

THE SERVANT



Waiting

*sitting in a gulch
hearing rumors
of a storm
afraid of the flood*

*a haiku
by Thomas Bushnell*

#209

Fall 2008

Publications from the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory

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Minister General, Richard Thomas Biernacki *Editor, Tobias Stanislas Haller*
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BLOTTING OFFENSES

Have mercy on me. O God, according to your loving kindness; in your great compassion blot out my offenses.—Ps. 51:1

I am a kibitzer on the email forum for Bishops and Deputies to the General Convention — and I remain in awe and wonder at the amount of time spent in endless chatter — beating already dead and mummified horses — driven into the ground endlessly. We discuss who pays how much and whether that is fair; we discuss who is invited to the Lambeth Conference. Does God really care? What would Jesus say? What's the question?

A time comes when our endless discussions lose their meaning and they become, I fear, offenses to God. We should as the Psalmist tells us have them blotted out. A recent discussion concerned the “Gay Agenda.” I submit that there *is* a gay agenda and it is carried out in the service to this church by our organists and choir directors, our singers and instrumentalists and—yes—our gay and lesbian clergy *and bishops!* It is carried out by members of our parishes on vestries and boards and yes, on the committees, commissions, boards and agencies of the international church: gay and lesbian folk remaining and serving and not making waves. There are enough others in the water making enough waves! Another discussion was about money and who pays their fair share. It seems to me, as one of my college professors used to say, “You pays your money and you takes your choice.” Non-support of the church whether nationally or in the parish or in the diocese is an offense to God. Blot out my offenses!

When will we learn that we are all in this together? I am sure many of us are tired of hearing about the “orthodox” faith once delivered to the saints. Which saints? We are not Orthodox—with a big “O”; we are Anglican and we are Episcopalian—and I have to wonder if many Episcopalians would survive if they were placed in a real Eastern Orthodox Church setting? How long will closeted gay clergy allow +Gene to hang on the line alone? We know you are out there and the biggest offense to God is to remain silent and hidden.

In all of what I have said, it is time for honesty and candor; it’s time to come clean. Read Psalm 51 again and again and again. The time for truth in all our relationships in this great church is here. Grasp the chance. Talk about the one thing Jesus said: Love one another as I have loved you.

RTB



Here and there with the brothers

COMMUNITY NOTES

Annual Convocation 2008

The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory held its Annual Convocation and Chapter at Mount Alvernia in Wappingers Falls, New York, from July 21st to the 26th. Tobias Stanislas Haller (New York), Emmanuel Williamson (Alaska) and David John Battbrick (Newcastle, Australia) celebrated the daily Holy Eucharists for the community, assisted by Gregorian deacons Edward Munro (Maryland), Charles Edward LeClerc (New Hampshire), Gordon John Stanley (Chicago) and Thomas Mark Liotta (New York) and the gathered community. Tobias Stanislas also celebrated the Festival Holy Eucharist on Saturday, July 26th, during which Ælred Bernard Dean (Atlanta) and Mark Andrew Jones (Southeast Florida) made their life professions of vows and Michael Elliott (Swansea & Brecon, Wales) and David Luke Henton (Texas) professed their first profession. The Brotherhood's Founder and Minister General, Richard Thomas Biernacki (New Jersey) delivered the sermon at this Festival Holy Eucharist of the convocation, drawing together the Feast of the Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the major themes of commitment which religious profession—and indeed all Christian life—demand.

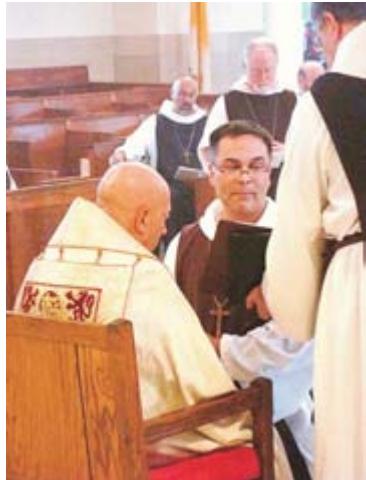
Other preachers at the daily celebrations included Richard Matthias (Ottawa, Canada), Nathanael Deward Rahm (Chicago), David John, and James Mahoney (New York). The Daily Offices were observed, of course, with Gregorian friars officiating; this particular week included Solemn Evensong on the Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene.



