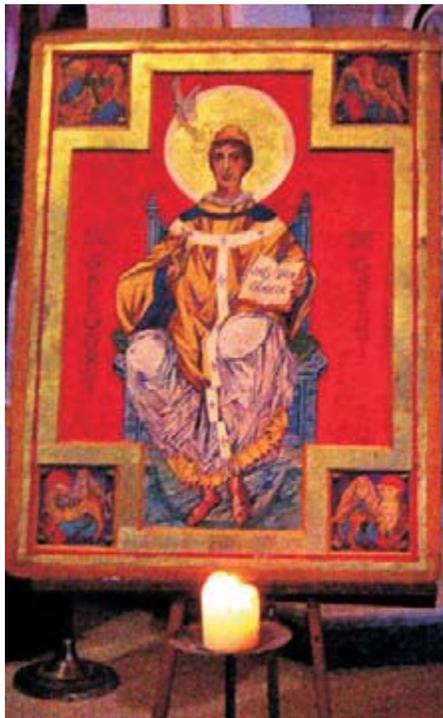




HE SERVANT



184

Spring 2002



EXCUSE ME: IS THIS A MASS OR JUST THE ASH?

This is an exact quote—words spoken to me as we were preparing to begin the mid-day eucharist at the Episcopal Church Center on Ash Wednesday 2002. An amazing question it seemed to me at first, but then it brought to mind how so much of what is done in churches today resembles fast food. A quick fix, a small piece of liturgy, torn from the fabric of a much larger and more meaningful garment—a church of shreds and patches.

Several years ago I preached at the First Sunday of Advent Vespers at Graymoor in Garrison, NY. I caught the assembly by surprise when I announced that several weeks earlier I had been assaulted—by Christmas carols in Macy's. I continued the homily, illustrating that we, as liturgical Christians, have the wonderful opportunity of “waiting” called Advent. We have these wonderful periods to pray and read and study in preparation for a great feast. Lent is one of those wonderful times. We have so many chances along the way to wait and watch, in preparation for the great feast, Easter. But you see, every day is Ash Wednesday, and life itself — even though some do not hear it — is a priest continuously whispering in our ears, “Remember that you are dust and unto dust you shall return.”

The fast food syndrome, ashes on demand, takes from us the ability to repent and confess, a part of the Observance of a Holy Lent, from the Book of Common Prayer. There is a Roman Catholic parish in midtown Manhattan which, on Ash Wednesday, placed three signs over the three church entry doors, the ones on the left and on the right each saying ASHES and the middle one MASS. It seemed offensive to me that the two should be separated. It is as if ashes are enough, apart from some kind of liturgical act of repentance and confession. I have a clipping from the New York Times, taken several years ago outside Saint Patrick's Cathedral, showing a large sign “ASHES ONLY.” That says it all—in every sense! Holy Days of Obligation can now be observed the day before. Where is the obligation? Saturday provides a quick 5 o'clock Mass; sleep Sunday. Where's the discipline of the Lord's Day? Fast food. Trouble is, it's the wrong kind of *fast* for the Church of Convenience, the Church of Ease.

We need to hear and do more than line up for an empty symbol. “You are dust” needs to be accompanied by repentance and confession and forgiveness. The words spoken as those ashes are imposed are humiliating words, but as Emerson said “the streets are full of humiliations for the proud.”

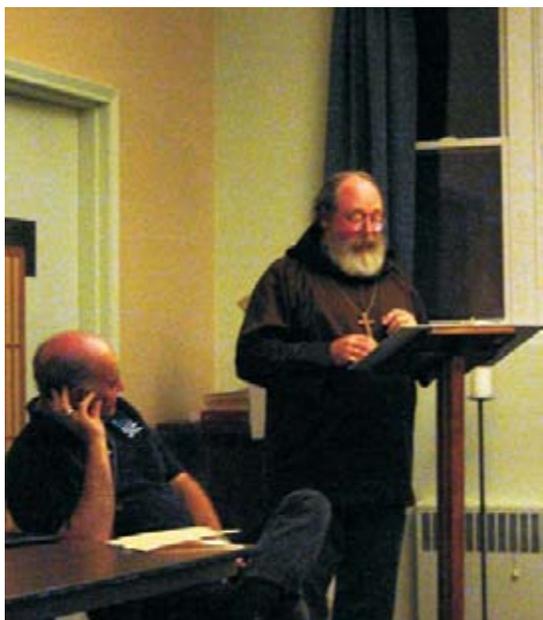
We need to remember that for the penitent there is another judge, another priest, the Great High Priest, who makes the sign of the cross not on the forehead but in the heart, not in cold ashes but cleansing fire, not in removable smudges but in the shedding of his indelible blood. We have the choice—in all we do for God and the church—to take the quick fix, the fast food, or to go the whole route and keep the disciplines. Not just in Lent, but all year long.

RTB

COMMUNITY NOTES

Winter Convocation 2002

Gregorian friars gathered from across the country for Winter Convocation in the first week of February, the first to take place at Mount Alvernia Retreat Center in Wappingers Falls NY. Last July's Annual Convocation also took place there, but the facility was still very much a work in progress at that time, with an extensive renovation program in its final stages. This time, all were looking forward to seeing the finished conference center.



Donovan Aidan delivers a challenging review of the history and theology of celibacy.

time, all were looking forward to seeing the finished conference center.

Last summer we worked around a temperamental antique elevator that often failed in its mission, guestrooms that were incomplete, a two-room lounge area that was only in its beginning stages, and hallways unfinished and unpainted. Were it not for the depth of Franciscan hospitality, last July's experiences might well have proved too much, but Franciscan hospitality is a force to reckon with! This year the brand new, spacious elevator was installed and working perfectly, the guestrooms all in tip-top shape, the lounge a welcome retreat both for snacks and quiet reflection, and the halls beautifully decorated with paintings and photos capturing the

rich Franciscan tradition. And the food is first class, too.

