



HE SERVANT



Helen Marie Joyce VHM with Richard Thomas Biernacki BSG

#201

Special Double Issue / Advent 2006

ENLARGING OUR PLACE



Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.

These opening words are not from the lessons of the day (I will get to them) — they are from Isaiah 54 on “the future glory of Zion.” I was struck by these when used by a Unitarian preacher I heard recently on the radio, while driving to church.

In 1 Peter we heard these words: “The end of all things is near, therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. Above all, maintain constant love for one another.” What happens here this afternoon must, if nothing else, emphasize this fact. Vows are nothing if they are not taken with the promise and resolve to seriousness

and discipline; to maintaining constant love for one another. This love means forgiveness and support for the brothers; it means being there when needed and it means no exceptions, as C S Lewis wrote in “The Weight of Glory” —

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you. How can we do it? Only, I think, by remembering where we stand, by meaning our words when we say our prayers each night, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us.” We are offered forgiveness on no other terms. To refuse it is to refuse God’s mercy for ourselves. There is a hint of no exceptions and God means what he says.”

Living in this way is not easy; living the vows is not easy and in a time when the rest of the world says, “Why are you doing this?” you three made this choice.

On May 6, 1985, in a sermon at Saint Bartholomew’s Church in White Plains, J Norman Hall, the rector said, “Christianity believes in the permanence of the experience of love.” For some strange reason the piece of paper on which I wrote that and other thoughts, remains with me to this day. And it speaks volumes.

Further from 1 Peter: “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received... whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.”

A few weeks ago, I was sitting in the screen house at our summer place which we call Gilead. Of course, the implication of the name is healing; this place has been such a center for us and those of you here who have been there can attest to its simplicity and beauty; its healing abilities. So, while sitting, having a liquid refreshment (use your imagination) I watched an amazing thing happen at the bird feeder. There were

mother birds taking seeds on a regular basis and going up to a branch and tapping them into pieces. What struck me was that near these branches were younger birds flapping their wings in what bird people call the “gimmee pose.” What captured my attention was the way in which the mother flew up to the babies and fed them the fragments of the seeds. Isn’t that what we are supposed to do for each other?

We must keep in mind that taking vows implies *more* dedication and *more* devotion and *more* love! Especially vows taken for life — for the balance of your natural life! Enlarge your tents. There will be times when there will be those around you in the “gimmee” pose. They may be other brothers or member of your family; they might be the clergy with whom you serve or the parishioners with whom you worship and work. You need to have the seeds ready!

The only primatial oversight
any of us needs is that of God
and of his Son!

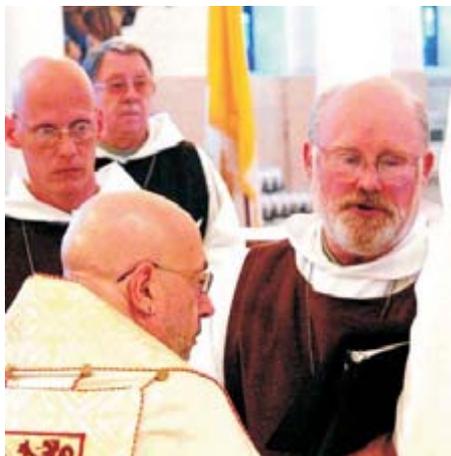
Now for you who make first profession, the implications are no less. This moment is not a given, not a right and nothing earned for great work. The Community, in its voting among your peers, feels that you show forth the response to the gospel mandate to Love! In the midst of all the hoopla in the church, even the loftiest of bishops have forgotten that the *only* thing Jesus requires of us is to *love*! The only primatial oversight any of us needs is that of God and of his Son!

In closing, I would like to read from C S Lewis’ *Mere Christianity*:

Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have his way, come to share in the life of Christ. If we do, we shall then be sharing in a life which was begotten, not made, which has always existed and always will exist. Christ is the Son of God. If we share in this kind of life, we shall be sons of God. We shall love the Father as he does and the Holy Ghost will arise in us. He came to this world and became a man in order to spread to other men the kind of life he has — by what I call “good infection.” Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.

I add further: this is also the whole purpose of becoming a religious — to become a little Christ.

— RTB



Peter makes his life vows of profession to Richard Thomas, as Karekin Madteos and Edward look on.

COMMUNITY NOTES

Annual Convocation



The Brotherhood held its Annual Convocation and General Chapter at Mount Alvernia in Wappingers Falls NY in late August. Episcopal Visitor Bishop Rodney R Michel attended for most of the week, during which he exercised his canonical responsibility for individual meetings with each member of the order. Bishop Rodney preached and served as principal celebrant at daily masses during the week, with Tobias Stanislas Haller and Emmanuel Williamson celebrating prior to the bishop's arrival. He celebrated the Convocation Festival Holy Eucharist, during which Peter Budde made his life profession of vows and Enoch John Valentine and Ron Fender



Bishop Rodney with the new novices David Luke, Michael and David John

made their first profession. Family members and friends from several different states came to attend this gala service and the chapel and brothers' choir were very well populated. The reception originally planned for the cloister had to be moved indoors due to rain and wind, but that didn't dampen the spirits of anyone who attended.

