

THE SERVANT



HE SHALL GIVE
HIS ANGELS
CHARGE OVER
YOU, TO KEEP
YOU IN ALL
YOUR WAYS.

*Archangels Gabriel and
Michael, terra cotta
sculpture by Michael
David, Trinity Church,
Natchitoches LA*

#150

July / September 1993

STICKING TO NATURE AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

A once-popular theologian once said that Jesus was not crucified because he said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow," but rather, "Consider the scribes and pharisees, how they steal." The over-simplification may be pardoned: stealing is not confined to money and property, and when caught at it, perpetrators are inclined to strike back—and violently.

At this time of year we may do well to emulate the Lord of life and give some attention to the lilies of the field and the world of nature they represent. With the increasing urbanization of what was once true rural living, it is important to remember that Jesus was a country boy. His public ministry took him to hill-tops and valleys, out in the middle of grassy fields, under the open sky.

Remember too, that the Master of Life taught by parables

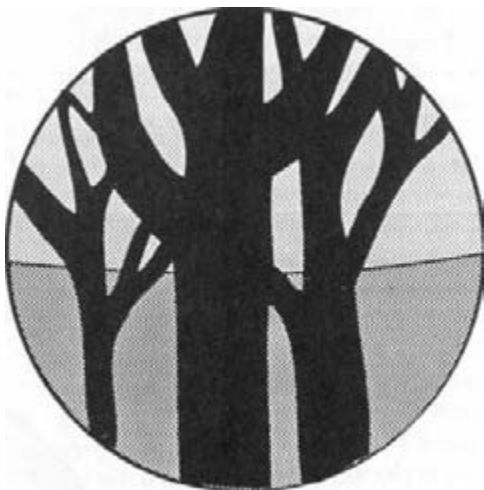
which imaged mainly nature themes; shepherds tending sheep, farmers planting crops, tiny mustard seeds growing into mighty trees. He used animals: foxes, wolves and birds, hens, swine; the camel and the donkey. What did Jesus perceive and emphasize in our Father's world? British preacher GT Bellhouse provides an insight here. Jesus was always conscious of

- + the wonder and mystery of nature;

- + the "reliability, regularity and responsiveness" of nature; and

- + the peacefulness of nature, even when nature produces and exhibits fierce turbulence and terrific storms.

In the first there is the thought of the secrecy of plant growth, of mystery blowing in the wind. The great nature-lover is also a lover of peace. Under the second, Jesus cites the dependability of nature.



We do not gather grapes from thorns. Even when a seed seems to die, God has provided a resurrection. We know that. And, in the third—consider the lilies: they send down their roots without trumpets or fanfares. They lift their heads to the sun and rain. What a contrast to our frenetic and often furious fretting. Why cannot we, who are guarded and guided by the divine wisdom, love, and power, live with the peace of nature at the center? With Christ, we are never blind to nature; we are also aware of God's world of wonder, purpose and peace.

Richard Thomas

A meditation on being human

THE CREATION CONCEPT

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

With these words the story of God's creative activity begins, an all-embracing statement about the origin of the universe in which we live.

Paul's words to the Galatians (3:23-29) go far beyond what they say on the surface. His prime message is *faith*, the kind of faith that Abraham had when, without hesitation, he went blindly into a new land at God's command. Since that time, through all the ages, people have sought to prove the existence of God. God is not simply a conclusion we draw because the world exists. If we only believe in God because we have no other way to account for the world of nature—if God becomes just the "unexplained" remainder after science has done its job—then we do not know God at all. God

would be nothing more than our explanation of something else—of the fact that the world exists. He would be a product of our own minds or, even worse, a figment of our imaginations.

The knowledge that God created the heavens and earth has enormous practical consequences for our understanding of God, humanity and the world. We know that the universe and its inhabitants did not just hap-

pen. The doctrine of creation also tells us who we are. In our age of recurring identity crises, we do well to look back to Jeremiah's age. He discovered that God knew more about him than he had ever dreamed. "Before I formed you in the

womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you." (Jer. 1:5)

It is wrong to say as many do today, "I belong to myself; what I do with my life is no one's business but my own." From birth to death we are God's children and by virtue both of our creation and redemption we remain God's children; created possessions raised by freedom and adoption to the status of heirs. Paul tells us, "You are not your own; you were bought with a price." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) He says further that those who wish to live outside and beyond the realm of the freedom permitted by God are faithless, and will live



without faith or grace. Humankind is not free to do with life whatever it wills. Those who are baptized and are *born of God* are responsible to God, and that responsibility invariably places restrictions

upon the human quest for unlimited freedom.

