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#146

Founder's Forum

God's tools—or Partners?

*I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I arm you, though you do not know me.
—Isaiah 45:5*

"I arm you, though you do not know me" This was God's word about Cyrus, king of Persia, by the lips of Isaiah the prophet. Cyrus had just done a remarkable thing. When he captured Babylon, he found the Jewish exiles there, and set them free to return to Jerusalem to re-build it. He was the means of their deliverance. No doubt he had his own end to serve—he was a leader of a mighty empire. He did not in the least understand that his actions would be the instrument of God's purpose for Israel. In serving his own designs, he was really fulfilling God's plan.

Many of the things which turn out to count the most in life are little things we do along the way: not the things we intend, or not for the reason we intend them. God makes use of our actions even when we are not conscious of God's presence in them.

But are we God's tools—or partners? The story of Cyrus shows *that* even those who might seem to be working against God—or at least apart from God—are being used by God. God will use as tools any who think they can exist apart and alone, seeking only their own ends. But God prefers us to be partners, using our skills—not simply being used. The

choice meets us every day—at work and at play. We can merely be tools. Or we can see God's purpose for and in our labor to get things made and done for his children. We can work in partnership with God.

Our life can be the plaything of various cultural currents and personal desires. But God has a great purpose in the world, and he wants us to share it. That is the message of Christ. He came to call us into a life partnership.

Richard Thomas

For Proper 18

Bones of contention

*I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live; loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and **holding** fast to him for that means life.
—Deuteronomy 30:15,19-20a*

There is a story about a little dog who had been given a bone to enjoy. The dog was happy, and wagged his tail in gratitude so that his entire body shook with delight. As he walked over a bridge on

his way home, the dog noticed another dog carrying another bone, one that looked bigger than the one he had been given. In response, the little dog leaned over the bridge to bark his anger. Need-

less to say, the bone dropped into the water when he opened his mouth to bark. As the bone hit the water, that rippled in response, the other dog disappeared.

On one level, this story just teaches us not to be greedy over a reflection, and that one can lose what one already has in chasing after an imitation. It is the familiar story about being careful before going for more. It is the same worldly wisdom Jesus echoes, reminding people that one does not start building a tower until one is sure that one can complete the project. One does not rush into battle unless one is certain of having a bigger army or a better defensive position. However, if one is looking for the secret to happiness or abundant living, one must look to the first part of the story. The little dog was happy when he was expressing his gratitude to the one who gave him the bone. Joy comes out of thankfulness, and the puppy wagged his entire body in delight. The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice ... Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which

passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 4-7) Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Always and for everything give thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father." (Eph. 5:20)

When I worked in a nursing home, I was able to observe life stripped to the essentials. There were lots of "little dogs" there, looking around to see if they had the "biggest bone." The resident on the low cholesterol diet was busy looking at her neighbor's gravy, while the diabetic neighbor was looking at her neighbor's lemon meringue pie. Both were miserable, and both looked foolish. There were other puppies who avoided looking foolish, but who passed their time in loneliness. Then, of course, there were a few happy dogs who were busy wagging their tails in gratitude. They had problems that necessitated their residence at a nursing home, but they weren't jealous and they weren't lonely. They had God as their center and they had life. Staff and family continue to sense this secret joy

and often stop by to appreciate their "wagging tails."

True happiness or abundant living comes from acknowledging God as creator, and thanking God for the gift of life. Celebrating the gift of life draws us out of ourselves and into community, in service to one another. To be thankful means to realize the blessings that one has, rather than being jealous of what one doesn't have. Both relationships and possessions pale in importance to following Christ. We can be thankful by giving because we understand that we will never have all the things or the depth of relationships we want, but we can "rejoice always" in the presence and care of God.

Clare ministers as chaplain to the Hospice Program at Community Medical Center in Toms River NJ.

Meeting the community



To serve you all my days

Thomas Joseph

I was born in Hamilton OH, son of the late William and Mildred Ross.

I entered the community in July 1980, and professed my life vows on March 14, 1987. In the community I am in my second term as Provincial of Province V, and serve on the Council of the Brotherhood.

In my daily work I serve on staff at Christ Episcopal Church, Cincinnati, where I have worked for ten years. I attend St Stephen's parish, Covington KY, where I serve as senior warden and acolyte master, and as a lay reader and chalice administrant. In December 1988 I completed the four-year EFM program from the School of Theology, University

of the South. I am also a volunteer on the In Patient Unit at the Hospice of Cincinnati, where I do primary nursing care. It's the ministry that's closest to my heart, and where I encounter God in each patient, family member, and nurse, each time I'm there.