Considering the life vows to be made at the festival service on Saturday, this year's community retreat focused on the commitment of life profession and all that might mean. Daily sessions included a panel discussion presented by James Teets (New York; 31 years in profession), Edward Munro (Maryland, 24 years in profession), Ciarán Anthony DellaFera (Massachusetts; 20 years in profession), Peter Budde (Texas; seven years in profession), and Francis Sebastian Medina (California; six years in profession). After the panel presentation many members present had the opportunity to ask questions and address other areas from their individual experience. A session of group *lectio divina* followed the panel discussion, delving into the "hard saying of Jesus" that true followers must hate family, possessions and life itself in order to become disciples. As in past retreats, the Emmaus Walk figured prominently into this

exploration of life commitment in vows, paring senior friars with postulants, novices and brothers in annual vows.

Five postulants were admitted to the community: Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands (Utah), Brad Pethoud (California), Kenneth James Elder (Louisiana), Robert Parker Surratt (Chicago) and Terry W Hall (Oklahoma); and Bo Alexander Armstrong (East Tennessee) and Francis Jonathan Bullock (Indianapolis) were received into the novitiate. 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 all these men come, and the international as well as national origin of these vocations should reassure the church everywhere of a bright, exciting and active future for Anglican community life.



Ælred Bernard makes his life profession.

Province 1

Ciarán Anthony reports from his new career path: “Yesterday I received the good news that I have been accepted into the Multicultural and Underserved and Populations Pathway at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. The school only accepted 27 students into the program which is designed to train students to become physicians who will be able to care for underserved and multicultural populations. As part of the program I will receive additional training, receive a longitudinal preceptor who works with such individuals, and be assigned as a physician-advocate. It will be my responsibility to coordinate this family’s health care and to advocate for all their medical needs. I will be the first person they call before they call a physician, and I will

attend all their medical appointments.” He recently completed his “thorax examination” (don’t ask) and biochemistry, and so is now 1/32 of a doctor!

Ciarán also participated in a liturgical capacity at Church of the Advent on Corpus Christi, serving as the subdeacon and crucifer at the procession.



Ciarán Anthony leads the Corpus Christi procession at Church of the Advent, Boston.

Province 2

Stephen Storen attended the event at which A Marshall Acuff Jr was presented with his warrant of appointment as Prior of the American Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem.



Prior Acuff (l) and Stephen

William Henry Benefield taught a five-hour course on the treatment of epilepsy to pharmacists from across the country attending a continuing medical education module in Las Vegas.



(Clockwise from left) Ronald Augustine preaching on Holy Cross Day at Atonement, Chicago, and at the Atonement Corpus Christi observance; Tobias Stanislas delivering a meditation at Trinity, San Francisco; William Henry in the procession on Corpus Christi, at Atonement

Ronald Augustine Fox preached at Church of the Atonement, Chicago, as they observed Holy Cross Day — which is also Foundation Day of BSG (1969).

Province 8

The province observed Foundation Day with a retreat held at Trinity Church, San Francisco. Tobias Stanislas Haller, visiting from Province 2, led the retreat with two meditations on liturgy and the Trinity. Minister Provincial Karekin Madteos Yarian coordinated the day and officiated at the offices, and in addition to a number of guests, friends, and members of Trinity Church, James Teets, Francis Sebastian Medina, and postulant Brad Pethoud joined in the observance. On the following

Sunday, Tobias Stanislas preached at Saint John the Evangelist, observing the feast of the Holy Cross.

International

William Henry also combined teaching with travel, aboard the MS Emerald Princess. The teaching constituted 15 hours of continuing medical education for nurses, pharmacists and physicians, covering topics from the treatment of anxiety disorders through adverse effects of antipsychotic medication. He took advantage of the various ports of call, and reports, “I experienced some profound and holy moments while visiting Corinth and Ephesus, visiting the sites of many of the ecumenical councils throughout Turkey, and a Holy

Eucharist at the house of the Virgin Mary in the mountains above Ephesus. The highlight was visiting Saint George’s Cathedral in Istanbul (the seat of the Patriarch of the Eastern Church) and venerating the remains of Saint John Chrysostom which are now back home. We practically had the entire cathedral to ourselves during our afternoon visit there—amazing—it was quiet, holy and peaceful—with lots of time to pray, light candles and enjoy the beauty of the icons, those windows into heaven.”



William Henry and John Chrysostom

A convocation sermon

PROFESSION—A CHALLENGE TO OUR VOWS

Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” (Matthew 20:22)

The Minister General inquires: “Do you believe with your whole heart that God is calling you to make this solemn, life-long dedication of yourself?” They said to him “I do.” (BSG Rites)

These two quotations, one from today’s Gospel reading and the other from our Brotherhood Rites, are linked in their force of challenge to our vows.

Brothers, we have taken time this week to reflect on the subject of life profession, and it has been a privileged time for us to listen to one another and share our thoughts and experiences about this most important topic. Now, I would ask you to consider that life profession is not just one moment in time, but a process that continues to work itself out “for the rest of our natural lives.”