This winter's retreat program was developed by the Education Committee in answer to a number of requests from within the community: an exploration of sexuality in the context of the religious life and the Brotherhood's Rule, entitled "Fidelity in Chastity." The Brotherhood Rule expresses its welcome and



Panel members Ciarán Anthony, Karekin Madteos, Robert James, and Donovan Aidan

challenge to the brothers to live a religious vocation while continuing in their present state, either married/partnered, single or celibate. While the historic patterns developed in the traditional monastic religious life see celibacy as fundamental to maintaining that charism, the Brotherhood's vision—of a dispersed religious life in service to the institutional church and the needs of the world where it's members live and minister—has sought to provide a way to express that same sense of dedication and consecration in a way reflective of an apostolic charism.



Bishop Michel preached an inspiring sermon on "having enough."

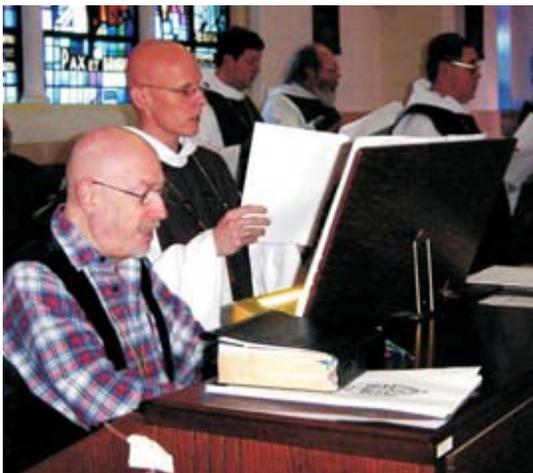
That is the formal background to the Brotherhood's vow of chastity; in practice, however, the community has never before sat down together to discuss the lived experiences of this vow at such depth and with such a carefully crafted direction from our pastoral leadership. It would be safe to say that everyone came away from the experience with some assumptions shattered, with new respect for each friar individually, and with the revelation of God in action in the world around us on many more levels than anyone had thought about.

Our Bishop Visitor Rodney Michel spent four days with the community. He has told us that he receives much during these times of reflection, relaxation and renewal, and everyone is delighted to have him with us in times of prayer, in celebrating the Holy Eucharist, in preaching, in fellowship, and in those quiet times of counsel and guidance. We are thus amply rewarded with whatever spiritual fruit our time together brings to harvest. The brothers have come to know Bishop Michel as the holy man that he is, and we are deeply thankful for his care and his presence.

The fact that Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent would take place during the week following Winter Convocation this year was not overlooked, and certain celebrations were a joyous part of our week together. Those included the birthdays of both Alban Patrick and Bishop Rodney—each feted on its day with a special cake and merriment during supper. And, though unable to be present due to his teaching obli-



Members of the Brotherhood gathered for three mornings to reflect on the vow of chastity.



Richard Thomas and Karekin Madteos lead the offertory anthem.

each of our lives, and we needed the time to express the emptiness his sudden death has bequeathed to us, and to move on toward healing. His favorite personal piety was the Rosary, and he was a regular participant in that devotion following Compline at the close of each day during convocations. On the Thursday night a “Memorial Rosary for Thomas Joseph” was held in the chapel and an unusually large number of Gregorians gathered to sit once more with our departed brother and to say “farewell until we meet again” in a special way, in the presence of our Lord and his Blessed Mother.

The liturgy was as much a part of each day as always, with Bishop Rodney and Tobias Stanislas sharing the role of the celebrant and our friar-deacons, Edward, Charles Edward, Francis Andrew and Gordon John exercising their ministry with us. Preaching was first-rate, as always, with contributions from Bishop Rodney, Christopher Stephen, Ronald Augustine, Thomas and Robert James—some of which will be seen in these pages below. And music was also special, as organized by Richard Thomas, Karekin Madteos, Richard John and Thomas Mark and executed by organists Richard Thomas, Thomas Mark and postulant-prospective Deward Rahm, who is organist and choirmaster at Saint Peter’s, Chicago, and was with us for the entire convocation, taking the bench on many occa-

gations, Michael David sent his traditional Mardi Gras gift to the friars assembled: a delicious King Cake and all the trimmings of a “N’awlins” celebration—masks, feathers, bracelets and coins, the works! We had almost as much fun as all those merry-makers in Louisiana—almost!

Remembrances of the vocation and ministry of our beloved Thomas Joseph were heard in quiet conversations and in the sermons throughout this week. He was an active presence in

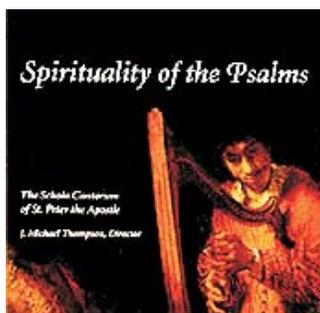


Karekin Madteos sings a haunting rendition of “Let all mortal flesh keep silence” while Richard Thomas accompanies with a gentle rhythmic ostinato on the “tung drum.”

sions. Unfortunately Richard John could only be present for a brief interval at this convocation, due to his chaplaincy obligations at the Westchester Medical Center.

The Brotherhood's Council met during Winter Convocation. Outreach Grants representing a tithe of the community's income from last year were made to The Agapé Fund (which provides emergency assistance to people living with HIV/AIDS), Fessenden Supportive Housing (a facility for men in recovery from alcohol and/or drug addiction), Saint James' Episcopal Church, Fordham (to assist with the massive roof repair project on this national landmark building), and Saint Barnabas Church in Tagatay City, Philippines, where Maurice John is presently developing a new ministry (to provide six months' rent on the church building).

