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HE SERVANT



*Objects found on a
Wisconsin beach...*

#205

Fall-Winter 2007

STATE OF THINGS GREGORIAN

I just finished reading *The Third Secret* by Steven Berry, centered on the Secrets of Fatima. I recommend the book. From the author's notes, I give you the words of Leo XIII in 1881: "The Church needs nothing but the truth." The truth—a novel idea in our day when so much in which we believed for most of our lives has changed; the leaders we thought were beyond doubt are liars and fabricators; dividers instead of reconcilers. Our bishops and clergy argue about property and money while there are hungry and homeless at the very doors of our churches.

The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory has always been a truth-teller. We have never shrunk back when questioned about who and what we are; we have always told the truth. I pray we have the strength in the years to come to continue strong and vital as we are today.



Brothers in choir recite the Daily Office.

The ministries and works in which this community is involved boggle the mind. Medical school and seminary; work for the community with vocations and training of postulants and novices. Director of pastoral care for a major New York hospital; dealing with illness and still continuing to work in vital ministries. Serving as a parish nurse; or going to nursing

school and beginning work with a parish nursing program. Planning the convocation music and liturgy while preparing to move life to a new place—indeed a very new place—and at the same time keeping the BSG emails flowing freely! Managing our money and bills; keeping the accounts in order and keeping us and our lives in the public eye! Shepherding those who are seeking our kind of life through the process



Thomas Mark Liotta sings the litanies at the life profession liturgy.



The Minister General girds Novice Will Harpest with the cincture.

and us seeing the results—two new postulants. And keeping all the many documents of the community in legal form and order—insuring that things are done “decently and in good order.”

You have probably noted, as I went through these many functions, that I mentioned no names. That is because while there are indeed brothers who fill these and other functions, these ministries and many others are ministries of us all! We all affect what others in the community do; we all benefit in some way from each of the ministries of these brothers.

Some of you have heard the explanations of the various stages of entrance and development in community. Postulants are knocking at the door and hoping it will open and be

welcoming; novices get to enter the door but they are in borrowed rooms and don't yet have all the furniture; professed get their own rooms and furniture and life pro-



Peter Budde preaches a stirring sermon at the life profession liturgy.



The Minister General admits Jason Bullock to the postulancy.

fessed—well—they just keep on professing! Each of us while moving out of a stage, much like being a deacon and then a priest, retain a part of that stage. We are postulants all, in that we should continue to knock at the door and wonder what God has in store for us; we are all somewhat novices in that we might be called upon at any time to some new work or ministry for which we need to learn and study. Profession should continue to contain the innocence and wonder of the first two stages, and life profession (if that happens) should

be the enlarging of ministry and development, not a relaxation and downtime! Those who are on the brink of making life vows must remember to keep the innocence of postulancy in mind, the searching and learning of novitiate and yes, even the years of annual vows and renewals.

When the Order of the Visitation was born on June 6, 1610, their founder, Francis de Sales, said “The character of the Daughters of the Visitation is to look at the will of God in all things and to follow it.” *The Spiritual Directory of the Visitation* puts it this way: “Let their whole life and exercises tend to unite them with God, to assist by prayer and good example Holy Church and the salvation of their neighbor.” Written in 1610 and still true today for us who were told at our beginnings that we were following in Francis de Sales’ footsteps! Thank you brothers and bishop for your support of me these many years. Continue strong while much of the church is weakening; be faithful while many in the church we love consider us otherwise. In the words of the Visitation Nuns “*Vive Jesu—Live Jesus!*”

RTB



John Henry Ernestine signs the instrument of life profession.