When the Minister General asks a candidate, “Will you look for and serve Christ at all times, and in all God’s creation?” we in our affirmation acknowledge that we are looking forward to ministry, prayer and living the Rule in a very dynamic way.

We usually begin in our journey in religious life with an attraction to some form of monastic life, using whatever circumstances our image of “Brother” or “Sister” has been revealed to us up to that time—the prayer life, and perhaps the habit, the participation in rituals and a life that bespeaks a holy person of God. We yearn sincerely for a community experience to support us in our journey and are overjoyed to find it on our little mountaintop here, or wherever we meet, and carry away our memories and relationships that are impossible either fully to describe to others or easy to abandon and leave behind. We nurture our inner calling of self-giving through our dedication to our Rule; and in time we become people with new reborn selves—they begin to call us “Brother” don’t they—as we re-enter the world with new awareness.

David John Battrick preaches.



Mark Andrew Jones signs the instrument of life profection.

called to make profession, to vow and to pour our hearts out in affirmation that we are “ready to drink the cup” of the kingdom. I sometimes think that we Gregorians are each part of a traveling theater production, each of us a little theater if you will, where at various times we play the roles of author, actor, scenery builder; we are the stage itself, the audience, and yes at times the director.

Perhaps you didn’t expect me to say “director”—for you might be thinking that “surrender” and “giving up of self desire” and “listening to God to find God’s will”

I call these attractions to religious life Monk, Community, Rule, and License. These are what make us Gregorians—yet each of these elements must be held in our own personal balance if we truly are to be effective servants.

Some place along the way in our Brotherhood experience we realize that there is something more demanded of us in the kingdom of God. We discover that we are continually



The chapel at Mount Alvernia

allows us to leave all the directing to God. But I think that would over-simplify the reality and complexity of our humanity.

On my right is a large icon of Gregory the Great, which includes his traditional symbol of the dove (representing the Holy Spirit) whispering the word of God into his ear. But I'm sure you've discovered by now that becoming modern-day Gregorios doesn't include getting the little bird at your shoulder. We must rely on our relationship with our inner spirit-in-God to help guide us in profession. That takes talking to and listening with God, doesn't it? It takes prayer, and it takes being able to make those decisions for ourselves that direct our lives beyond ourselves.



The Minister General girds Francis Jonathan Bullock and Bo Alexander Armstrong with the novice cincture.

comes, is just missing the point. Gregory says that by refusing to take control of our lives, we actually deprive ourselves of the gifts we have received, gifts received not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of others.

My brothers, each of us from postulant to senior retired brother, has already in some form made a profession to be a servant of the servants of God. In varying degrees we have agreed to "run with courage the race that is before [us]." Once you have made this profession it does little good to complain like Jeremiah that "I have worn myself out with my labors and have had no respite" because



Yesterday at Noonday we listened to a reading from Gregory the Great that I would like to repeat in paraphrase for you: Gregory says that we are already gifted, endowed with talents, and filled with virtues, things that reflect the divine presence within us. Declining to accept new ministries, fearing to tip-toe out of our personal boundaries, or to allow ourselves to coast with mediocre work, waiting for the "tomorrow-of more-time" that never



Tobias Stanislas presents Michael Elliott to make his first vows.



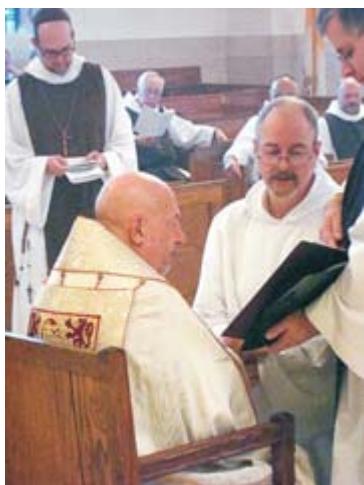
The Minister General places the life profession ring on Ælred Bernard Dean's finger.

act—in God’s name.... Some of us are enormously gifted,” Robinson continues, “and most of us only moderately so though we all tend to underestimate the wealth of riches we are given. However much or little we’ve been given, the question for us is ‘What will I do with what I have been given? And what kind of master do I serve?’ It makes a big difference.”

Are we merely “sinners in the hands of an angry God; are we merely men angry with God for not leaving us alone; or “do we think of ourselves as co-creators with God, using our gifts to be God’s loving arms in the world no matter what the risk or cost? Or are we fearful and timid, afraid to risk losing what little we think we have. Knowing the master makes a lot of difference in how we live our lives as

profession has already stamped on your heart the commitment and willingness to drink the cup of servanthood.