Here and there with the Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood

Community Notes

Province I

Roy attended a retreat with the Brothers of the Mercy of God (an ecumenical community) and others interested in talking about a vocation to religious life. Workshops and discussion groups were held on religious vows, the Taizé community, and the ecumenical movement. + + +

Roy, Donovan Aidan, and Bernard

later attended the profession of four brothers of the BMG.

Province II

The provincial Ember Day retreat was held at St John's, South Salem NY. **Tobias Stanislas** led off with a medita-

tion on "The Three Rs-Repentance, Reconciliation, and Renewal" and a workshop on evangelism. **William Francis** led a mediation-time in the afternoon, and the Rev Lynn Harrington celebrated the concluding eucharist, at which **Tobias Stanislas** preached.

(continued page 3, column 3)

Intercessions

**The
Brotherhood &
Companion
Sisterhood of
Saint Gregory**
Visitor

Walter D Dennis *Life Professed*

Richard Thomas Biernacki
John E Nidecker, d 6.20.88
James Teets
Christian Williams
Luke Anthony Nowicki
John Peter Clark
William Francis Jones
Stephen Storen
Thomas Joseph Ross Tobias
Stanislas Haller *William E
Bunting, d 10.12.88* Thaddeus
David Williams Roy Tobin
Edward Munro
Charles Kramer
Laurence Andrew Keller
Bernard Fessenden
Bernard Francis LaReau
Donovan Aidan Bowley

Annual Professed

George Keith
Michael David Elvestrøm
Edward Ramón Riley
Christopher Stephen Jenks
Ciarán Anthony DellaFera
William Edward Orce
Damian-Curtis Kellum
Ronald Silas MacGregor
Richard John Lorino
Clare Connell
Roger Goodman
Ronald Augustine Fox
Maurice John Grove

Novices

Charles Edward LeClerc
Mark Harris
Francis Andrew Phillips
Benet Hill
Maria Carol Taylor
Claudia Michael Girling
Andrew Fortuna
Francis Jane Knipple

Postulants

William A Webber IV
Gordon J Stanley
Ernestine G Burke

Associates

Cecil Berges, d 10.16.90
Marion Pierce, d 12.26.91
Helen Marie Joyce, VHM
Robert Macon
Jeff Emmett
Grosvenor Calkins
Richard A Belanger
Thomas Ferguson, FSC
Joseph di Mauro ^{MSA}
Catherine W Sturm
Mary Helen Clare
Maryann Wolff
Stephen D Montgomery
Joseph F O'Day
Fidel Flores
Karl W Fry
Brendan Nugent
Sheila Gould
Joseph W Phillips
Earl Christian
Lawrence LeRoy David
Kenneth Staples
David Smith
William R Munroe
Wendell Allen
and The Friends of the Brotherhood

**Religious
Communities**

The Sacramentine and Visitandine Nuns
The Society of the Atonement
The Society of St John the Evangelist
Camaldolese Benedictines / Incarnation
Priory

For healing

Damian-Curtis Kellum, BSG
William Edward Orce, BSG
Kenneth Staples, aIBSG
Marcell Belanger
Emil Harvey
Bill Boyd
For all who live with HIV/AIDS

Departed

Horace W B Donegan
Charlotte B Morgan
J Norman Hall
George T Koerner

Henry N Fukui
Thomas John Davidson
Elizabeth Ann Jurewicz
William Lewis 44 SA
Page Bigelow
Charles F Hall

Intentions

The Decade of Evangelism
Joseph Richey House
Thaddeus David Williams, BSG
Roger Goodman, BSG
Stephen Storen, BSG
Claudia Michael Girling, n/CSSG
Gustavo A Mansilla Adrienne M
DiMicco David
St Stephen's, Providence RI
The Jurewicz/Knipple family

Thanksgiving

The ordinations of Charles Judson Aelred
Glidden and William Gordon Forrest,
OSB, to the diaconate

**Covenant
Collect**

Almighty and everlasting God, you filled
your servant Gregory with evangelistic
zeal and with pastoral wisdom; and you
gave to your servant Francis a burning
desire to be one with Christ, and to
build up the church: Enable the Society
of the Atonement and the Brotherhood
of Saint Gregory to preserve that zeal
and fervor, and to exercise that pastoral
skill to the upbuilding of your church,
that all may be one, to your glory alone;
and this we ask in the Name of your
Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

(continued from page 2)

Province V

Ronald Augustine served as thurifer at
three major liturgical events in the Chi-
cago area recently. First was a Roman
Catholic-Episcopal-Lutheran covenant
celebration, "Re-membling Christ's
Church"; Joseph Cardinal Bearnardin was
officiant. Next came solemn second ves-
pers at the River Forest Dominican Cen-
ter; followed by first vespers of Peter and
Paul at Madonna della Strada Chapel at
Loyola University.