The concept of creation in God's image tells us that we are molded and shaped to resemble God. Male and female come into this domain endowed with unique capacities: emotional creatures who could love and be loved, moral creatures who could respond to God our master, rational creatures who could master their domain.

Can we see any relationship between the concept of *image* and the fact that people experience

+ a sense of fulfillment as they engage in creative ventures?

(+ a sense of well-being as they engage in self-giving?)

+ a sense of guilt as they participate in moral infractions? (The Ten Commandments do not offer a choice of one from column A and one from column B)

+ and a sense of frustration as they separate themselves from God?

If Paul is right, humankind, the very crown of the creation process, is the chief object of God's saving love. Why did God create the heavens and the earth? What was and is God's reason and purpose in creation? Creation does not exist by itself but by the will of God. The aim, object and purpose of creation is not sought in creation itself, but only in the God who made it, who maintains it and who cares for it. Apart from God, the world and the universe have no goal, no purpose, and no destiny—life itself would be quite without meaning. It is impossible to understand God's creative act except as the work of his overflowing love. God created a being in his own image, with whom he can enjoy fellowship and with whom he can enter into a partnership. Creation may be understood as the sphere, the arena, the place where this relationship is established: where

God's incomprehensible love is displayed and demonstrated.

The words of Psalm 19.1-4, tell us that the creation is a theater of God's glory: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. One day tells it's tale to another, and one night imparts knowledge to another. Although they have no words or language and their voices are not heard: their sound has gone out into all lands and their message to the ends of the world."

The sequel to creation is covenant: the partnership into which God fully and freely enters with creation. It is the covenant which declares, proclaims and reveals the meaning for creation; God's desire for fellowship with beings made in his image, you and I.

People of our generation look in vain for meaning and purpose in their lives; they are looking in the wrong places. The pursuit of wealth, pleasure, and status—as though they were capable of giving meaning to our lives—is an illusion. We are grateful when they come, but they are the sort of things that perish while they are being used. Creation is the work of God's love, the covenant is the expression of that love. It is the assurance to all of his creation that his love for us is a visible reality—now and always.

In the light of that love, who are we then to love anyone less for any reason, when God loves all with equal affection. He created the world to be a climate of love and fellowship. Genesis' question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" is answered in John's Gospel, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Finally, the preservation of God's intent for his creation belongs to humankind by divine decree. God said, "Have dominion." He created a perfect world

and it was his intent that his created ones
experience
+ harmony with him
+ a harmony with self
+ a harmony with others
+ a harmony with nature

I and all of this is contingent upon
obedience to God.

The doorway to eternal life is open and
fellowship between the creator and the
created is open. God longs for the company
of his creatures; let us find harmony with
ourselves, so we may find harmony with
God.

William Edward

Meeting the community

FAITH SECURE

Stephen

I was the only child
of Irish-born
parents, deeply
devout Roman
Catholics for

whom Irishness was equated with Roman
Catholicism. I grew up in a tight-knit,
loving home on Upper West Side Man-
hattan near Columbia University. That area
then, as now, was a cultural and ethnic
mecca with students and others from all over
the world. I went to elementary school at
Corpus Christi, a diverse school with students
from many different ethnic and economic
backgrounds, all receiving a first-rate
education.

Corpus Christi was also a very liberal
parish and the place where the Archdiocese
of New York assigned priests who were in
political trouble of one sort or another. The
parish maintained a very rich (and
somewhat Anglican) choral and liturgical
tradition which it maintains to this day. I
still vividly remember as an eighth grader
going to a High Mass and then watching a
draft card burning on the steps of the
church presided over by the Catholic
chaplain at Columbia who lived in the
parish rectory. I was well into

my journey in the Episcopal Church when I
realized that my experiences at Corpus
Christi with its diversity, emphasis on social
action and liturgy laid the ground work for
my interest in the Episcopal Church.

When I was 15 we moved to Ireland,
where I would experience a superior edu-
cational system on the one hand, but a
church with a very conservative character
that was closely tied up with nationalistic
sentiments that I did not identify with or
have any interest in. I enjoyed life in Ire-
land as much as any Irish teenager but I
grew distant from the church, and by the
time I returned to New York at the age of 19
I had grown somewhat agnostic.