Council also received the first copies of a brand new CD entitled "Spirituality of the Psalms," the latest recording by the Schola Cantorum of Saint Peter the Apostle,



Chicago, under the direction of J Michael Thompson and with Deward R Rahm at the organ. This recording, published by the Liturgical Press (the Order of Saint Benedict at Saint Joseph's Abbey) in Collegeville MN, notes the major role that Anglicans have played in the development and revival of music for the Psalter, and the album includes examples in four styles: Gregorian plainsong, Anglican chant, metrical hymnody and psalm motets. This recording is particularly exciting to the Brotherhood, not only because we contributed towards its funding, but because it features two of the Psalm-tones Tobias Stanislas

wrote for the Brotherhood's use, and a psalm setting by postulant-prospective Deward Rahm. The CD (or cassette) can be ordered from Saint Joseph's Liturgical Press (www.catalog.litpress.org).

The over-arching purpose of each convocation is fully realized on the very last day, when each friar packs his bags and embraces his brothers one last time before leaving. Thomas Joseph's death less than two months earlier reminds us of the shortness of this life, that this may be the last time we are all together in this way. Jesus taught us that it is very important to step out of the day-to-day ministry each of us carries, to be together and to gain the necessary refreshment that time apart brings us. But it is always in the returning, the going back to the work we are given, that we experience the completion of our stepping aside for a moment. We welcome that return and we know we are now more prepared to love and to help and to pray for all of God's wonderful creation than we were before we made this journey. Thanks be to God!

Cambridge MA

Bishop Steven Charleston, Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School, called upon his administrative assistant, Francis Andrew, to take on the ministry of hospitality recently. Archbishop Desmond Tutu had accepted the dean's invitation to come to EDS for a year as guest lecturer, and Francis Andrew worked with the assembled team called together to make all of the arrangements for the archbishop's time in Cambridge. Francis Andrew traveled to the Boston Airport to meet Archbishop Desmond's flight and to escort him to his new residence for the next year, certainly living up to the title, servant of the servants of God!

In early January, Francis Andrew accompanied Bishop Charleston on a trip to Hawaii. The Bishop was invited to preach a three-day “revival” for five parishes in the Windward Region of Oahu. In addition to providing support for the bishop, Francis Andrew was available to talk with people individually about the seminary and about personal growth in spiritual life and disciplines. The trip provided a good opportunity to introduce the Episcopalians of Oahu to the Brotherhood.

Yonkers

Christmas can be a difficult time for the residents of Fessenden House, a group home for men in recovery from severe drug and alcohol addiction. Most of the residents were homeless or incarcerated for years prior to coming there, and many have lost all contact with their families, including wives, children, parents and siblings. This loss is particularly painful during the holidays, and the support of people in the local community is especially important during this time of year. Christopher Stephen and Patrick Ignatius, who live and work at Fessenden House, report that members of local churches and others in the community were particularly generous to the men at Fessenden House this past Christmas. On the fourth Sunday of Advent about forty members of Saint John’s, Getty Square (where Christopher Stephen and Patrick Ignatius are members) arrived early in the evening singing carols and bearing gifts for each of the house’s residents, including the brothers and Hudson and Samson, the house dogs. The residents had prepared refreshments for the weary travelers, who had been visiting members of the parish all afternoon. In addition, Nicholas of Myra (a.k.a. “Santa Claus”) made a surprise appearance. The members of the Church of Saint Paul the Apostle (RC), also generously donated Christmas gifts to the men, as did Richard and Fran Lorino, parents of Richard John. “Mama Lorino,” as she is affectionately known to the men in the house, has prepared home-cooked meals for them several times a month since the house opened in 1995, and she and her husband are much loved by the house’s residents.



Patrick Ignatius, Hudson and Samson with “Santa Claus”

Dobbs Ferry, New York

On the first Sunday after the Epiphany Christopher Stephen preached at Aldersgate United Methodist Church. At a luncheon after the service, he gave a short presentation on Fessenden House, and two residents of the house, who had volunteered to accompany him, shared their story with the members of the congregation. A member of the church wrote Christopher Stephen following the visit that she had never seen the church’s members so attentive or so moved. “The Holy Spirit was definitely at work. There were people there who really needed to hear what these men had to say.” The people of Aldersgate Church have supported Fessenden House since it opened through donations of food, clothing and money.

Chicago

Michael David made his traditional Christmastide journey to visit the community in the Chicago area, a highlight of which was his turning up unannounced at the Church of the Atonement the Sunday morning when Mary Julian, SSG was the scheduled preacher. Such a surprise could have been fatal for a lesser homilist, but we have it on good authority that Mary Julian carried on without the slightest hitch or double-take! The Chicago-area Gregorians made Michael David feel welcome as always; their hospitality is legendary!

Louisiana

Back home, Michael David reports that his renovation of his home—the Friary of Our Lady of the Angels—is continuing apace, with a new kitchen and a fourth bathroom now installed. His garden landscaping will receive a new statue, this one of the Holy Family: “It will be raised, as I have with the (three) other pieces, cabled into the tree, and about five feet from the sidewalk.” Sounds mighty impressive! Good work, brother, your artistic talents know no bounds!

A reflection



NO HONOR FOR THE PROPHET

Well this is one fine text for a brother preaching to his community! “Prophets are not without honor except in their home town and among their own kin.” Fortunately, I don’t think anyone’s going to mistake me for a prophet, but the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory is certainly my “home town” and my kin—my community, and more importantly, my spiritual home.

This afternoon I want to focus on a different part of Mark’s Gospel for today, the puzzling part in which Mark reports that Jesus could do no deeds of power in Nazareth. He could work no miracles there. He was powerless.

How can this be possible? After all, in our own community, Christ has worked many, many deeds of power—in my life and in the lives of so many others. I came to this community many years after the denial and despair of addiction to alcohol had led to new life in recovery, but it was this community that accepted me just as I am.

Unlike those doubters at Nazareth, the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory is a group alive with deeds of power and deeds of healing. So what have we got that Nazareth didn’t have? What could Mark possibly mean for us to make of his report that Jesus was unable to do deeds of power in his own country, the city of his childhood?