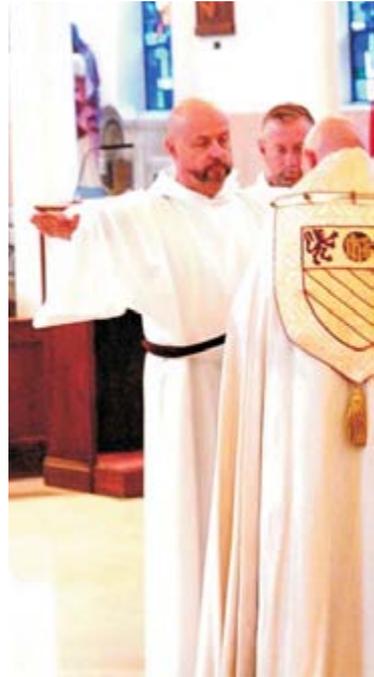
Aelred Bernard Dean, the community's Director of Education, led this year's community retreat, which called the friars to study the implications of the vows from many different



Brothers lead the panel discussion (l to r): Joseph Basil, Edward, Mark Andrew, Ron, and Peter.



Ron Fender shares a moment with the Minister General prior to being girded with the knotted cincture that symbolizes the vows.



Richard Thomas girds Enoch John for spiritual battle.

perspectives as the community experiences them. The two-day retreat began with a panel discussion by brothers at various points in their individual profession of vows, including Joseph Basil Gauss, Edward Munro and Mark Andrew Jones, and Peter and Ron, who would make their life and first professions later in the week. Five small groups further explored aspects of the life lived in religious commitment, and an Emmaus Walk paired the brothers for personal conversation.

Two postulants joined the community during the week: Wilbur D Harpest of the Diocese of Chicago and Todd E Mashlan from the Diocese of Ohio, and three men entered the novitiate: David John Battrick, our first brother in Australia; Michael Elliott, from the Diocese of Swansea & Brecon in the Church in Wales; and David Luke Henton of the Diocese of Texas.

In addition to the daily round of the four-fold Daily Office and the Holy Eucharist, postulants and novices engaged in training sessions, and the Brotherhood Benevolent Trust, Council, and gatherings of the Provinces met.

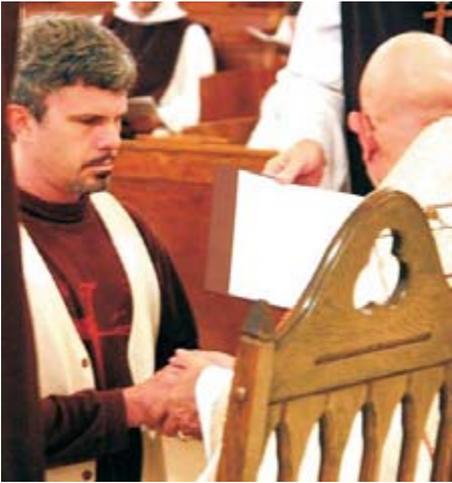


Brothers share their insights on the vows in a plenary session.

Among several decisions taken during the Chapter and Council meetings was establishment of a fifth domestic province of the Brotherhood — Province 4, including the states from North Carolina west to Tennessee and southward through Florida. Aelred Bernard was elected its first Minister Provincial and Council appointed Thomas Bushnell to replace him as Director of Education. Edward resigned as Minister Provincial of Province 5 in order to join the newly formed Province 4, and Nathanael Deward Rahm was elected to take his place. Ten brothers renewed their Annual Vows of Profession to the Minister General, and a large number of Gregorian Friars were commissioned as officials – elected and appointed – on the Saturday at Evening Prayer, including Ministers Provincial for Provinces 1 (Ciarán Anthony DellaFera), 4 (Aelred Bernard), 5 (Nathanael Deward) and 8 (Karekin Madteos Yarian); Minister General’s Counselor (Tobias Stanislas); the Directors of Education (Thomas), Postulants and Novices (William David Everett), Associates (Peter), Public Relations (James Teets) and Convocation Liturgy and Music (Thomas); Treasurer (James); Convocation Infirmarian (Thomas Lawrence Greer); and Cellarer (Robert James McLaughlin). And Council also established a new committee to study the developing possibilities of the Associates Program, chaired by the current Director of Associates, Peter.



The Minister General blesses the new novices, as their mentors and pastoral guides look on.



Todd Mashlan enters the postulancy.



Will Harpest receives the postulant's cross.

When one looks at the various minutes taken during such a week as this, one easily sees the accomplishments made during that time. This is always a good thing, but it cannot include the sound of laughter heard everywhere during this time together. That is the true hallmark of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory: Jesus' servants that love what they do each day of their lives through their countless ministries where God has placed them, and they also love to be together for one or two times a year to refresh their spiritual "batteries" and tell stories of what God has done through their vocations since last they met. Ongoing and deepening interest in the religious life throughout the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion is witnessed by the variety of locations from which these men come, and the international aspect of these vocations should reassure the church everywhere of a bright, exciting and active future for Anglican religious community life.

General Convention

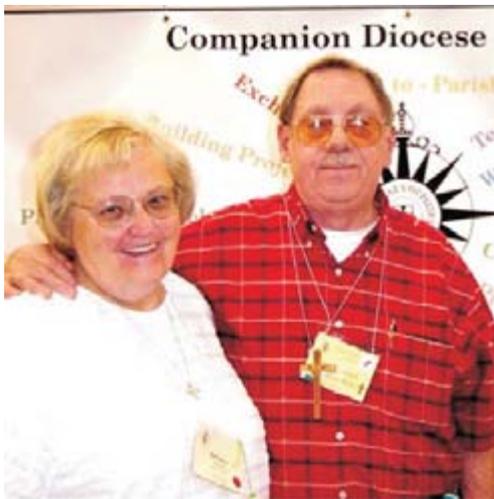
The 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church took place in Columbus from June 13th to the 22nd and the Brotherhood made varied and significant contributions to that triennial event, in terms of presence and participation. Perhaps the most visible of the seven Gregorian Friars on hand for this event was Tobias Stanislas, who was a clerical deputy from the Diocese of New York and also one of the media briefers who fielded questions from the press in teams of two bishops and two deputies at the daily morning press conference. Episcopal News Service provided clips of these conferences and interviews for the nightly news program generated for cable viewers and the closed-circuit network throughout the downtown Columbus hotels. During the Convention he was elected as the Province II clerical member of the Joint Standing Committee for the Nomination of the Presiding Bishop. He also served on the legislative committee charged with signing off on the consecration of bishops; in past years a fairly uncontroversial task, but one which in recent years has become more noteworthy. Bishop Michel served on this committee as one of the episcopal representatives,