In 1978 a friend who had grown tired of
my comments about the irrelevance of God (particularly after the breakup of a
relationship that was headed towards
marriage), dared me to visit an Episcopal
parish. I went, liked what I saw and heard,
and the rest is history. I was received on
Pentecost 1979 at Trinity Church, New York
City.

I never thought I would join a religious
community like the Brotherhood of Saint
Gregory. I had always admired my



school teachers, many of whom were religious, and I finally figured out that their communities provided them a framework through which they could use their gifts and exercise ministry. I visited several Episcopal religious houses and eventually met Richard Thomas in January 1980. I entered the postulancy in April of that year. The Brotherhood has provided me with a community of like-minded individuals who center their lives around a rule and ethos that allows each of us the freedom to maximize our spiritual and human potential.

I currently serve on Trinity's outreach committee, as a Morning Prayer officiant, volunteer at our homeless shelter, and delegate to diocesan convention. In my secular profession I am a vice president of Citibank NA, working as a securities law compliance officer for several securities and investment advisory businesses. I am also an arbitrator for the National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc.



THE BUSINESS OF GOD

William Edward

Born in Yonkers NY in 1923, William Edward graduated from the High School

of Commerce and attended NYU where he majored in business administration.

He served with the Third Armored Division in Europe during WWII and was a member of the famous "Task Force

X." He won two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star for Valor.

In 1987, he retired as director of corporate operations of a major retail chain. He is married to Jacqueline Messersmith of Springfield IL and lives in Metamora IL. He serves as lay reader, chalice bearer, and eucharistic minister. He and Jackie are certified Bethel Bible Study teachers and Stephen Ministers. They currently attend All Saints in Morton IL.



MINISTRY AND A JOURNEY

Christian

As one who sees his ministry within the framework of a quiet life, it is hard for me to tell the

world of that ministry. I come from the old school where ministry is a way of life, done daily without much thought, and certainly not something one talks about.

My path in ministry and the religious life began in the 1950s when the All Saints sisters visited my parish. A seed was planted, and as the years progressed it was nurtured and a vocation flowered. In June 1968 I was admitted as a postulant of the Society of St Paul in Sandy, Oregon. I came just out of nursing school to a community which ran nursing homes. In July 1970 I professed my vows and for the next seven years worked in St Jude's Home, as nurse, activities di-rector, medical records librarian, in-service director, PT designee, cook, launderer—you name it and I have done it!
I

served the community as organist, Sunday School teacher, refectorian, and a member of the Board of St Jude's Corporation. It was during these years that my avocation was realized, and under the tutelage of Father David, SSP, I was trained in vestment making.

In 1977 I realized that God was calling me to an active life, so with the con-sent of the Society's rector I came to New Hampshire and sought entrance into an active community. The rector recommended that I contact the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, as its focus was church art, liturgy, and music. To my great surprise and joy the Rule of the Brotherhood was almost a carbon copy of the Society's rule, but with an apostolic focus, which made my transition easier. In 1978 I was formally received into the Brotherhood and professed life vows in July 1984, 14 years to the day from my first vows.

In 1989 I became disabled and was unable to return to geriatric nursing, a field in which I had worked for 21 years. I assist the community through my work as director of the Brotherhood Vestment Exchange, and as sacristan for our biannual convocations. In 1990 my canonical transfer was received by Bishop Thuener, and I minister within the diocese at his pleasure.