The way Mark reports the story, Jesus has been on a whirlwind tour of Galilee. His disciples could have worn T-shirts proclaiming, “Jesus’ Galilean Road Tour, Spring 33.” From the city of Capernaum to a deserted place and back again, several stops at the synagogue and the Sea of Galilee, a foray with a few Pharisees, a moment or two on a mountain, a day trip to the Decapolis, and a date with a Gerasene demoniac. It kind of takes the breath away.

This is quintessential Mark: everything happens at breakneck speed; everything is urgent. Mark is constantly saying things like, “suddenly” this happened, or “immediately” that happened. Things happen “all at once,” one after another.

Most of you know that I was once a police officer, but I was also a newspaper reporter. Now Mark is a good journalist. He never buries the lead, or wastes words. His gospel is 16 terse chapters of “who, what, when and where.” But Mark is a little light on the why. By the time we reach today’s passage, we are a bit breathless, and no wonder. As far as “deeds of power” go, Jesus has already healed an unclean spirit, a leper, a paralytic, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law, a man with a withered hand—and these are just the headlines!

So consider it classic reportorial understatement when Mark says news of Jesus’ power had spread throughout Galilee. At Simon Peter’s house, the whole city of Capernaum shows up. Then the crowds swell so large that Jesus can’t even go near the cities anymore, staying instead in the countryside. By the time Jesus moves his mighty ministry offshore—just to avoid the crush of the crowds—Mark says that folks are coming not just from the other side of the Jordan, but also from Sidon on the northern coast and even from Idumea, many miles to the south! Surely everyone has heard of Jesus and his deeds of power.

When Jesus goes home for the first time, perhaps, like us, he could have used a breather just to digest all of this. But no such respite comes—either for Jesus, or for Mark’s readers. Instead, Jesus comes home to crowds so enormous there isn’t even time for food. Worse, the folks in the very town that raised him say he’s out of his mind. Some scribes from Jerusalem declare him possessed! Even Jesus’ own family tries to restrain him from the work for which God has empowered him. And how does Jesus respond to all of this? He shakes the dust off his feet and takes his teaching, his preaching, and all his renowned deeds of power back out on the road.

Do not misunderstand
Mark’s Gospel.
Jesus Christ lacks
no power, then or now

We, as Mark’s readers, may be running out of steam by now, but this is precisely when Jesus performs the mightiest, most powerful deeds of his ministry yet: he stills the fierce winds of a raging storm; he kicks a whole legion of demons out of a possessed Gerasene into a herd of pigs, and over a cliff into the sea; without even trying, he stops the incessant bleeding of a woman who has been hemorrhaging for twelve years, while on his way to raise a 12-year-old girl from the dead!

Then Jesus comes back to Nazareth for the second time. This is where we are in today’s reading—home with Jesus. Is he exhausted? Maybe. But powerless? Mark leads with Jesus in the synagogue. The story starts out pretty much like one we’ve heard earlier in Mark’s Gospel: everyone who hears Jesus is astounded. They wonder out

loud where Jesus gets his wisdom. They marvel at the deeds of power being done by his hands. But then, all at once, as Mark would say, this story veers off into the Twilight Zone. Rather than celebrating their native son, the hometown folks take offense at him. The actual Greek word means to be “cast off by a blow out of a state of self-possession.” In today’s vernacular, we might say these folks are blown away! And why not? They don’t understand what has happened to their hometown boy, and what they don’t understand, they simply deny. The folks of Nazareth think they know Jesus. But do they? All at once Jesus is saying things they don’t understand; he’s doing things with a power they’ve never witnessed before. What’s happened to him? Who does Jesus think he is? Maybe he really is possessed! The people of Nazareth are so blinded by fear that they refuse to see what we’ve known since Chapter 1, verse 1: that Jesus, son of Mary, is also Son of God. It is mind-blowing.

But here’s where Mark appears to lose credibility as a reporter. Mark reports that Jesus could do no deeds of power in Nazareth (except a handful of healings which Mark reports like some sort of throwaway line). Are we really supposed to believe that the same Jesus we’ve been following breathlessly for the last five chapters, who’s been performing breathtaking deeds of power all over God’s green acres, is suddenly, if you’ll pardon the expression, out of breath?

Jesus must marvel
at our unbelief too,
when we’re so afraid
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understand that we
shut him out...

If we go back and look at Mark’s Gospel closely, we see that no where in it does Jesus perform a healing or a miracle or any “deed of power” without being asked. Even the Gerasene demoniac approaches Jesus first. So what if Jesus is unable to do “all but a few deeds of power” at Nazareth for one simple reason: he isn’t asked to? What if God really doesn’t go where God is not invited, because to do so would be a kind of divine abuse of power? What if Jesus doesn’t impose healing on anyone out of love and out of divine respect for their freedom, even when that means their freedom to deny the reality of Christ himself?

But Jesus Christ lacking power? I don’t think so. The only “powerlessness” Jesus knows is the powerlessness born of self-denying love, the powerlessness born of patience that does not impose itself on its beloved, patience that waits, and hopes, and prays for what can only be offered willingly and openly. Jesus waits for an invitation; a “Dear Jesus, please do something with this hurt,” or simply, “Dear Jesus, help me, please.”

There have certainly been times in my life when, like the folks of Nazareth, I did not recognize Christ, times when I didn't understand the God I thought I knew so well, blown away by what I didn't understand, using denial, just to cope. I'm not surprised that Jesus marvels at the unbelief he encounters in Nazareth! He must marvel at our unbelief too, when we're so afraid of what we don't understand that we shut him out; when in our fear or our anger or our pride we deny the reality of who Jesus is, and by so doing, deny him the invitation to do powerful deeds in our lives.