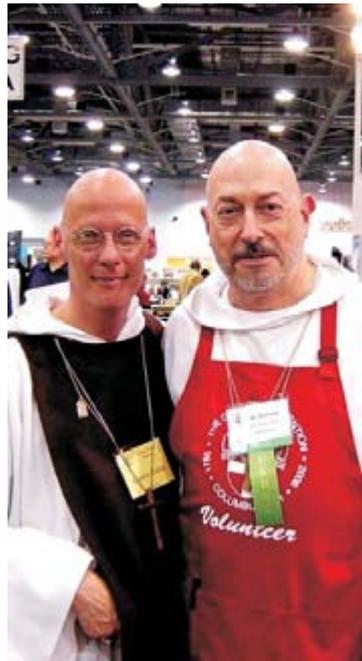
(l to r) Tobias Stanislas, Sarah Knoll-Williams and Bishop Michel serve on the Consecration of Bishops Legislative Committee. (Photo: Melodie Woerman)

and it was a good opportunity for Tobias Stanislas and he to share a bit of conversation in the down time between hearing sessions.

Edward Munro and Karekin Madteos Yarian were at their stations in the exhibit hall daily, Edward with the Companion Diocese Network (he is that organization's national Consultant for Province III) and Karekin Madteos with the Every Voice Network – both report countless wonderful experiences in meeting old and new friends alike. Richard Thomas Biernacki was on hand lending his many years of experience in serving the General Convention as a volunteer in the House of Deputies. James Teets was there from before the beginning until after the end, serving the annual meeting of the Companion Diocese Network which gathered before the convention began; making arrangements for and attending the

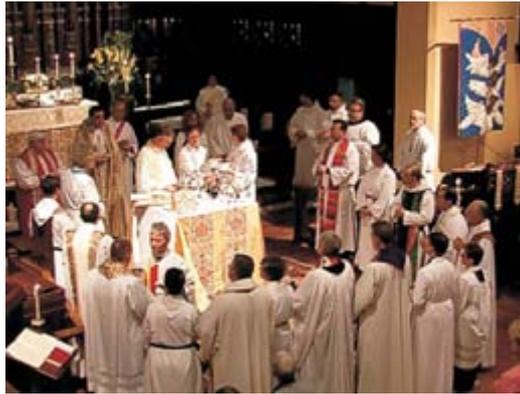


Barbara and Edward Munro at the Companion Diocese Network booth



Karekin Madteos and Richard Thomas in a pause between assignments

Liberia Covenant Committee Meeting on the Sunday prior; and for the balance of his fifteen days there, following through on his hospitality ministry to provide a warm welcome and to serve the more than 65 international guests invited to the convention by the Presiding Bishop and his own Office of Anglican and Global Relations. Behind the scenes William Francis Jones, sequestered in an upstairs office at the Convention Center, worked with the staff of the Controller's Office providing funda-



Emmanuel and Tobias Stanislas join the throng of eucharistic ministers at the Integrity celebration.

mental financial services to the event. And the “free agent” throughout the convention was Emmanuel Williamson, who came as a visitor and did just that: he visited with everyone in sight, especially with the members of the many other religious communities that attended convention – some of which gathered at the Cowley Publications or the CAROA Booth – or consulting with his own Diocese of Alaska Deputa-

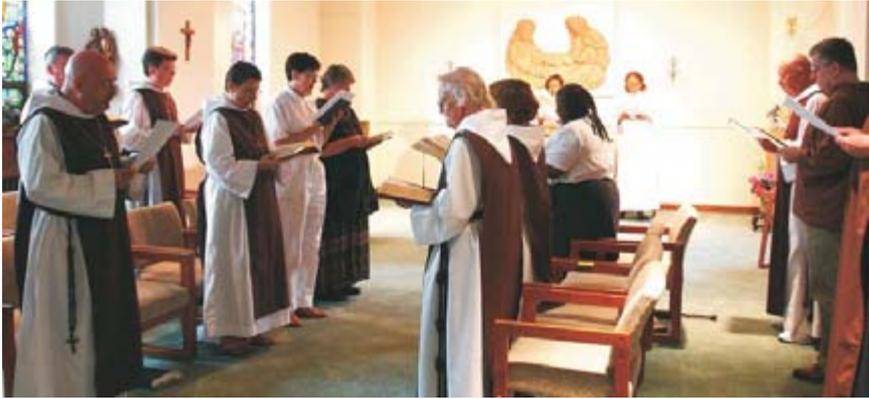


Prior to the Integrity Eucharist, Tobias Stanislas catches up with some New York colleagues: (l to r) Timothy Holder, Alex Dyer, and John Denaro.

tion. Bishop Michel gathered the available brothers together for a nightly update on the day's events from the point of view of the House of Bishops, and all of the brothers managed to find time on their hectic schedules to meet for a festive dinner together once during their time in Columbus. Service to God's people and table fellowship: the mission of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory was certainly lived out during this important event!

