



HE SERVANT



#211

Summer 2009

Publications from the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory

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The Servant

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THE CHURCH IN THE LEAD

I was leafing through a copy of *A Year with C S Lewis* and I ran across this thought: “Should the church take the lead?” That’s a hard question, yet it should be simple. Our Winter Retreat this year centered on hospitality and the ways we and those we serve are affected by our hospitality — or lack of it. We heard about boundaries and when we should and should not act; about the many ways that hospitality assists others in ways we never see or hear about. It is apparent that many today feel, “The church ought to take the lead.” The church tries, but is often thwarted in her efforts.

I keep journal notes and found one dating to April 21, 1985, words from a sermon by the Rev J Norman Hall, rector of Saint Bartholomew’s, White Plains: “There is no such thing as non-missionary Christianity.” These words should be taken to heart. In some places they are, but often this missionary work is hampered by legalism. My parish has begun to investigate a network serving the homeless, and of course there were immediate roadblocks. We want to use the vacant rectory on our property — but “What will the children in the Nursery School think when they see ‘those people.’ What about our property values? What about... what about...” Ah, there it is, “What it’s really all about” — our real values, what we value, and not the value of caring for those who have much less and ask little. As Lewis writes, Christians should put more effort into doing as we would be done by. That’s what it’s really supposed to be about.

I wrote in issue 210 about courtesy and the ways in which it has been eroded or lost in our society. These erosions tie in with what I say here and now, for we have also lost that courage *to be there* for those who need us whatever the obstacles, and in some cases whatever the cost. Recently a newscast about two hospitals closing in NY featured a nurse from one of them. She said, “We can pay a ball player \$275 million to throw a ball but not keep a hospital open?”

Hospitality encompasses and crosses over boundaries. The missionary church does more than change the religious beliefs of converts. The missionary church should care and nurture; support and teach “life” to those welcomed into it. We are all missionaries in this endeavor of hospitality. We share a hope that the world is on the road to new heights and new insights, and we all can be part of offering what the church — the whole body of Christians — is and should be doing. We should *all* take part, for we *are* the church.

RTB



*J Norman Hall and Paul Moore, at the
1982 General Convention*

Here and there with the brothers

COMMUNITY NOTES

Ministry to the Margins

The Brotherhood's 2009 Winter Convocation and Retreat provided time to consider, to have conversation and to pray about concepts of ministry to the margins of society—the homeless, hungry, prisoners, and those who suffer from physical disability and

mental illness. Indeed, if you open up those categories, most of us could find ourselves among those who have lived on a margin of some sort at one time or another in our lives.

Our annual retreat called us to Wappingers Falls for four days amid a snow and ice storm. Twenty-two Gregorians and Episcopal Visitor Rodney Michel managed to arrive at Mount Alvernia Retreat Center after some hard traveling, though others were either dissuaded by the advance weather reports or had to turn back because of severe highway conditions



Thomas Mark Liotta sings the gospel.

at the last minute. But once there, everyone received the warm welcome we have come to anticipate from our brothers of the Order of Friars Minor.

Those familiar with our retreat and convocation regimen will know that each day includes the four-fold Daily Office and the Holy Eucharist, with time to eat, relax and catch up with all the life situations of our members. A rota of officiants and celebrants at the offices and the daily masses is developed in advance, giving most everyone present an opportunity to serve the community in one liturgical way or another. Bishop Rodney celebrated and preached on the feast of Charles, King and Martyr, and Tobias Stanislas Haller was celebrant on the other two days. Two of our friar-deacons, Gordon John Stanley and Thomas Mark Liotta, exercised their ministry for the community, assisted by our regular thurifer, Ronald Augustine Fox, together with James Teets, Robert James McLaughlin and John Henry Ernestine. Nathanael Deward Rahm and Enoch John Valentine ably provided the ministry of music for the Daily Office and Holy Eucharist during our time together,



Ronald Augustine Fox, David Luke Henton, and Karekin Madteos Yarian join others in an intense game of Dominos.



Convocation is always a time for fellowship and story-sharing.

and in addition to Bishop Rodney, Christopher Stephen Jenks and Enoch John rounded out the preaching schedule.