Do not misunderstand Mark's Gospel. Jesus Christ lacks no power, then or now. In Nazareth, elsewhere in the Middle East, or in Washington DC. But God doesn't go where God's not invited. Christ will not impose himself where he's not welcome. Mark's Gospel is challenging us to look further, to go deeper, to look beyond the walls of Mount Alvernia for those places in our lives where, like the folks of Nazareth, we don't necessarily recognize Christ for who he is, where perhaps we think he doesn't quite belong, where we are reluctant or afraid to invite him in, where we'd rather do it ourselves—in our secular lives, our work and family, in our decision-making and our places of confusion. Jesus is waiting with infinite patience and divine love, right out there, just to be invited to do deeds of power in all those parts of our lives to which he's never before been invited.

And my brothers, he can do some mighty powerful deeds.

Ronald Augustine

A sermon for the Martyrs of Japan

LOSING AND FINDING



Those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

Lesser Feasts and Fasts has a short write-up on the Martyrs of Japan. It is brief and to the point, but frustratingly incomplete. It basically says that Christian missionaries from Spain and Portugal came to Japan in the mid-sixteenth century and, through the efforts of the Jesuits and later the Dominicans and Franciscans, “witnessed to Christ with heroism and self-sacrifice.”

These missionaries were tolerated, if not embraced, by the Japanese authorities, and by 1595 approximately 300,000 people had been baptized. Then a massive persecution began: “Rivalries among the religious orders; and the interplay of colonial politics... aroused suspicion about western intentions and conquest.” Well, I did a little additional research and found that the Japanese’ suspicions of “western intentions” were well-founded. The persecutions were sparked when a Spanish galleon ran aground and its hold was found to be filled with arms and ammunition. Under interrogation, the captain admitted that the Spanish strategy for conquest was to send missionaries to soften up the populace, and then to send in the army. It was the strategy being used by the Spanish here in the Americas during the same period, and it was very effective. It is not clear to me whether the Spanish missionaries agreed with this strategy or were even aware of it, although I am sure they must have had some inkling.

In any case, we need to be careful about reading our own values and insights into that time and those cultures. Neither the Spanish nor the Japanese made the same distinctions that we do between religion and culture. In Europe Christianity and culture were so inextricably woven together that even the most educated and informed believed that they were one and the same, although some missionaries took issue with this, Francis Xavier himself being the one of the most notable. In Japan the state religions of Shintoism and Buddhism permeated every aspect of Japanese life and culture from the art, music and etiquette of the Shogun's court to the proper manner in which a peasant should relieve himself while working in the fields. Given this weaving together of culture and religion, it was not at all difficult for either the Europeans or the Japanese to make the conceptual leap from evangelism to imperialism, from mission to conquest. For the Europeans, conquest of "heathen" countries and cultures was, in and of itself, a missionary activity, and if it brought riches and power with it, so much the better. For the Japanese, Christianity undermined not only the political stability of the nation but the religious values upon which the entire culture was based. They saw it as an immoral intrusion into their society, and it had to be resisted or destroyed.

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The persecution of Christians began in earnest with the martyrdom of twenty-seven friars and their converts in 1597. The condemned men and boys were led on a thirty-mile forced march, barefoot and naked, through brutal terrain and cold winter weather, to the city of Nagasaki. As an act of courtesy and respect for the martyrs, Shogun Hideyoshi decreed that they were to be crucified in the same manner as their Lord. However, since crucifixion was not a Japanese practice, and since neither the Shogun nor his political advisors wished to fan public sympathy for the martyrs by prolonging their deaths, the martyrs were tied to their crosses, rather than nailed, and then quickly stabbed to death by soldiers with javelins. One of the martyrs was a twelve-year-old boy whose name was Louis Ibaragi. On the way up the hill to the place of execution, a sympathetic nobleman urged Louis to save himself by renouncing his faith. He refused, but instead eagerly asked, "Where is my cross?" The accounts say that when the smallest cross was pointed out to him "he immediately embraced it and held on to it as a child clings to his toy."

Local and regional persecutions continued haphazardly until 1614, when Shogun Ieyasu issued an edict of persecution throughout all the islands of Japan and ensured its implementation. Churches were destroyed, foreign missionaries expelled, and Japanese Christians tortured and killed. Finally, in 1638, following a peasant rebellion

for which Christians were blamed, Japan closed off all contact with the outside world. Not only were Christian missionaries forbidden to enter the country; traders and merchants from Europe were prohibited and were to be killed on sight, even if they washed up on the shores of Japan by accident due to shipwreck. All Bibles and other Christian books and devotional objects were destroyed, and all Japanese were required to publicly confess that they were not Christians once a year. Japan sealed itself off from the rest of the world, and this policy remained in effect until 1854, when Commodore Perry forced Japan to open trade with the west.

When Christian missionaries returned to Japan in the 19th century, what they found was very interesting. Despite the persecutions and brutal repression of the previous 250 years, there were still hidden pockets of Christianity. Since Bibles were forbidden, members of these underground churches had memorized long portions of the Gospels and other passages from scripture hundreds of years earlier and handed them down orally from generation to generation. There were no Christian priests, and Christian liturgies were forbidden, but Christians had adapted the Japanese tea ceremony as a eucharistic celebration, using rice cakes and sake instead of bread and wine. Some of these secret Christian families were powerful samurai or members of the Shogun's court, and they subtly but effectively influenced public policy not only to lessen the severity of the persecutions, but to alleviate the effects of the tyrannical rule of the poorer classes by the local samurai and foster greater economic and social justice.



The power of the
Gospel shines through,
no matter how much
we screw up



We have much to learn from these missionaries and martyrs and from the hidden Christians who succeeded them. It is very easy for us, especially those of us who are intimately involved in the life of the church as an institution, to see all the confusion, all the controversy, all the divisions, all the spineless bishops who try ever so hard not to offend people and end up alienating everybody, all the infuriatingly pig-headed people who arrogantly presume to make moral judgments about those they disagree with, and conclude that our witness to the gospel is ineffective. This is a legitimate concern. Our witness to Christ and the power of the resurrection is compromised by all of this factionalism. Like the missionaries to Japan, we have our unexamined assumptions and blind spots that are molded and formed by the culture in which we live. However, this does not render our witness to Christ ineffective.