New Jersey

Richard Thomas, James, William Francis, Stephen Storen, Tobias Stanislas and Robert James attended the Summer Convocation of the Sisters of Saint Gregory, at Emmaus House in Perth Amboy. Their time with the sisters included Noonday Prayer and much catch-up time over lunch, prior to the liturgy which featured the admission of three novices. Mary Louise Chin delivered an inspirational sermon on the vowed life, and prior to the Offertory Richard Thomas gave a special word of reflec-



The Sisters of Saint Gregory Convocation Eucharist

tion and congratulations on behalf of the Brotherhood. This was indeed a wonderful opportunity to refresh long-standing friendships and to begin some new ones.

Richard Thomas and John Henry Ernestine assisted at the Easter Vigil at Saint Clement's, Belford — Richard Thomas at the organ console and John Henry chanting the Exsultet.

Manhattan

On the Saturday before Lent 1 the brothers of Province 2 gathered to prepare for the penitential season. This retreat arose in response to an invitation to Tobias Stanislas from Fr Lloyd Prator of Saint John's in the Village to deliver Lenten meditations for a Quiet Day at this venerable Greenwich Village parish. Though the day was kept in Holy Silence, simply being present, listening and praying with parishioners of Saint John's was a rewarding community experience for all who attended, and the thought-provoking reflections on spiritual renewal constituted a welcome beginning to this Holy Season of Lent.



Brothers and sisters share a meal and conversation at the Sisters of Saint Gregory Convocation.



Richard Thomas at the console at Saint Clement's, Belford NJ

Canon Frederick Boyd Williams was a widely known preacher and tireless worker for civil rights, for people with AIDS and for opportunities for children; he was rector of the Church of the Intercession in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan for thirty years, a Chaplain in the American Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, and a good friend to a number of Gregorian Friars for decades. He died suddenly at his Manhattan home in early April, just two months after the beginning of his retirement, and his life and ministry were celebrated at the Intercession on Monday in Holy Week this year. Bishop Mark Sisk of New York presided at the funeral with no less than eight other bishops present and such a crowd of mourners that overflowed the church's large nave out onto its Broadway environs. Former New York City Mayor David N Dinkins was one of the lecturers at this beautiful service, which included testimonials from US Congressman Charles B Rangel and the Rev Dr James A Forbes jr, Senior Minister of Riverside Church. Brothers James, William Francis, Stephen and Tobias Stanislas represented the Brotherhood and joined the procession; other communities present included the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis, the Order of the Holy Cross, the Community of the Holy Spirit and the Order of Saint Helena.

Central Pennsylvania

Luke Anthony Nowicki enjoys his employment as a staff member of a congregation of the United Methodist Church and he participated in their annual retreat in April. This took place at Camp Hebron in Halifax PA, a facility staffed by the Mennonites and available to all denominations. Luke Anthony reports that he gave a talk on the subject of grace, which was the retreat's theme. Ample time was allowed for rest and relaxation, together with common prayer and social time.

Baltimore

William Henry Benefield was a featured speaker at an afternoon symposium of the College of Neurologic and Psychiatric Pharmacists' Annual Meeting, as part of the Psychiatry Board recertification program. He lectured on the Treatment of Autistic Disorder and other Developmental Disabilities. While in Baltimore, he visited Edward and the Seafarer's Ministry.



Edward visiting with Sister Helen Marie in 1996

We note with sorrow the death of Sr Helen Marie Joyce VHM — a formative force in the Brotherhood's early days, who helped the founder prepare the rule of the community. She is also responsible for sharing the responsorial "Jesus Prayer" which has become a regular part of our community worship. We trust she now chants this beautiful prayer in the presence of the One to whom it is always addressed.

Sewanee, Tennessee

Tobias Stanislas attended the meeting of the Conference of the Anglican Religious Orders of the Americas as their guest, representing the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities. Many of the church's Orders and Communities are facing challenging issues of identity and structure, and this meeting focused on creative responses to these challenges. It was a great meeting and Tobias regrets his time there was cut short due to a call to attend the Provincial Synod meeting in Albany at the end of the week.

Chicago

William Henry visited the Windy City for a psychiatry conference, and while there visited with several of the brothers, and was guest of Ronald Augustine, attending liturgy at the Church of the Atonement. Another old friend of the parish was present for Pentecost, Bishop Montgomery, and Ronald Augustine took the opportunity to have a snapshot taken.



Ronald Augustine and Bishop Montgomery

San Antonio

Gordon John Stanley returned the favor and visited the Lone Star State, serving as the deacon at Saint Paul's-Grayson Street, William Henry's parish, and both assisted at Solemn Evensong and Benediction marking the close of Saint Paul's Choir and Choral Scholar's music series.

Hawaii

William Henry traveled to Hawaii at the end of May and made a pilgrimage to Molokai where Blessed Damien ministered to those with Hansen's disease. He visited and prayed in Fr Damien's Church and at the original burial site in Kalawao, and visited Saint Andrew's Cathedral on Sunday in Honolulu.