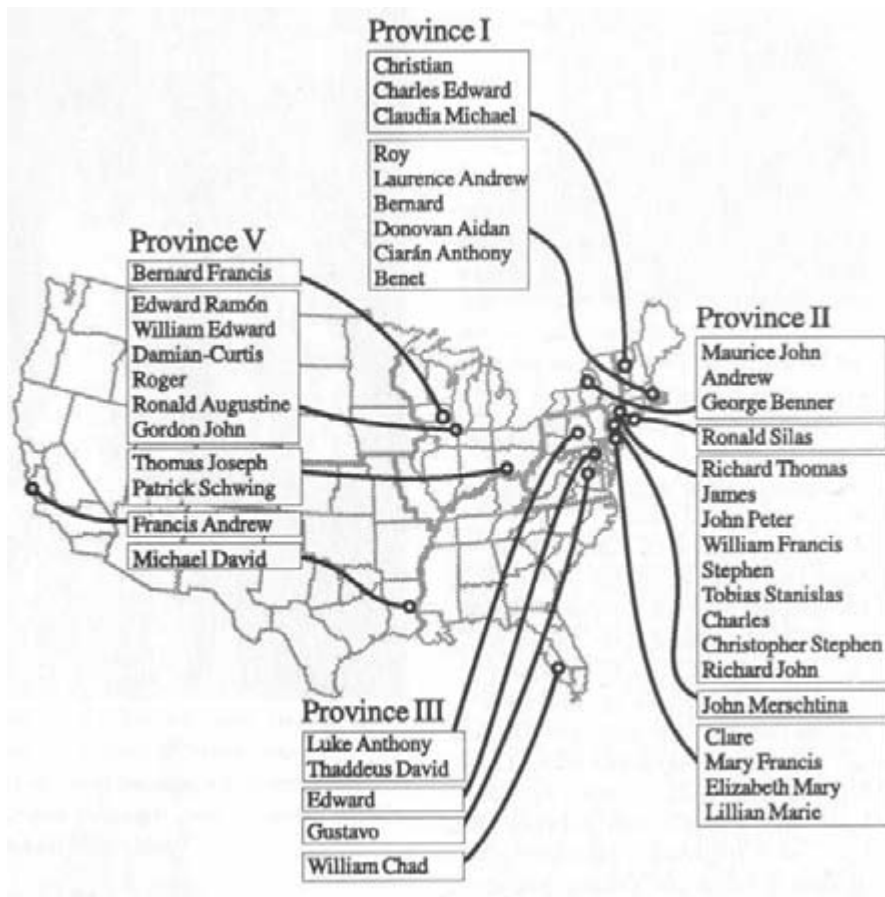


Here and there with the community

COMMUNITY NOTES

Where we are

The map below shows where the members of the community "live, move, and have their being." The Brotherhood and Companion Sisterhood serve in many different ways throughout our church.



Province II

Region II (metropolitan New York City) members gathered at St Bartholomew's, White Plains, for the Lent Ember Day. Meditations on "Forgiveness" (Stephen) and "Humility" (Richard John), and time for reflection, discussion, and silent prayer made for a very rewarding day.

Associate Richard Yarian also attended.

+ + + Tobias Stanislas has begun working part-time on the staff of the Diocese of New York, assisting Deacon Claudia Wilson. + + + His poem, "Annunciation and Response," appeared on the cover of the March 21 edition of *The Living Church*.

Richard John represented the community at the funeral of our Covenant-Brother Angelo Spitalieri, of the Society of the Atonement, Graymoor. Angelo served the Atonement community as cook, barber, and tailor, and died in the 37th year of his profession.

Maurice John, Andrew, and George Benner have been working on getting St Gregory's Retreat Center and Farm up and running. The center is in sunny Mexico NY (north of Syracuse), on 75 acres including an apple orchard, blue-berry bushes, a perennial garden, and meditation spots along a river running through the property; a biblical herb garden is planned for the future. The brothers began the center to fill the need for a place of tranquillity, peace, and spiritual renewal. Overnight and one-day retreats will be available. There is also a gift shop with a wide variety of items made by the brothers, including jams and jellies, baked goods, fudge, and more durable (and ecclesiastical) articles such as vestments and stained glass.

The Brotherhood Council met in April, and approved the life profession of Christopher Stephen, Ciarán Anthony, and William Edward at the annual con-vocation in July. Council also recommended the first profession of Francis Andrew, pending the polling of Chapter, and approved the release of Maria Carol from the Sisterhood novitiate. Aspirants Karen Ann E McConnell and Helen B L Lovell were approved as postulants-prospective. Edward and Thomas Joseph were nominated for additional terms as Provincials III and V respectively; the Provinces have concurred with their appointment by the Superior General.

Province III

Assisted by James, Tobias Stanislas led a weekend retreat and workshop, "Gifts to Share," at Trinity Church, Williamsport



James was subdeacon and crucifer for the Easter Vigil at St Luke in the Fields, Manhattan. He is shown with the Gene White memorial cross, created by artist and priest John Walsted.

PA. The focus was on stewardship of personal gifts and talents, the dangers of burnout, and the importance of self-dedication. Over thirty members of the parish participated in the workshop and intergenerational forum on Sunday morning. Tobias Stanislas also preached at the two eucharistic celebrations, taking as his text, "Seeing is Believing"—the stories of

FOR MANY YEARS

For many years, O Lord,
I sought you where you were not.

For many years I looked in vain at the
things you were not.