In reflecting on the missionaries to Japan, I was impressed by how effective their work was, despite the confusion caused by the mixture of politics, religion and culture. Despite their mistakes—and there were many—the missionaries succeeded in bringing the Gospel to people who were starving for it, and 300,000 people embraced

salvation in Jesus, even though it meant martyrdom for many of them. The power of the witness of the European missionaries to the Japanese wasn't just in their words. It was in their love for the people they came to serve, a love that shone through despite their cultural blind spots, the political infighting within and between the religious orders, and the use of the missionaries by the governments of Europe as part of an imperialist strategy.

This is an important point. The power of the gospel shines through, no matter how much we screw up. The proclamation of the gospel is the work of the Holy Spirit, and we participate in that work as members of the Body of Christ. We do not control the process or the people we serve. We can and do make mistakes, sometimes terrible mistakes, and we need to take responsibility for those mistakes and do what we can to mitigate their effects in humility and charity. However, our witness is not rooted in our mistakes. It is rooted in our baptismal vows "to proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ," "to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves" and "to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being." This calls to mind Francis of Assisi's exhortation to his brothers to "preach the gospel continuously, using words when necessary." Without this witness of love, words are ineffective or, worse yet, blasphemous, no matter how serene and untroubled the life of the church may be. With this witness of love, the power of the gospel shines through all the bickering and infighting and controversy. The manner in which we live and the way in which we love and care for each other and the people we serve is the most effective means of preaching and witnessing to the good news of God in Christ. We are called to *preach* the gospel by *living* the gospel.

And then, of course, there is the witness of the martyrs themselves. If the missionaries sowed the seed of the gospel in Japan, the blood of the martyrs fed and watered that seed and, although hidden for many generations until the time was ripe, it flourished in the surreptitious eucharistic tea ceremonies and in the whispered conversations in the Shogun's court. The blood of the martyrs was the leaven that leavened the whole lump, and it is leavening it still.

They embraced
Jesus and his cross
because they knew
that to live in Christ
was life

In today's Gospel, Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." Any of the Japanese martyrs, both those we commemorate today and those who were martyred in the following years, could easily have avoided death sim-

ply by renouncing their Christian faith—yet few did. The Martyrs of Japan embraced the cross, many, as in the case of Louis Ibaragi, quite literally. Whatever the intentions of some of the European missionaries, these martyrs were not Christians because they were enamored of European culture or because they wanted Japan to be a colony of Spain. They embraced Jesus and his cross because they knew that to live in Christ was life, while to deny Christ would have meant death—death to their souls as well as to their bodies.

████████████████████
We are called to
embrace the cross...
████████████████████

My brothers, we are called to embrace that same cross. We are called to embrace it in all the little martyrdoms that each of us are called to each day.

We are called to embrace it by setting aside our own selves out of love for each other and for the people we serve.

We are called to embrace it by being a loving presence in the life of a man whose combination of mental illness and dementia makes him almost incomprehensible, yet who yearns to be loved just like the rest of us.

We are called to embrace it in ministering to the man who is puking his guts out in the middle of the night, even if it means we may become sick ourselves.

We are called to embrace it by standing before the parole officer at our door at 4:00 am and telling her that she cannot harass a man who has done nothing wrong, simply because she believes she has the right to do so.

We are called to embrace it by visiting those in prison who no one else will visit, even if it means that some officious corrections officer will keep us waiting at the door of the cell block for 20 minutes before we are allowed to leave.

We are called to embrace it in the woman who shows up on our doorstep in the middle of the night asking for cigarettes, even if it means we give her our last pack of smokes. (That's a particularly tough one for me.)

We are called to embrace it by clothing those walking naked through our streets, even if it means that we are stripped naked.

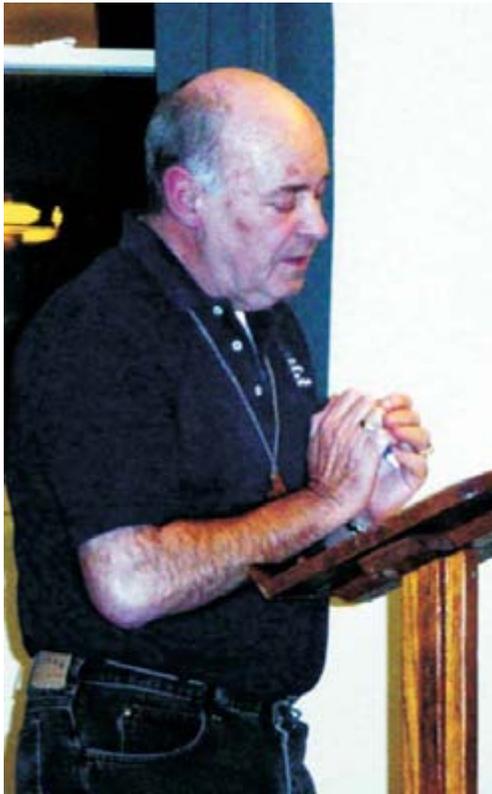
We are called to embrace it by feeding those who are starving, even if it means that we starve.

Like the Martyrs of Memphis, who are particular favorites of mine, we are called to embrace the cross by ministering to the sick and dying, even if by doing so, we are embracing our own deaths from the same dread disease, because for some of us it may come to that. For in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and ministering to those who are sick and in prison, we are ministering to Christ himself. We are called to embrace the cross even if to do so means our own deaths, so that in dying to ourselves we might live in Christ.

Christopher Stephen
████████████████████

SHEPHERDS' GOODBYE

Here it is, another Saturday, the last full day we have to spend together as a gathered community. In a few hours we will meet for the office of Compline, the last official act together. We are reminded that in order for us to carry on our work, in order for us to live as Gregorian friars, we must return to the world and our service to God's church. This separation has never been an easy one for me. I remember my first Mission Service and how I was moved to tears at the thought of having to leave each of you after a tremendously enriching and spiritually high week together. Some present at that liturgy were openly sobbing.