London



The July 27th edition of *The London Gazette* announced the Queen's Appointments for 2006 to the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem – also known as the Order of Saint John – and among those listed as Serving Brothers is our own James Teets. For over a decade James has held a special interest in the Holy Land, including his management of the Episcopal Church's annual Good Friday Offering, a dedicated collection raised for the benefit of the four dioceses of the

Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, with an emphasis on the Diocese of Jerusalem. The Most Venerable Order's charitable focus from the US is the Eye



The Advisory Board of the Office of the Anglican Observer

Hospital in Jerusalem and Gaza City, which serves thousands of people who could not otherwise have access to this level of medical care. James has also visited the region and knows many of the church leaders personally. James joins Gregorian Friars Stephen (who is a member of the Order's US Priory Chapter), Tobias Stanislas and William Henry in supporting this important ministry. We also note the role Tobias Stanislas played in prompting General Convention's salute to the Order (Resolution Boos) as it celebrates multiple anniversaries in this and next year: the 125th anniversary of the founding of Saint John's Eye Hospital, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the American Society of the Order, and the 10th anniversary of the foundation of the American Priory — the first outside the British Commonwealth.

Stephen and William Francis attended a meeting with various luminaries, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, in connection with the Office of the Anglican Observer to the United Nations. With the retirement of Archdeacon "Tai" the office is in the process of restructuring.

The Phillipines



Bishop Dixie with Maurice John

Bishop Dixie Taclobao of Central Philippines and Associate Fr Leon Cadsap from Tagaytay south of Manila visited Maurice John Grove's parish for the first official visitation. This turned into a classic village celebration. In the photograph, Bishop Dixie joins our brother Maurice John in enjoying fresh coconut and coconut juice (called *buko*) from the trees on the grounds.

ON CHRISTIAN HOPE

I have often struggled with the choice between two futures; one that I can discern with my limited vision and the other that belongs to Christ. I believe that there are, in fact, two futures.

The first, the one that I discern, is the future that is obvious to me given the facts that I can see. Given the circumstances of today's world, that future seems mighty bleak. It is filled with the effects of environmental degradation, poor international relationships related to human politics, a lack of social justice, and a culture that seems increasingly divorced from ethical and moral direction. It is into this future that I often project all of my plans, my hopes and desires for my life: my career choices, my future education plans, my desire to one day own a home, or write that collection of poetry I've always wanted to write.

It is that other future I often lose sight of, the one that is rooted in the faith that God is working in the world in surprising ways, and that God in Christ has a plan for the whole of creation that includes redemption, justice, and the love that typifies the reign of God on earth. As Saint Paul says in Ephesians, we are to "set our hope on Christ" who has a plan, in the fullness of time, to gather up all things in himself — all things in heaven and on earth.

Being raised among die-hard Presbyterians in a rural community of like-minded Protestants, I am afraid that I was raised with a rather pessimistic view of human nature and our capacity for redemption. It is a legacy that I often hope I have left behind in my decision to become an Episcopalian. Our catholic view of humanity is very much at odds with the understanding that I was raised with. It is a view that believes that human-kind is



Karekin Madteos, center, joins the brothers in a social reception following the vows workshop.

good, innately good, and predisposed to goodness in spite of our sin. The view that I inherited believes quite the opposite — that we are predisposed to sin rather than goodness and that given a choice we will almost always choose sin. Therein lies my struggle and my choice. Either I believe that I am redeemed or I do not. Either I hope in a future that has been redeemed by God, or I do not.

I entered religious life in my twenties as a way of participating in the redemption that God has planned for the world. I believed then, and still do, that God has a plan for the future that is beyond my knowing and beyond my understanding. My choice to live my faith in this concrete way in the world was a choice to enter into God's purpose as a way of life. It is a choice to do the work I believe God calls me to do as a way of helping to bring forth that purpose in the world. It is an act of hope and an act of



David Luke is girded as a novice.

I am asked to strive for justice, to resist evil, to continue in faith, to respect the dignity of all, to proclaim the Good News, to seek and serve. These are all duties that involve choice and action. All of these duties come to bear on the future that I choose to live for and the hope that I choose to live into. Further, before I make these promises, I vow to renounce the forces of wickedness and evil, to renounce desires that are contrary to God's purposes, to accept Christ as the power that transforms and saves me, and most importantly, to put all of my trust in Christ's grace and love. These all have profound implications for the measure of Christian hope that I allow to take hold of my vision.

If I were a perfect Christian, then the choice between the kind of future I see and the kind of future that I trust God will unfold for us would be a simple one. But I am not perfect and my faith often falters. To live a Christian life within my Covenant with God, with all of its benefits and responsibilities, requires a great deal of patience, humility, quietness, prayer, and above all trust. I try my best. The delicate

trust. Having made this choice, I daily try to confront the future that I can discern with my two eyes and say "No; God has something better in mind."

It is by the choice to live in this manner, dedicated to the work necessary to prepare the way for the reign of God, that I avoid the kind of quietism that is a danger to our lives as faithful Christians. It is too easy to slide into apathy when we believe that God alone will take care of the future — and quietly retreat into lives of inaction or complacency. In Baptism, God and I established a Covenant with one another. God promised me certain rights and gifts when I was baptized, but also asked that I take on certain duties in return. I need to remember that these duties are not simply about the way I see or think about the world in my life of faith. They are not simply about what I believe but what I do — the actions I take as a result.



David John makes the promises that grant him entry to the novitiate, as James Mahoney, James Teets, and Gordon John Stanley exercise their ministries.

balancing act between these two futures is the story of my faith life in its entirety. The struggles, the victories, the doubts and the hopes all have their rightful place in this struggle.

As long as I still see as through a mirror, darkly, I choose to hope in a future beyond my capacity to see or understand. Although I am often tempted to allow my own view of the future to eclipse the one that Christian hope demands, God reminds me at the Eucharist of the vision of the future to which we are called. If I choose to act with the certainty that God needs our participation to make that future happen, and as long as I am willing to do my part, then my hope shall never be lost. Christ will surely see to it that all will be well.