Here and there with the brothers

COMMUNITY NOTES

Annual Convocation

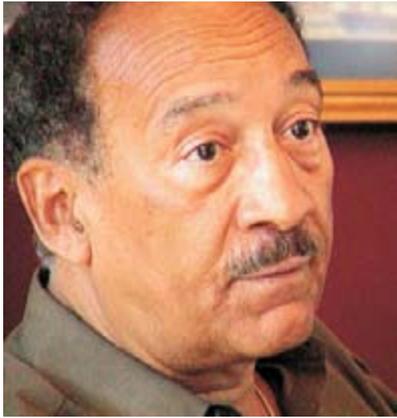
Gregorian Friars again gathered for Annual Convocation and General Chapter at Mount Alvernia Retreat Center in upstate Wappingers Falls, New York, from July 23rd to the 28th. The community's Episcopal Visitor, the Rt Rev Rodney R Michel, was in attendance for most of the week, during which he served as principal celebrant of the daily Holy Eucharists and as preacher at one service, as skilled and willing advisor to the Minister General and other leaders of the community and to its committees and work groups, and as pastoral counselor to any who needed his ear and his blessing. Tobias Stanislas Haller and Emmanuel Williamson served as celebrants prior to the bishop's arrival, and he celebrated the Festival Holy Eucharist on Saturday, July 28th, during which John Henry Ernestine and Francis Sebastian Medina made their life professions of vows. Peter Budde delivered a poignant sermon,



Bishop Michel



The Ministers Provincial present Francis Sebastian Medina and John Henry Ernestine for life profession.



Dr Robert Williams

linking the Burial Office with the rite of life profession—thus skillfully highlighting the context of death and resurrection.

Family members and friends from coast to coast came to attend this gala service—a group from John Henry’s parish in New Jersey even chartered a bus—and the chapel and brothers’ choir were very well populated. A bright and sunny afternoon provided a fine setting for the reception in the cloister following the liturgy, when many well-wishers could spend time with the two newly life professed Gregorian Friars. The evening closed with a candle-light dinner provided by the OFM Friars of Mount Alvernia.

Thomas Bushnell, the community’s Director of Education, introduced this year’s community retreat leaders: Drs Glenda Hodges and Robert Williams of Howard University Medical School in Washington DC, who presented a program on health and ministry. Hodges—a lawyer and ordained minister, as well as an instructor on Howard University’s faculty—spoke to the community in depth about end-of-life-issues from a legal and also from a spiritual vantage point. Williams, a senior teaching physician on Howard University’s faculty, provided the Christian medical specialist’s



Four brothers stand at the corners of the pall covering the candidates for life profession.



Dr Glenda Hodges



Francis Sebastian makes his life profession.

point of view, which was very well received by all in attendance. A number of the Gregorian Friars are also professionals in the health care field, and the program included a panel discussion featuring the two guests and two of our practicing nurses—Joseph Basil Gauss (who has just completed his nurse’s training) and Thomas Lawrence Greer (a 20-year veteran RN)—and two Gregorian chaplains—Richard John Lorino (head of chaplaincy at a major Westchester County hospital and a CPE supervisor) and Thomas Mark Liotta (hospice chaplain in the Diocese of New York). This discussion brought forward many questions and thoughtful comments, and everyone present was delighted with the jovial yet very knowledgeable and often quite serious presentations. As many of our brothers engage in visitation of the sick, both in the hospitals and at home, this year’s retreat was received as most helpful to all.

Two postulants were admitted to the community during the week: Bo Alexander Armstrong of the Diocese of East Tennessee and Jason F Bullock from the Diocese of Indianapolis. Will Harpest of the Diocese of Chicago was received into the novitiate. Nine brothers also renewed their Annual Vows at the hands of the Minister General. Tobias Stanislas observed his Silver Jubilee during this week—25 years in religious



Panelists discuss issues of health, spirituality, life and death.

profession—heartfelt congratulations were given by all, and especially by the Minister General.