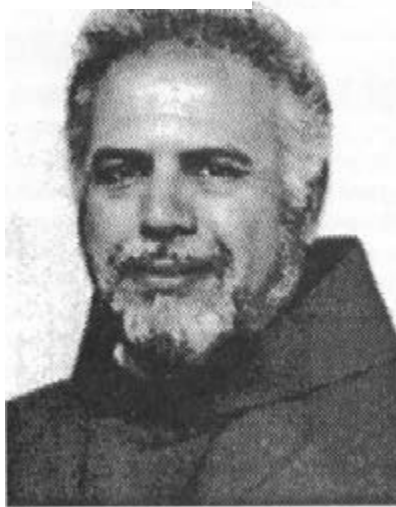
For many years I stumbled and fell
because I sought you in the places you were not.

For many years I thought I'd find you
in the rich things of this life but you were not there.

When all the while you were so close to me in my poor
empty heart.

Angelo, SA

Graymoor 1966



Saul anointing David as king, and Jesus healing the "man born blind."

The trip also provided them with an opportunity to visit Thaddeus David, who's recuperation is making great strides. He is expected to undergo additional surgery shortly, which should per-

mit him to return to full and active ministry and work.

Province V

Thomas Joseph has been approved as a postulant for ordination as a deacon in the Diocese of Southern Ohio. + + + A show of large mixed-media works by Michael David was held in the Hanchey Gallery at Northwestern State University, Natchitoches LA. Included in the show were images of angels, and an imaginative self-portrait of the artist's mind. On a more liturgical note, Michael David was thurifer for one of the main events of the Western Louisiana diocesan convention; he was chalicist at the celebration of Bishop Henton's 40th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood.

As the Presiding Bishop's Linkage Staff Officer for the Diocese of Fond du Lac, James attended the Annual Diocesan Council in May, and had a good visit. He was also able to visit with Bernard Francis, in the neighboring Diocese of Milwaukee. +



Trinity, Williamsport PA

Liberal fascism

The following comments may surprise those who have me pegged as a dyed-in-the-wool knee-jerk liberal, but surprise adds spice to life. These comments are occasioned by the news that a US Senator wishes to reject trademark renewal for the Daughters of the Confederacy on the grounds that their logo contains a representation of the Confederate flag. This story followed on the heels of others de-tailing the Hungarian prohibition of the public display of any swastika, arrow-cross, or hammer-and-sickle, and renewed furor over the anti-semitic comments of Professor Leonard Jeffries.

Please don't think I'm trying to encourage the display of hateful or painful symbols, or in any way approving the publication or pronouncement of prejudice. But does anyone really believe that by repressing the rhetoric of hate one is making the world less hateful? Rather, hate is going underground, deep into the bones, to brood and explode as violence. Walter Brueggemann, faced with the obviously nasty and hateful language of some of the Psalms, made the following observation:

The *speech* of vengeance is not to be equated with *acts* of vengeance. This community [Israel] which respected and greatly valued language encouraged speech, destructive as it might be, in the place of destructive action . . . These Psalms might help us to reflect on retaliatory violence in a society which has lost its places and legitimacy for speech. 'Where there is no valued *speech of assault* for the powerless, the risks of *deathly action* are much higher from per-sons in despair.'

True liberals are secure enough in their beliefs to let others say whatever they like; wise liberals will not mistake this toleration for acquiescence, but will respond with strong arguments. But fascist liberals, perhaps less secure or strongly bolstered with persuasive arguments, will simply seek to silence those who disagree with them.

When I turn to the church, it is not the rhetoric of hate that concerns me, but the rhetoric of worship: a strange place for conflict. Political correctness has entered the church through inclusive language and the liturgy. There are conservatives who refuse to picture God as female, but there are also liberals who refuse to picture God as male. Both sides ultimately must appear ridiculous, since God is neither male nor female; and no image or collection of images can comprehend God. A true liberal is free to refer to God as a warfaring soldier, or as a mother in labor (Isaiah 42:13-14), as a volcano or a chicken; thanks be to God.

Similarly, there are conservatives who claim the 1979 Prayer Book to be heretical; and some liberals act as if anyone who prefers the 1928 version is a spiritual troglodyte. Worship is a very personal thing; shouldn't people worship in the way they feel most comfortable? Those who rush to issue new and varied "supplemental" rites should hardly seek to silence those whose motion is more retrograde: at least they tread on familiar ground.

Ah, some will say, but we are a people of "common prayer." Were the new book less varied in its contents, this argument would be more persuasive. Once one has

1 Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms* (Winona MN: St Mary's Press, 1986), page 70.

begun to dance to the tune of Variety in Worship, what's one more variation? It would have been far less painful and divisive to the church to take a truly liberal approach: simply to allow continued use of the old book (or even earlier versions) at the discretion of the parish clergy in response to the wishes of the congregation, while continuing to educate on the virtues of the new book.