The retreat leader for this gathering was Dr Peter R Gathje, Associate Professor of Ethics at Memphis Theological Seminary. This position, together with his own studies – he holds an undergraduate degree from Saint John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota, an MTS from Candler School of Theology at Emory University, and a PhD in theological ethics also from Emory — along with a previous decade at Christian Brothers University where he held the Chair of Religion and Philosophy, provided him with a fine academic background as well as a lively spirit to challenge and engage with a room full of Gregorians!

However, it is his current ministry among Memphis’ homeless population which specifically prepared him for his time with us. “Pete” is one of the founders and directors of Manna House in Memphis’ inner city — which describes itself as a place



Retreat leader Peter Gathje

where they “welcome each guest with respect and compassion. It is a living room for people from the streets.” Open three mornings each week, Manna House provides “a place for conversation or rest. We offer something to drink (coffee, and in warm weather Kool-Aid and water), we offer use of a bathroom, a phone for local calls, and showers that include a change of clothes. We offer some personal hygiene items and limited clothing items (such as T-shirts and socks).” He and a small group of committed friends are the staff at Manna House, and he spoke lovingly of the opportunities for ministry there and especially of the time of prayer with his colleagues.

Peter presented four talks which resonated with many Gregorians: Four Table Legs of Hospitality, Joys and Sorrows of Offering Hospitality, Saying Yes and Saying No: Boundaries and Limits in Offering Hospitality, and Hospitality and Justice. A general discussion followed wherein Christopher Stephen, Ron Fender and a number of our brothers who serve in similar ministries were able to express their own experiences in this ever-expanding field of caring. And ample time for one-on-one discussion was also provided as the gathering broke into small groups.

Ministry at its best is always two-way, and Peter expressed his gratitude for his time with the Gregorian community. Early in his life he had spent three years at the Benedictine foundation at Collegetown, and those long-ago days of discernment still mean much to him. He summed up his visit as follows: "I thoroughly enjoyed being with all of you. The times for community prayer doing the Liturgy of the Hours was especially meaningful for me as it brought back many good memories of monastic life at Saint John's Abbey." Glad we could be hospitable to you, too, dear friend!

Province 2

This year's Advent Retreat for Province 2 took place at the Minister General's parish, the Church of the Holy Communion, Fair Haven, in the Diocese of New Jersey on Saturday, December 6, 2008. The day began with bright sunshine, though a cold wind brought signs of snow to the overcast sky as the day progressed. The Brotherhood's event was entitled "A Day of Reflection and Prayer in Advent" and it began with breakfast and warm welcomes offered by both Richard Thomas Biernacki and the Minister Provincial of Province 2, Richard John Lorino, to the members of the community, Associates and parishioners and friends who attended — with thirty present one of our best attended retreat days yet. Morning Prayer was officiated by James Teets, followed by the first Advent Meditation offered by Robert James McLaughlin. A full luncheon was provided along with time for people to get to know one-another, then Thomas Mark Liotta led those attending through sung Noonday Prayer. A second Advent Meditation was presented by John Henry Ernestine, followed by quiet time to reflect upon these teachings. The day concluded with the Holy Eucharist celebrated by the Rev. Nancy H Speck, rector of the parish, with Thomas Mark serving as Deacon of the Mass, Richard Thomas at the organ's keyboard and Tobias Stanislas Haller delivering a passionate sermon centering on the Feast of Saint Nicholas of Myra. Even as Thomas Mark closed the service as well as the day with the Dismissal, no one seemed to want to leave! Many new friendships were made that day, and fellowship among the Gregorian Friars and the Associates is always anx-



Robert James McLaughlin addresses the retreatants at Holy Communion, Fair Haven NJ.