Bishop Gene Robinson, in his new book *In the Eye of the Storm*, speaks of “Risking Everything” in the use of our talents. “Perhaps,” he says, “the Christian life has more to do with investing than with saving, more to do with living with boldness than with proceeding with caution.... God entrusts us with responsibility and leaves us free to act—and free to not



David Luke Henton makes his first vows.



The postulants are presented for admission.

Christians. This is the way Jesus lived his life. This theme—that life is to be given, spent, invested, not held onto—runs through his life and ministry. ‘If any want to become my followers,’ Jesus declares, ‘Let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’”

Profess *life*, Brothers. Take up your cross, risk your life, take a chance on losing whatever you fear losing the most, and follow your calling.



Members of the panel (l) and the attentive assembly (below) reflect on the themes of profession and life profession.

Do not dwell long on the symbolism of the death of old self and the funeral pall, as valuable as these may be, for the real object of our profession is to celebrate life. When the pall is removed tomorrow, all the beautiful things that make up Mark Andrew and Ælred Bernard will still be there, along with their foibles and faults.

“To be a Brother is to become a witness of the love of God in your every moment... to live a life of joy and celebration.”

Brothers, I invite each of you tomorrow silently but deliberately to say to yourself the words of profession as the candidates make their declarations. Re-profess, re-possess and re-claim those vows that you have or soon will publicly proclaim of your own desire; give your life over into God’s hands by using the good gifts God has wrought in you to be God’s own hands in the world. God’s kingdom is at hand and you are professed in its making. You are able to drink the cup and say, “I will, God being my helper.”

James Mahoney



Fellowship on “the porch”



INTERCESSIONS

The Brotherhood		
Episcopal Visitor	Sun	
Rodney R Michel		Sat
Episcopal Visitors Emeriti		
<i>Horace WB Donegan d 11.11.91</i>		
<i>Paul Moore, jr d 5.1.03</i>		
<i>Walter D Dennis d 3.30.03</i>		
Life and Annual Professed		
Richard Thomas Biernacki		
<i>John Nidecker d 6.20.88</i>		
James Teets		
Luke Anthony Nowicki		
<i>John Peter Clark d 2.25.94</i>		
William Francis Jones	Mon	
Stephen Storen		
<i>Thomas Joseph Ross d 12.18.01</i>		
Tobias Stanislas Haller		
<i>William Bunting d 10.12.88</i>		
Edward Munro		
<i>Charles Kramer d 10.23.06</i>		
<i>Bernard Fessenden d 8.10.93</i>		
Donovan Aidan Bowley	Tue	
<i>Edward Riley d 9.15.05</i>		
Christopher Stephen Jenks		
Ciarán Anthony DellaFera		
<i>Damian-Curtis Kellum d 10.9.07</i>		
Richard John Lorino		
Ronald Augustine Fox		
Maurice John Grove		
Charles Edward LeClerc		
Virgilio Fortuna	Wed	
Gordon John Stanley		
Karekin Madteos Yarian		
William David Everett		
Thomas Bushnell		
Thomas Mark Liotta		
James Mahoney		
<i>Patrick Ignatius Dickson d 7.20.05</i>		
Robert James McLaughlin	Thu	
Peter Budde		
John Henry Ernestine		
Francis Sebastian Medina		
Ælred Bernard Dean		
Joseph Basil Gauss		
Mark Andrew Jones		
Emmanuel Williamson		
Richard Matthias		
William Henry Benefield	Fri	
Nathanael Deward Rahm		
Thomas Lawrence Greer		
Enoch John Valentine		
Ron Fender		
Michael Elliott		
David Luke Henton		
Novices		
David John Battrick		
Will Harpest		
Bo Alexander Armstrong		
Francis Jonathan Bullock		
Postulants		
Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands		
Brad Pethoud		
Kenneth James Elder		
Robert P "Beau" Surratt III		
Terry Wayne Hall		
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		
Anamchara Fellowship		
Anglican Order of Preachers		
Rivendell Community		
Sisters of Saint Gregory		
Third Order SSF		
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Camaldolese Benedictines		
Society of Saint John the		
Evangelist		
Anglican Oblates of Saint		
Benedict		
Community of the Transfiguration		
Order of Julian of Norwich		
Associates and Friends of the		
Brotherhood		
For the intentions of		
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Fessenden Recovery Ministries		
Baltimore Int'l Seafarers' Center;		
Saint Paul's Grayson St, San		
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Augustine, Karekin Madteos,		
William David, Thomas,		
Thomas Mark, Emmanuel, Luke		
Anthony, Charles Edward, James		
Mahoney, Ælfred Bernard, John		
Henry, Ron, David John		
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