Freedom of speech and expression is a precious commodity in the church and in the world. Let us accept the blessed liberty of the children of God wherewith we are endowed, and praise the Lord with many tongues, speaking to many hearts and minds.

Toxic nostalgia

At the ordination of Bishop Jack Iker of Fort Worth, Bishop Terence Kelshaw is reported to have said that "the jury is still out" on the subject of the ordination of women. To what jury does he refer? I will not feign ignorance at this point: Kelshaw is referring to the "catholic church," by which he means Rome and the East.¹ Kelshaw is simply one in a long string of bishops and clergy who seem to look over their shoulder to see what the "real" church is doing while we Anglicans wan-der about aimlessly, as if we were a kind of platonic shadow ministry. Is this a kind of synodical inferiority complex, or an advanced form of ecclesiastical masochism or codependency? Or is it simply toxic nostalgia?

Why look to Rome and the East on matters we are capable of deciding for ourselves? Some deny that capability, but we Anglicans, acting alone, have changed even the canon of Scripture, and repealed

many less significant regulations such as those on episcopal celibacy (still the rule in the rest of the "catholic" church.)

The crowning absurdity is to look for authority to bodies which by their authority reject those who are looking, on the very matter concerning which they look! English clergy disaffected with the decision to ordain women discovered this not long ago. They went to Rome seeking reception, some sort of Uniate structure, and perhaps (in the case of one bishop) a personal prelature; instead they were told that their reception would necessitate "absolute ordination" since the Holy Catholic Church of Rome does not accept the validity of their orders. (The Orthodox have the same view, though expressed in more charitable language than that of the Leonine Bull.) As far as Rome and the East are concerned, Anglican clergy are, as John Paul II has said, "pious laymen."

I do not accept this judgment, nor this foreign bishop's competence to judge. Who made *him* pope? Anglicans may not be the most numerous of God's children, but we are members of the household of God. Let us accept our competency to govern our house—or at least to clean our room. We are as much of the catholic church as we can be: we cannot speak for all, but we can speak for ourselves. And we have something to say that will be a blessing for that whole church when it one day comes to accept it. As Charles Williams once said, "The altar must sometimes be prepared in one place in order that the fire from heaven might descend somewhere else."

Tobias Stanislas

1 If he is referring to the Anglican Provinces yet to approve the ordination of women, I am willing to stand corrected. In any case, a majority of the provinces have already registered their approval, and all but a few are likely to follow within the next several years.

FISHERMAN

Ever the Dreamer, Lord, You Scatter forth Signs
which swim down time and settle in, to
reside as memories,
dreams in my mind,

Ever the Seeker, Lord, You Flash forth Blue,
Brilliantly
Illuminator, Guide,

Ever the Pattern Maker,
You Light up my way and,
a trail is left . . . of the Hunt,

Where You Unceasingly Pursue me
throughout the depths;

And I being Haunted by You stumble blindly,
haltingly,
across Your Path,

Aware am I that once again, You the Steady One,
The Influencer, have set forth a net to
capture my attention,

Cast out before me are unmistakable lures
flashing Your Presence, a Pattern for me to
acknowledge, bow down to, and follow
...

I flow along these Invisible lines,
seeking Direction
To You of course,
I am drawn.

Claudia Michael

COMMUNITY PROPERTY

The bread which you do not use is the
bread of the hungry;
the garment hanging in your wardrobe
is the garment of the one who is naked;
the shoes you do not wear
are the shoes of the one who is barefoot;
the money that you keep locked away
is the money of the poor;
the acts of charity that you do not perform
are so many injustices that you commit.

Basil the Great

CONSENSUS AND ORDER

Laws that have been approved may be again repealed, and to that end also disputed against, by the authors thereof themselves. But this is when the whole doth deliberate what laws each part shall observe, and not when a part refuseth the laws which the whole hath orderly agreed upon. Nature, Scripture, and experience itself, have all taught the world to seek for the ending of contentions by submitting itself unto some judicial and definitive sentence. I would therefore know wherein you and your followers do stand thus formally divided against the authorized guides of this church, and the rest of the people subject unto their charge; whether ye be content to refer your cause to any other higher judgment than your own, or else intend to persist and proceed as ye have begun.

Richard Hooker