— Karekin Madteos Yarian BSG



As brothers witness vows being professed, they are strengthened in their own commitments.

A Convocation Sermon

ALL PURE THINGS

They gathered in the room that day, dressed in their long robes, a collection of prominent, upper middle class citizens. Not rich but definitely affluent. They had earned their wealth through hard work and were proud of it. Among them physicians, lawyers, scholars, merchants and academics, men of influence and standing in the Jewish



Ciarán Anthony regales a group of the brothers at the social reception.



Aelred Bernard and Mark Andrew (f) and Will and Gordon John (b) at the social reception

community. They were deeply committed to their faith. They were devoted lay people. They fiercely adhered to the tenants of their religion, they strictly followed the ancient traditions, they observed every possible nuance of religious law and custom. They prayed, they sacrificed, they observed the required feasts and fasts, they tithed and they lived, in their own estimation, upright and pious lives. “You shall be holy as I am holy,” God admonishes Moses in our reading from Leviticus. These men thought

that they knew what God meant by, “Be holy.” They believed that the strict application of the law to every aspect of their lives would make them holy.

I am speaking of the Pharisees in the time of Jesus. The word Pharisee means to “separate” and that is what they did; they separated themselves from the rest of society. They were a growing influence among the contending parties of their religion. They had no idea that in less than 50 years, only they and the followers of Jesus would remain to lead the Jewish people.

It was the custom in those days for one among them to invite his fellow worshipers back to his house for a meal on the Sabbath, in order to discuss current events and issues of religion and theology. Today’s Gospel reading begins in the middle of one of those meals, and guess who’s coming to dinner? They had invited one of the many itinerant preachers in the area. A carpenter’s son, who socialized with sinners, and caused dissension among the people. He was a rabble-rouser who repeatedly challenged them publicly and questioned the purity code. They feared that he could be the founder of yet another religious party with which they would have to contend for power.

To get the full flavor of the situation in which we find ourselves we must back up several verses to the arrival of the guest of honor. On their way to the meal, Jesus is met by a man with dropsy. Dropsy is edema or swelling in the body’s limbs and today we know that it can be a symptom of a more serious ailment. In ancient times it was believed to be the result of intemperate or immoral sexual activity. To the Pharisees this man was unclean, and yet Jesus healed him, quoting Deuteronomy, “Which of you would not save a child or an ox if it fell into a well on the Sabbath?”

Before the meal begins, Jesus observes the guests jockeying for seats of honor at the table. He responds to their display of ego by quoting from Proverbs, “All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Next, in today’s Gospel reading, he tells his host, “When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”



Christopher Stephen (l) chats with Donovan Aidan and Charles at the reception.

Finally, he tells a parable about a rich man who has invited many guests to attend a dinner. The guests all send excuses; not one of them has the time to attend. The parable ends with the ominous statement, “None of those who were invited will taste of my dinner.”

Jesus understands God and the law very differently than do the Pharisees. He is not impressed with their external piety or their moral uprightness, nor with the external regulations of the purity code. He considers their piety to be self-righteousness and not God-righteousness. They are about distancing sin from the sinner rather than dealing with the internal causes of the sin itself.

The Pharisees ignore the healing miracle that Jesus performs that Sabbath, just as they ignore his challenge of their interpretation of the law. Like the rich man’s invited dinner guests these Pharisees choose to ignore the miracle and message before them. They choose not to hear the invitation. They miss their opportunity to taste of Christ’s dinner.

This has always troubled me. Why does Jesus’ message fall on deaf ears? Why at the end of his ministry, knowing all that he has done, do so many of the Pharisees refuse to believe? Then it occurred to me: it’s the purity code.

This code is more than a set of rules to avoid sinning, this code is a way of existence. The entire society, economy, religion, history, and future, the very way of life of the Pharisee, is defined and insured by that purity code. It is how they sustain themselves separate and apart from the evils of the gentile society that surrounds them. The purity code provides the wall of protection that they need to exist, and Jesus is asking them to tear down the wall.

Jesus preaches a message that is completely opposite to the beliefs and practices of the Pharisees.

Ⓣ that knowing God and loving God and one another is more important than keeping the purity code

Ⓣ that temple ritual is not essential to true piety

Ⓣ that we are to break down the barriers that can separate us from one another

Ⓣ that we are to serve all with love, compassion, humility and hospitality.

Is it any wonder that the Pharisees can not accept him and even fear him?

The purity code is still alive and well. Christians today are still making the mistakes of the Pharisees in the past. We attempt to exclude people we think are not pure, in a mistaken attempt to keep the church itself pure. The message is clear. The kingdom of God is not what the followers of the purity code think it is. Christians are not called to be separatist or exclusivist. Christians cannot hide from the world. Christians must go into the world with love, compassion, humility and hospitality to share the word and the open invitation of Christ.

Ⓣ Love that embraces all

Ⓣ Compassion that mitigates judgment

Ⓣ Humility that allows us to see others as God sees us

Ⓣ Hospitality that allows us to enter into relationships and events in which we do not control the outcome.

Jesus revealed a true and complete vision of God — the love, mercy, forgiveness, and salvation that is God's gift through grace to all who answer the call — a grace that the purity code cannot provide and the Pharisees could never imagine. The same grace that allows me to say, without reservation, that when my time here is finished, on the day I finally get to that mansion with many rooms, I will not be



James and Richard Thomas with Dean C David Williams of Newark: Williams was present at the foundation service of the Brotherhood in 1969, along with Sister Helen Marie Joyce and the Sisters of the Visitation, at their Riverdale convent.

surprised to see our brothers Patrick Ignatius and Thomas Joseph sitting at the Lord's Great Table. Nor will I be surprised to see Bishop Herzog of Albany sitting between them. No, I will not be surprised — at least not as surprised as the bishop.

