of Romanesque architectural pattern. The interior features fine stained glass, and aged varnished wood. Should you see the film "Steel Magnolias" you will see the interior of Trinity Church. Many of my friends are in the film as well.

I teach art at the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts, a public residential high school for juniors and seniors who have been invited and selected to study in our "gifted and talented" programs. The school is the second of its kind in the US, and one of the few of such to include the arts: dance, drama, music, and graphic and visual arts. We

are on the campus of Northwestern State University and have two additional institutions for children and ninth graders.

Much of my ministry, therefore, is with the university and the students who are unique and are experiencing dramatic changes in their lives. It is through the visual arts that I have daily contact with young people. We offer classes in etching, painting, drawing, design, sculpture, mixed-media, and a new telelearning system to many other schools in various Louisiana parishes (*counties*, to y'all).

I happen to be the *only* art teacher for studio work. I am also involved with the drama program, designing sets and costumes. And our director, Myrna Schexnider, has produced such plays as Strindberg's *A Dream Play* and a musical adaptation of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. For these productions, and others, I have built sets which featured some twenty movable flats, two-story scaffolding, and an 18 foot animated projection.

My ministry in music is directly involved in the school, the parish, and ecumenically. I am a bass vocalist, and play flute



Tobias Stanislas, the icon of Our Lady of the Atonement, and Michael David.

and keyboard. Three of us have a combo which is called LSMSA After Five.

My work in the visual arts has been exhibited in invitationals and competitive showings throughout the States, in England and Finland. I also work in the liturgical arts, in worship space, vestments, paraments, and paint icons and altar-pieces. Such works are scattered from Tampa, Florida to Vancouver, Washington. Before entering teaching at the secondary level, I was a university professor with an MFA degree from the University of Iowa, and a student of Mauricio Lasansky.

My original home, where my mother still lives on the farm, is near Battle Ground, Washington. And in the Pacific Northwest reside my sisters, brother, their children, and my great nephew and niece. My other family, my brothers and sisters in Christ, live all over the States.

Companions on the way

Focus on Associates



Associates are men and women who follow their own *Rule*. They find that it extends

their church activities beyond parochial and denominational bounds, as they become part of a larger family participating in dialogue and fellowship with other Associates and with brothers and sisters of the community.

The mission of the church is to bring people closer to God and to each other. This fundamental precept is the basis upon which the *Associates' Rule* is built.

The Associates' Rule

An Associate shall pray at least one office daily which shall include: a selection from the Psalter, one or more readings of Scripture, one or more canticles, the Apostles Creed, the Lord's Prayer, one or more prayers or collects, and a form of intercession (using the current intercession list from *The Servant*).

An Associate shall increase in knowledge of the Bible and of the worship and history of the church, in order better to serve the Body of Christ.

An Associate shall take part in a public service of worship once in each week and remember the Brotherhood and Associates in prayer.

An Associate shall attend the Brotherhood's Annual Convocation Eucharist when possible.

An Associate shall maintain communication with the Director of Associates and report once a year concerning observance of the *Associates' Rule*.

An Associate shall wear the Associates' Pin when practicable.

An Associate shall assist the Brotherhood regularly, as he or she is able, through prayer and financial support.

Anyone interested in becoming an Associate should contact the Director of Associates: Br Bernard Francis LaReau, BSG, 4531 Martha Lane, Unit E, Madison WI 53714-3200

Remembering Marion

Marion Pierce and her twin sister Cecil Berges, who died the year before, were the first two Associates of the Brotherhood. Marion's funeral was an occasion for giving thanks for a life filled with love and Christian service, and it was attended by many of her fellow parishioners from St Bartholomew's Church, White Plains. Ten of our brothers were on hand, including a contingent from

Province I. Rick Belanger and Earl Christian proudly represented the Associates.

Marion died on St Stephen's Day; what more appropriate time could there be for her to gain her reward for a lifetime spent in serving and caring for others than on that day set aside by the church to commemorate its first deacon Stephen? I met "the twins" about 1975, while pondering the implications of religious life in the Brotherhood of St Gregory. Cecil and Marion were mainstays of our Founder, Richard Thomas, and without their support in the early days our community's quality of life would have been considerably lower. In those days St Bartholomew's Church was the center of our corporate life and every gathering was ably assisted by Cecil and Marion, who were always the first to volunteer their large house to accommodate the out-of-town members, and to prepare dinners

for sometimes more than 50 guests at a sitting! Marion's special talent was in working with fabric: she created the first cope worn by our Superior General, as well as a number of habits for our brothers (she made my novice habit and added the scapular at my first profession—I still have them). In recent years, as our community was blessed with so many members that the use of retreat centers for our gatherings became a necessity, smaller meetings of the Council and of Province II continued to be welcomed into Cecil and Marion's home.

The Brotherhood, and the church, have not lost their support in the communion of saints, where light perpetual shines upon them.

James

Here and there with the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood

Community notes

Province I

Ciarán Anthony took part in a worship service with the Unitarian Universalist congregation of Milford NH. He provided music at the prelude, and a reflection later in the service.

The Church of St John the Evangelist, Boston, reprinted our "Collect for the Seventh Day of Creation: the Sabbath" in its parish newsletter.

Province II

Clare, who serves as chaplain of the hospice program of Community Medical Center of Toms River NJ, officiated at the annual memorial service there. This service honored the more than 200 patients who have died during the past year. The memorial service is held every November, National Hospice Month. + + + Clare also participated in the Compassionate Friends "Remembering Our Children" service in mid-December, along with Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Presbyterian clergy.

Christopher Stephen attended the professions of John Raphael Aguilar-Cruz and Jaimie Soto, co-founders of the

Brothers and Sisters of St Francis. The new ecumenical community draws on Franciscan spirituality, and has received support from many, including **Bishop Walter D Dennis** and the Rev James Forbes of Riverside Church. + + + Christopher Stephen has been appointed interim administrator for St Peter's (NYC) capital campaign. He has been a member of the parish for two-and-a-half years, and has served as chair of the building committee, which is overseeing restoration of the 153-year-old building.

Stephen has received a certificate acknowledging 500 hours' service to the Covenant House NineLine. The hotline provides crisis counseling and intervention to troubled youth and their families. Stephen has served as a volunteer counselor over the last four years.

The provincial Advent quiet day was held at Holy Trinity Church, South River NJ. The theme of "The Spirituality of Waiting" was supported through meditations by **Christopher Stephen** and a Quaker-style hour of silence and speaking in the Spirit. The eucharist was celebrated by **Clare**.

Tobias Stanislas' "Map of the Anglican World" serves as the center spread of *The Anglican Communion: A Guide*, a new publication produced by the Anglican Consultative Council, 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UT.

Province West

Ronald Augustine assisted in the liturgy for the Sixth National Day of Prayer for Persons Living with HIV/AIDS at St James' Cathedral, Chicago.

Bernard Francis has begun a new ministry as a eucharistic minister and visitor to the sick and shut-ins, in Madison WI.

Novice **Francis Andrew** contributed an Advent article to the parish newsletter of All Saints, Beverly Hills. He also read one of the lessons in the National Public Radio broadcast of the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols from the parish.

With the permission of Bishop Visitor **Walter D Dennis**, Council has released **Kevin James** from his life vows of profession in the Brotherhood.