Robert James delivers a reflection on life in partnership

That first Mission Service comes back to mind at each and every convocation I attend. But things have changed for me. I haven't cried in a long time. It is not that I am not moved by having to separate myself from each of you for another six months, or that it will have been an entire year before I see my brothers who were unable to attend this convocation, or that, as we have all experienced this year at the death of our brother Thomas Joseph, we might not see a brother again in this life. I have changed in that I am able, through God's good grace, more clearly to realize that to be a Servant of the Servants of God, we must separate.

However, our separation is less harsh because we have been refreshed, if only for a brief time. We have been able to spend time with each other, we have prayed and sung the Lord's praises each day this week, we have considered and discussed our vow of chastity, we have eaten good food and hopefully, for some, gotten a few well deserved naps. We have raised our blood pressure and sugar levels to new highs by munching on all kinds of junk foods and noshing for an entire week. And, I hope, each of us has had a few good laughs. I think we have, as my mother used to say, "allowed ourselves to let our hair down for awhile." Looking around this chapel, some of us let our hair down once before and haven't been able to find it since!

Let me share a story with you. There was a Sunday School teacher who instructed her class of youngsters to draw a picture of their favorite Bible character. All the heads were down and sketching and drawing, coloring and cutting. As she walked around the classroom looking over each student's shoulder, she came upon one very intent young lady. She was all hunched over her table and coloring like mad. "What are you

drawing, Jenny?” the teacher asked. “I’m drawing a picture of God,” the little girl replied. “But Jenny, no one has ever seen the face of God, no one really knows what God looks like,” replied the teacher. Jenny answered, “They will in about ten minutes.”

Are we Gregorian friars as confident as this child in our abilities to make God known in this strife-torn world we are living in? Truly, we are unable to show a drawing of what God looks like. But we can show and share the impressions he has made in our hearts and minds by living the example of his Son, the Christ.

Today’s reading from Mark speaks directly to our Gregorian community. The apostles have been through a very difficult and trying time. John the Baptist has just been murdered and they are telling Jesus of all that has happened and the work they have been doing. Jesus says to them: “Come with me, by yourselves, to some lonely place where you can rest quietly.” Mark adds that they have had no leisure even to eat, so many were coming and going. And so, they get into a boat and head to a lonely place. And when they get to the lonely place, there is another multitude waiting for them. It seems to me that the only break they got was the boat ride. Mark tells us that when Jesus came ashore he saw the great crowd and his heart went out to them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd—and he had much to teach them.

Allow me to bring this passage from Mark into the present time. In addition to the tasks and toils of our own personal ministries, we have all felt the terribly heavy burden and suffered deep personal distress over the events of September 11. Many of us, especially our brothers here in the New York City area closest to “ground zero,” have seen the pain and anguish of countless people directly and indirectly affected by the destruction of the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers. Each of us, no matter what part of this country we live in, has been faced with many scared, horrified, angered, and lost souls. I am particularly reminded of the story Tobias Stanislas shared via e-mail about his ministry at Saint Paul’s and the man who just kept returning, full of the pain of loss, and guilt that he had survived. “And when we came there, our hearts went out to them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and we had much to teach them.”

Yes, my brothers, we have been blessed. We have studied, and I pray continue to refine our “Skillfulness as Shepherds”; we have even succeeded in grasping more of a respite than did the apostles, as we gathered here in this quiet place. We have laid our troubles and problems, our weaknesses and shortcomings, indeed our entire selves at the altar and we have gathered strength, courage, and hope from the life-giving Body and Blood of Christ.

And so, we begin our journey again. Tomorrow, we will strip our beds and pack our bags. We will begin tonight to say farewell to each other, we will wish each other love and success in our individual ministries, and some may even shed a tear. But, to a man, each of us leaves here stronger, each of us leaves here closer to God, each of us leaves here with the light of Christ burning brighter. And, my beloved brothers, each of our hearts will go out to them because we are shepherds and we have much to teach them.