— Richard Matthias BSG

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

How might we use these Advent days to focus on the present; on what is going on in the here and now; how we are nurturing the risen Christ who dwells within each of us in the present time by virtue of our Baptism? Maybe we should ask the question, “How do we find the manger amid the madness of the mall?”

I don’t know about you, but this is a tough time of year for me to be a good Christian. Anyone else feel like that? Have you seen the news stories about people who waited all night in front of a store to buy something on sale for Christmas, and then trampled one another in a frenzy to get it, leaving one woman dead? Have you heard about all the hoopla over whether the tree in front of the White House (which, although it has become a symbol of Christmas, really has nothing to do with Christmas) should be called a Christmas Tree or a Holiday Tree? How about the advertisements we see everywhere at this time of year that leave the first five letters of Christmas out completely, and replace them with a big X. What is X-mas? OK, here’s a tough one: have most of you already spent more money on buying gifts for Christmas than you’ve put into the plate this month?

How many of us are so tired by Christmas Day that the last thing we want to do is celebrate? I think it’s safe to say that Christmas Present has become less of a “present” and more of a nightmare, and that’s why I say it’s hard for me to be a good Christian during this time: because being a good Christian means making sure there is room in my heart for Jesus, and it’s hard for me to do that amid the tension and frenzy that Christmas has become. I tend to spend my Advent days being angry at everyone for missing the point, for being so far off the mark, which is absolutely ridiculous, because it means I am missing the point too. So, you might ask, what is the point of Advent. Good question.

A rabbi and a pastor were talking one day, and the pastor said, “So you don’t believe that Jesus is the Messiah?” “No,” said the rabbi, “I don’t.” “Ah,” said the pastor, “so you are still waiting for the Messiah to come?” “No,” said the rabbi, “not waiting; preparing.”

I think a lot of what has become of Christmas is precisely because most of us are “waiting” rather than “preparing” — and when we wait, we have lots of extra time; so what do we do? We go shopping, or we think up other ways to fill the time. If we were actually using the days of Advent to *prepare* not for a secular “holiday” but for a religious “holy” day, we wouldn’t have time for all the other stuff that Christmas has become.

If we truly believe what we say every Sunday as part of the Eucharistic Prayer — Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again — if we truly believe that Christ is alive and in the world, dwelling within each one of us, then there wouldn’t be much need for Advent. We would be so consumed by that knowledge that we would never need to stop and reflect on it. Alas, we are mere mortals, and we forget. So the church gives us Advent: a time to stop everything and start over again, a new year. The Jewish people have Rosh Hashanah, the secular world has New Year’s day, and we Christians have the First Sunday of Advent: *that* is the start of our new year.

So the first thing we're asked to do at the beginning of this new year is reflect on our relationship with Jesus. This is a time for us to remember what happened at Christ's first coming 2000 years ago, imagine (and we can only imagine) what will happen when Christ returns in majesty sometime in the future; and then to focus all of that looking back and looking forward by looking inward. The great question of Advent is, Am I ready?

Here's my favorite Advent prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus. I don't know exactly what that means, but please don't let that stop you." We know that Jesus will return. The question is, "Am I ready?" We know it is going to be unexpected and fast. Am I ready? We know that he will recognize his sheep and take them to himself. Am I ready? We know that there will be many who will be left behind. Am I ready?

Here's a little story some of the brothers have already heard from a previous quiet day, but I think it bears repeating. I patronize a local dry cleaner in the town where I live. I don't dress like this during the week; I look very corporate during the week — one patient even told me I dress too nice to be a brother! Anyway, back to the dry cleaner. It's owned and run by a Jewish family. One December, a few years ago, I overheard the owner on the telephone with her son discussing Christmas gifts. We started to talk as she waited on me, and I mentioned this to her. "Sandy, I heard you talking to Jason about Christmas gifts. I'm surprised to hear that you celebrate Christmas, considering what it's all about. She replied, "Oh yeah, him. Well, we don't do the Santa Claus part."

Friends, if we were living a holy Advent right now — and of course, this is preaching to the choir because all of you are here instead of in a mall somewhere, trying to do precisely that — but if every Christian in the world was living a holy Advent, actively preparing himself and herself spiritually, actively opening his or her heart to make sure there is room for Jesus this time around; if everyone was *preparing* rather than *waiting* — nobody would think that Santa Claus was the central figure of Christmas. Nobody would be at the malls. (Of course, my nephew who is a Wall Street Executive tells me that the entire economy would collapse if people listened to me. So what — let it collapse. See how difficult it is to accept that; right away we think of our 401k's and our pensions and our paychecks. How difficult it is to let go and leave it all up to God.) If everyone was living a holy Advent, instead of waiting up all night at electronics stores for discounts, we'd be up all night readying ourselves for the arrival of the Master, lest we be unprepared at his sudden and swift coming — and the only ones who would be trampled down would be the foolish who chose to preoccupy themselves while they waited around.

During this time for reflection, be honest with yourself, and ask if you are *waiting* or if you are *preparing* during these Advent days. Are you ready enough to say, "Come, Lord Jesus. I don't know exactly what that means, but don't let that stop you." To Christ be glory, now and forever.