In addition to the daily round of the four-fold Office and the Holy Eucharist, time was well-used in training sessions for the postulants and novices as well as meetings of the five BSG provinces, the Ministers Provincial as a group, and the Brotherhood Benevolent Trust. In addition to the regular reports presented by the Minister General, the Ministers Provincial and the other directors and officials of the community during the annual General Chapter Meeting, resolutions came forward toward improving the process for life profession,

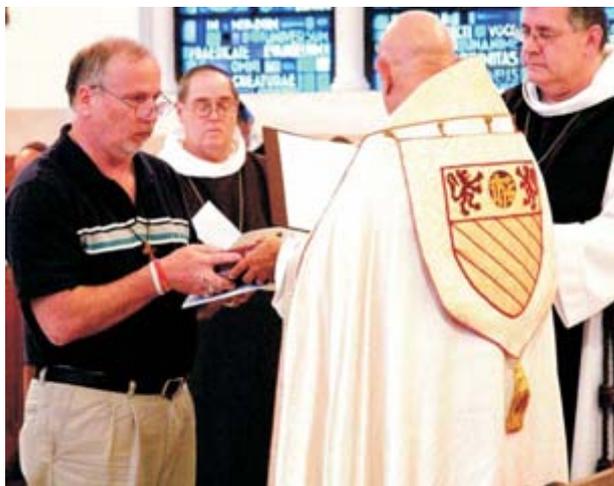
streamlining the legislative process, and limiting the number of meetings during Annual Convocation week in order to insure maximum blocks of time for rest, refreshment and social exchange among the brothers. Chapter elected Robert James McLaughlin and Edward Munro to terms on the Brotherhood Council.

Each day's Holy Eucharist featured full ceremonial, including sermons from

Enoch John Valentine, William Francis Jones and Richard Matthias, in addition to Bishop Rodney and Peter. The prayer life of each convocation is intense, just as it should be, and maintaining the integrity of four fully-developed Choir Offices each and every day is a massive undertaking for which the brothers are uniquely prepared. Thomas Bushnell deserves special mention as he ably



The Minister General congratulates Tobias Stanislas Haller on his silver jubilee.



The Minister General commits the Book of Common Prayer and Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great to postulant Bo Alexander Armstrong.



Enoch John Valentine preaches as Emmanuel Williamson joins the rest of the community in attentive listening.

gathering and exchanging stories of countless ministries and the great humor that God provides to those who love him that is heard throughout the buildings that week, and it lives in the memories and the prayer lives of each of us...until we meet again.

Province 2

Mount Sinai, Long Island: On July 7th James Teets and Tobias Stanislas Haller traveled out to Little Portion Friary, the mother house of the Society of Saint Francis, to represent the Brotherhood at the burial of Br Justus Richard vanHouten SSF. Br Justus Richard

was serving as an Episcopal Church missionary in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, when he was suddenly taken ill and died while visiting local parishioners in a remote area of the island. He was in his 31st year of profession. His death took place on December 13, 2006 but due to distance and inclement weather which made the original funeral arrangements for this past winter impossible, the interment of his ashes had to be delayed until this summer. The service was simple yet solemn and reverent, with the Minister Provincial, Br Jude Hill SSF as celebrant and former Minister Provincial Br Derek Ford SSF as preacher. Br Justus Richard was much loved and highly respected by all who knew him among the communities that comprise the religious life in The Episcopal Church—he was himself a former Minister Provincial of the American Province of the SSF, as well as a deacon. Members of the Third Order of the SSF,

officiated at Solemn Evensong on the Feast of Saint James the Apostle — nicely complementing the Solemn High Mass of earlier that day — and a wonderfully dedicated and talented group of brothers comprise the daily serving staff, the sacristans, the organist rota, the Schola Cantorum, and the florist team all put forth the extra effort needed to make each day's worship experience truly "a joyful noise unto the Lord!"

Convocation weeks are always productive, both spiritually and physically, as well as informative, but it is the laughter of brothers



David John Battrick and William David Everett compare notes on the second-year novice program.

the Community of Saint John Baptist, the Order of the Holy Cross and the Order of Saint Helena, in addition to our two BSG friars, were pleased to bring greetings to Justus Richard's mother, brother and sister-in-law following the service, and to re-connect with other long-time friends among the Franciscans. May Br Justus Richard rest in peace and rise in glory!