Robert James



INTERCESSIONS

The Brotherhood		Associates
Episcopal Visitor	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Cecil Berges d 10.16.90</i>
Rodney R Michel		<i>Marion Pierce d 12.26.91</i>
Episcopal Visitors Emeriti		Helen Marie Joyce, VHM
<i>Horace WB Donegan d 11.11.91</i>		Grosvenor Calkins
Paul Moore, jr		Jeff Emmett
Walter D Dennis		<i>Richard A Belanger d 11.21.94</i>
Life and Annual Professed		Joseph di Mauro, SA
Richard Thomas Biernacki		Catherine W Sturm
<i>John Nidecker d 6.20.88</i>		Mary Helen Clare
James Teets		Maryann Wolff
Luke Anthony Nowicki		Joseph F O'Day
<i>John Peter Clark d 2.25.94</i>	<i>Mon</i>	Stephen D Montgomery
William Francis Jones		Fidel Flores
Stephen Storen		<i>Brendan W Nugent d 10.10.96</i>
<i>Thomas Joseph Ross d 12.18.01</i>		Sheila Gould
Tobias Stanislas Haller		Earl Christian
<i>William Bunting d 10.12.88</i>		Lawrence LeRoy David
Edward Munro		<i>Kenneth Staples d 10.6.92</i>
Charles Kramer	<i>Tue</i>	David Smith
<i>Bernard Fessenden d 8.10.93</i>		William R Munroe
Donovan Aidan Bowley		Wendell Allen
Michael David Elvestrøm		<i>Elizabeth J Holton d 8.27.93</i>
Edward Ramón Riley		Roland "Randy" RR Pryor
Christopher Stephen Jenks		Grant Walsh
Ciarán Anthony DellaFera		Jeffery L Benson
William Edward Orce	<i>Wed</i>	M Eugene Ellis
Damian-Curtis Kellum		Mark Harris
Richard John Lorino		Enrique Antonio Illarze
Ronald Augustine Fox		Dennis W Pattey
Maurice John Grove		John A Bell
Charles Edward LeClerc		Gerard F Beritela
Francis Andrew Phillips		Perry L Conley
Andrew Fortuna	<i>Thu</i>	Wilhelmina Barton
Gordon John Stanley		Raymond E Barton
Karekin Madteos Yarian		Gabriel McGovern
Alban Patrick Thompson		Ethel B "Ettie" Hurley
Gabriel Liam Everett		Amy M Barron
Thomas Bushnell	<i>Fri</i>	Leopold Frade
Thomas Mark Liotta		Diana D Frade
James Dunstan Mahoney		Robin Stephanie Steele
Patrick Ignatius Dickson		Ulric Van den Berghe
Robert James McLaughlin		Carol Gwynn Hays
Peter Budde		James David Walley
Novices	<i>Sat</i>	David Benzshawel
John Henry Ernestine		Robin R M'Kay
Francis Sebastian Medina		Theresa Allan
Aelred Bernard Dean		Glenn R Charlton
Joseph Basil Gauss		Betsy Kardos
Mark Andrew Jones		David Burton
Emmanuel Williamson		Timothy Lundy
Postulant		Wiley W "Jack" Merryman
Richard Matthias		Graham Thomas Prosser
Postulants-Prospective		Philip L Hewitt
William Benefield		Michael S Parenti
Deward Rahm		Mark L Raper
		Laurie A Wiegand
		John-Albert Moseley
		JoAnn Tomback
		Carl Lindgren, OSN
		R Tony Cable
		Lynne J D McQuade
		Zechariah Schariah
		Lydia Karlo
		Steven Bright-Jordan, OSJ
		Ruth Richmond Laning
		Denise A Tibedo
		Kathleen C Klee
		<i>Sarah Elizabeth Wells, SSG</i>
		<i>d 5.8.2000</i>
		Patrick Bell Schwing
		R William Franklin
		Martín Barahona
		M Carl Lunden
		Patricia A Ahearn
		David Alvarado
		Jay Frank Crosthwaite
		Paul E Van Brunt
		M Sharon Ryan
		Virginia E Holloway
		Charles C Nichols, jr
		Kevin Heckman
		Margaret J Faulk
		Paul G Power
		Ruth G Power
		Laurie Joseph Niblick, n/SSG
		George L Vizvary
		John R Coyle
		Melissa Colby
		Barbara Ann Jensen
		Robert R M Bagwell
		William Russell
		Bruce N Gardner
		Mark Palcanis
		Malcolm Roberts III
		Cynthia Cheski
		Jim Elledge
		Jeffrey Linden
		James E Cyphers
		Michael D Bond
		Mary Jean Bond
		Nancy R Fifield
		Frederick L Nestrock
		Brad Hicks
		Gina Stickelmaier
		Howard B Bowlin
		Carin Bridgit Delfs, SSG
		<i>Sue Bradley d 12.23.01</i>
		Joseph Lynn Spears
		Rolando Q Bacoy
		John Calella
		Robert Thomas
		Robert J White
		Elizabeth Mary Burke, SSG
		Stephen Moss
		& The Friends of the
		Brotherhood

more

Religious Communities

The Sisters of Saint Gregory
Sacramentine & Visitandine
Nuns
Society of the Atonement
Order of Agapé & Reconciliation
Camaldolese Benedictines
Society of Saint John the
Evangelist
Community of the Paraclete
Congregation of the Anglican
Oblates of Saint Benedict
Community of the
Transfiguration
The Order of Julian of Norwich

For healing

For our brothers Luke Anthony,
William Francis, Charles,
Damian-Curtis, William
Edward, Edward Ramón,
Patrick Ignatius and James
Dunstan
For our sisters Clare,
Lillian-Marie, Elizabeth Mary
and Susanna Bede
For all who live with HIV/AIDS
Ian Frazier
Jane Bowley
Patricia J Matthias
Scott Wager
Mary Haller
Walter D Dennis
John Aguilar-Cruz, BSF
Charles Miller
Gordon Gauss
Brian Murphy, CFA
Ann Marie
Alice Riechel
Rich Warren
Arnold Elizalde
Lynn Gilberg

Departed

Charlotte B Morgan
Arsene and Louise Lemarier
J Norman Hall
George T Koerner
Henry N Fukui
J Steward Slocum
James R Gundrum
Robert Williamson
Louise Dobson
Cecilia N Christensen
Kathy McAllister
Lou Stanganell
C R (“Ray”) Dix
Henry (“Hank”) Allen
Godfrey Diekmann, OSB
Dada
Loretta Brown

Intentions

Joseph Richey House
Fessenden House Recovery
Ministries
Saint James’ Church Fordham,
Bronx
Baltimore International
Seafarers’ Center
Trinity, Stoughton MA
Saint John’s, Boston
Our brothers William Francis,
Ciarán Anthony, Andrew,
Karekin Madeos, Francis
Andrew, Gabriel Liam, Thomas
Mark, Aelred Bernard, John
Henry and Emmanuel
The Lotus Team at IBM
Peter, BSG and wife Betty Budde
Don Mariutto
David
Myrna
Steve
Archbishop Remi of Madagascar
Audrey, Gerry and Patsy
McGregor
Penelope Warren
James
Linda and Alyxandra Mitchell
Ann
Cornelia Crayon
Andrew and Barry
Eddie and Christopher
Archbishop Desmond Tutu,
TSSF
Thanksgiving
The Resurrection of our Lord
Jesus Christ

WHERE THERE’S A WILL

You can assist and further the ministries of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory by remembering the community in your will. If you choose to do so, the following form of wording is appropriate:

I hereby give, devise, and bequeath to The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, Inc., a New York State not-for-profit corporation and its successors for ever \$_____ and / or _____ percent of my estate to be used in such a manner as determined by its Directors.