— Richard John Lorino BSG

INTERCESSIONS

The Brotherhood

Episcopal Visitor

Sun

Rodney R Michel

Episcopal Visitors Emeriti

Horace WB Donegan d 11.11.91

Paul Moore, jr d 5.1.03

Walter D Dennis d 3.30.03

Life and Annual Professed

Richard Thomas Biernacki

John Nidecker d 6.20.88

James Teets

Luke Anthony Nowicki

Mon

John Peter Clark d 2.25.94

William Francis Jones

Stephen Storen

Thomas Joseph Ross d 12.18.01

Tobias Stanislas Haller

William Bunting d 10.12.88

Edward Munro

Charles Kramer

Tue

Bernard Fessenden d 8.10.93

Donovan Aidan Bowley

Edward Riley d 9.15.05

Christopher Stephen Jenks

Ciarán Anthony DellaFera

Damian-Curtis Kellum

Richard John Lorino

Wed

Ronald Augustine Fox

Maurice John Grove

Charles Edward LeClerc

Virgilio Fortuna

Gordon John Stanley

Karekin Madteos Yarian

William David Everett

Thu

Thomas Bushnell

Thomas Mark Liotta

James Mahoney

Patrick Ignatius Dickson d 7.20.05

Robert James McLaughlin

Peter Budde

John Henry Ernestine

Fri

Francis Sebastian Medina

Aelred Bernard Dean

Joseph Basil Gauss

Mark Andrew Jones

Emmanuel Williamson

Richard Matthias

William Henry Benefield

Sat

Nathanael Deward Rahm

Thomas Lawrence Greer

Enoch John Valentine

Ron Fender

Novices

David John Battrick

Michael Elliott

David Luke Henton

Postulants

Will Harpest

Todd Mashlan

The Associates and Friends of the Brotherhood

Religious Communities

Sacramentine & Visitandine

Nuns

Society of the Atonement

Community of the Paraclete

Companions of Saint Luke~

Benedictine

Community of Celebration

Congregation of the Companions

of the Holy Saviour

Life in the Lamb Community

Little Sisters of Saint Clare

Rivendell Community

Sisters of Saint Gregory

Third Order SSF

Worker Sisters & Brothers of the

Holy Spirit

Camaldolese Benedictines

Society of Saint John the

Evangelist

Anglican Oblates of Saint

Benedict

Community of the Transfiguration

Order of Julian of Norwich

For the intentions of

Joseph Richey House

Fessenden Recovery Ministries

Dove House

Baltimore Int'l Seafarers' Center;

Saint Paul's Grayson Saint, San

Antonio

Brothers Tobias Stanislas, Ronald

Augustine, Karekin Madteos,

William David, Thomas,

Thomas Mark, Emmanuel,

Luke Anthony, Charles,

Damian-Curtis, Charles

Edward, James Mahoney,

Aelred Bernard, John Henry

Aldersgate UMC Dobbs Ferry,

St Christopher's, Killeen TX

White Plains Hospital

Episcopal Parishes of Yonkers

Ian, David, Dennis, Marie,

William Henry, Johanna,

Virginia, Nancy, Dean, Scott,

Kathleen, Steven, Anthony,

Austin, Tim

Lillian-Marie, Carin Bridgit &

Helen Bernice SSG, Sheila

Gould a/BSG

For the Departed

Benefactors, Friends &

Associates: Charlotte Morgan,

Arsene & Louise Lemarier,

Norman Hall, George Koerner,

Henry Fukui, J Steward Slocum,

James Gundrum, Cecil Berges,

Marion Pierce, Kenneth Staples,

Elizabeth Holton, Richard A

Belanger, Brendan W Nugent,

Sarah Elizabeth Wells, SSG, Sue

Bradley

Austin Manchester

Jim Ayers

Maurice Francis Poirier OCP

Kristen Erlendson Sundquist

Earle Chatfield Blakeman jr

Peter King

Douglas P Roth

Ed Cook

Allan

Frederick Boyd Williams

Michael Hall

Isabel

Ernesto Forbes

Glenda Thomas

Bryan Heymann

Clifford Clark

Patrick Fitzgerald

Robert Collins

Bob Smith

Carmelo Sanfilippo

Nathan Graybill

Luisa Murrell

Paul Kerrigan

Maria

Joyce Hogg

Jeanne Duncanson

Madelyn

Marie Cleveland Jenks

Tom Scott

Mary Quick-Blackman

Barnard Hughes

Paul Lachele

George Fidone

Pauline Larom Kane

Helen Marie Joyce VHM

Gene Metzger

Donald Vincent Taylor

Herbert Thompson jr

Thanksgiving

The election of Katharine Jefferts

Schori as XXVI Presiding

Bishop of the Episcopal Church

For James Teets' 20th anniversary

of ministry at the Episcopal

Church Center in NY

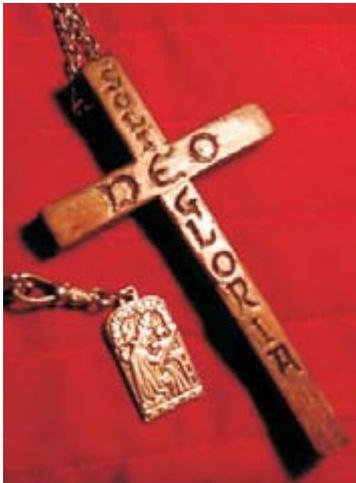
The Silver Jubilees of William

Francis Jones and Stephen

Storen



Brothers who served as mentors and pastors through the postulancy greet the new novices after their reception into this next stage on their pilgrimage.



The present profession cross and the medal of Saint Gregory

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.