Another interment closer to the Gregorian family took place in late May when Christopher Stephen Jenks' mother Marie's life was celebrated and her ashes placed in their resting place in the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in New York. Tobias Stanislas was celebrant and Thomas Mark deacon for the liturgy.

On a happier note, Christopher Stephen preached at the 175th anniversary service at Saint Peter's Chelsea in Manhattan, at which his father had served as vicar from 1961–1973, and at which he spent much of his childhood. He was also a member from 1988 to 1994, and worked with the building restoration projects at that time. Bishop Catherine Roskam was celebrant, and Christopher Stephen's sermon was very well received.

Stephen Storen has been advanced to the grade of Officer Brother in the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem. His reinvestiture will take place in November.

Province 8

Thomas Bushnell completed his dissertation in due order and was awarded the PhD from the University of California Irvine. It has been a long haul and we are proud of his accomplishment.

A day after he returned to California from Annual Convocation, Thomas packed his car and began a cross-country trek toward Alexandria, Virginia with a stop to visit his parents in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and another visit in Chicago. After completing his PhD, Thomas has been approved as a postulant for ordination to the priesthood from the Diocese of Los Angeles, and he begins the fall term at Virginia Theological Seminary. We wish him very well in this endeavor, just as we have in the past, as we continue to lift him up in prayer for perseverance and the height of scholastic achievement that he seeks to attain. The church is blessed by his commitment.



Thomas Bushnell, having been conferred the doctorate in philosophy, poses with his doctoral advisor Dr Bonnie Kent.

UNEXPECTED UNITY

Our Psalm today proclaims, “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity.” The Epistle speaks of a future time when “all of us come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God.” In our Gospel Jesus prays for those he is about to send into the world and for those to whom they were sent “that they all may be one.” The overall theme of our readings seems to be unity, you *expect* a homily on unity, and I am not going to disappoint you.

Our Lord had not yet moved into his new office in heaven before the bickering started in the basement. Should the gentiles be circumcised? Can I eat pork? Why can't I get a haircut? And so it began. Argument after argument leading in the extreme to such events as:

☒ **The Great Schism:** “Your doctrine and theology are different from ours, you dress funny, therefore you are excommunicated, declared apostate and condemned to eternal damnation.”

☒ **The Crusades:** “You are not one of us, you dress funny, you are an infidel, you must die and then be condemned to eternal damnation.”

☒ **The Inquisition:** “It has come to our attention that you are: a. Jewish, b. an infidel, c. Apostate; and you dress funny, *therefore*, these good Christian gentlemen would like to ask you a few questions in a quiet little room in the basement.”

☒ **The Reformation:** “You are corrupt, you dress funny and we can do it better, who needs you anyway?”

Here endeth the history lesson. But let's consider unity as it stands today. As Doctor Phil would ask, “How is that working for you?” We are now two millennia into the Christian era and we are essentially at the same impasse. One only has to read the newspaper to see that the Roman Church has recently declared itself (once again) to be the house in which the one true church lives. Across the Christian spectrum from the Branch Davidians to the Pilgrim Holiness Church, to the Eastern Orthodox Churches each group is arrogant enough to believe that they have the true key.

From Koresh to Falwell, Ratzinger to Akinola, each has the *one true path* to the unity that Christ prayed for so long ago. None is willing to compromise with or comfort the other. Each is blind to the fact that a religion which asserts its own absoluteness cannot escape being a source of intolerance.



Richard Matthias preaches at Annual Convocation.

I find it difficult to believe that the Christ I know desired and prayed for a monolithic church. Jesus was a radical. He disliked the organized religion of his time, the temple cult and its priests and scribes. He repeatedly broke the holiness code. His ministry was diverse and he associated with women and other “unclean” people. Jesus even told his followers that those who healed in his name and were not of their particular group should be permitted to do so because “those who are for us are not against us.” So I truly find it hard to conceive of Christ insisting on a monolithic church for the worship of God.



The Rev Kristin Kopren with Richard Thomas Biernacki, at the reception following the life profession liturgy

We continue to approach unity as something to be imposed or attained by human effort, the Tower of Babel be damned! We are going to create a perfect religion for a perfect people! Rather than looking to this constricting, imposed unity, is not Christ’s prayer for unity a recognition that the unity requested comes only from the Father? Is not unity from the Father likely to be modeled on the unity between the Father and the Son—and if it is, is it not likely to be diverse and inclusive and dynamic?

I have had issues with The Episcopal Church in the past. However, as I have matured I have come to appreciate and to cherish the diverse and inclusive approach that is the hallmark of our church. Via Media, the middle way: we will meet you where you are and grow with you in Christ’s love. I find this openness and acceptance closer to the love described in the Gospels than anything in my experience.

As we continue to experience the vitriol and divisiveness of the current argument over inclusion of gays and lesbians and women in the life of the church, we must avoid the temptation to demonize the opposition. This does not mean that we must capitulate to their demands, but we must continue to love them as diverse members of the Body of Christ and engage them, providing opportunities for mutual growth. To do anything other than this would be to denigrate the love of Christ and its inclusiveness that we hold so dear.

Let us pray: God of peace, forgive us as we forgive each other for all the hurt we have brought into our lives. Let your healing love rest upon the wounds we have caused by our anger. Deepen our love in a new understanding for each other and for you. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ who carried on his cross our discord and our grief. Amen.

Richard Matthias

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Advent will soon be upon us. How might we use these Advent days (that remind us of the past and look to the future) 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 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 Xmas? 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?

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 losing touch with Christmas is 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. See, the Jewish people have Rosh Hashana, the secular world has New Year’s Day, and we Christians have The First

Sunday of Advent—that is 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* that what happened at Christ’s first coming 2,000 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?

I patronize a local dry cleaner in the town where I live. I don’t wear the habit 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 said, “Sandy, I heard you talking to Jason about Christmas gifts. I’m surprised to hear that you celebrate Christmas, considering what it is all about. She replied, “Oh yeah, him; well we don’t do the Santa Claus part.”

Friends, if we were living a holy Advent, actively preparing spiritually, actively opening our hearts to make sure there is room for Jesus; *preparing* rather than *waiting*—nobody would think that Santa Claus was the central figure of Christmas. Nobody would be at the malls. If everyone were 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.

During this time for reflection, be honest with yourself and ask if you are *waiting* or if you are *preparing*. Be ready to say, “Come, Lord Jesus. I don’t know exactly what that means, but don’t let that stop you.”

Richard John Lorino



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 d 10.23.06 *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
 Will Harpest

Postulants
 Bo Alexander Armstrong
 Jason F Bullock

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 St, San
 Antonio; Saint James Fordham
 Brothers Tobias Stanislas,
 Edward, Ronald Augustine,
 Karekin Madteos,
 William David, Thomas,
 Thomas Mark, Emmanuel, Luke
 Anthony, Charles,
 Damian-Curtis, Charles Edward,
 James Mahoney, Aelred Bernard,
 John Henry, David John

Aldersgate UMC Dobbs Ferry,
 St Christopher's, Kileen TX
 White Plains Hospital
 Episcopal Parishes of Yonkers
 Ian, David, Dennis, Dean, Scott,
 Tim, Johanna, Virginia, Nancy,
 Kathleen, Debra, Steven,
 Anthony, Austin, Lloyd & Mary
 Romayne, Jerry, Grace, Clarence,
 Tina, Don, Amy, Joe, Jack,
 Thomas, Roger Benedict, Arturo
 Elizabeth Mary SSG

For the Departed
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 Frederick Putnam
 Yasmin Reyes
 Chris Bohlman
 Mary Leonard VHM
 John Eggleston
 Edward Jones
 Yasmine Malik
 Bob Rivers

Thanksgiving
 The 175th Anniversary of Saint
 Peter's Chelsea
 The diaconal ordination of James
 M Rosenthal
 The institution of Paul Price as
 rector of Saint George's
 Riverside CA