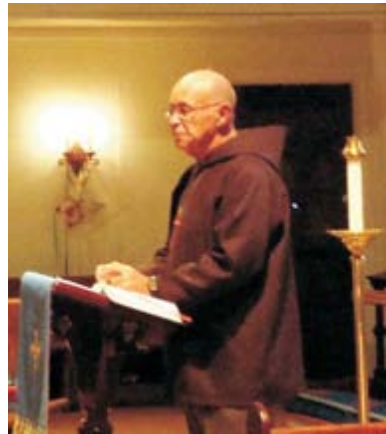
James Teets enjoys a lunch meeting with Barbara Jean CSJB, and (not shown) Bishop Herbert Donovan, Mary Lynne CSJB, and Clamence Yanke of Cameroon, in early 2009.

iously refreshed; and best of all, the new Church Year began with prayer, reflection and song as everyone looked forward to the opportunities presented by an exciting new Year of Our Lord.

Tobias Stanislas' book, *Reasonable and Holy: Engaging Same-Sexuality*, should be



off the press from Seabury (a division of Church Publishing Incorporated) about the time this issue of *The Servant* reaches you. The volume is intended in part as a



Robert James

fulfillment of the “Listening Process” mandated by Lambeth 1998.1.10, and as a response and rebuttal to the familiar arguments raised against the morality of faithful, life-long, monogamous same-sex relationships.

Province 4

Ron Fender announced that he has been confirmed as a National Organizer in the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign. He further commented to the Gregorian community: “This will open a national arena for our work here in Chattanooga and will offer me opportunities to serve the poor and homeless in a broader and more profound landscape. I celebrate this work we do and thank God that in all

things, I live and pray as your brother. Soli Deo Gloria!” To which we all add our sincerest “Amen!”

Province 5

William Henry Benefield is now formally an aspirant for holy orders in the Diocese of Chicago. He received the news and said, “One can only smile, try to remain calm, and when the reality of it all sets in — whisper the *Trisagion*.” This, of course, is the very beginning of a long and complicated pathway toward priestly ordination, a path which includes years of study, constant re-evaluation and re-confirmation, and we commit our prayers to those of William Henry’s family and friends as he takes this next step on a new vocational journey!

Province 8

After nearly seven years of service to the congregation of Saint Peter’s, Seward, Alaska Emmanuel Williamson has returned to the ‘lower 48’ to begin a new chapter in his life of ministry. He has decided to pursue a sense of calling to the nursing profession and hopes to couple that with service to small parishes that can no longer afford a full-time priest. He intends to begin nursing training in Oregon later this year. As always, our prayers accompany our brother each day of his journey.

David John Battrick continues his fruitful ministry in the Australian Diocese of Newcastle, and was happy recently to announce the diaconal ordination of fourteen of his students.

A convocation sermon

PROMISED SABBATH

Grant ...that our rest here upon earth may be a preparation for the eternal rest promised to your people in heaven...

Shortly after I agreed to preach on this occasion, I realized I’d preached on this same



Christopher Stepehn Jenks

proper four years ago, right here. That stirred up some memories, and there are a couple of things about that Winter Convocation that stand out in my mind. The weather was horrible, and many of the brothers had trouble getting here. Then, in the true apostolic tradition, we held all things in common that week, including a particularly nasty bug that was making the rounds. I remember that I was sick when I preached that Saturday. All I wanted to do was slither into my bed and pull the covers over my head. I had it lucky. Many of the other brothers were, or became, much sicker than me, and I well remember reading emails from some recounting their harrowing tales of long trips home while dealing with the flu.

What I remember most about that convocation, however, is that it was Patrick Ignatius' last convocation before his death. We had no way of knowing that for sure at the time, but many of us suspected it. He'd been on chemotherapy for four-and-a-half years, and while it had certainly slowed the spread of his cancer, it had not stopped it. His breathing was becoming increasingly noisy and ragged. He was experiencing significant pain, although Patrick, being Patrick, never complained about it. A week or two after returning from convocation he went into the hospital because his chest was filling with fluid. That was the first of three hospitalizations to deal with that problem. After the third hospitalization in early June, he decided to forego any further treatment. As everyone here knows, he died that July just a few days before the start of the Annual Convocation.



Patrick Ignatius Dickson

As I've gotten older I've found myself thinking a lot about death. I don't think this is all that unusual. It's part of the aging process and, like it or not, I am aging. It is overwhelmingly likely at this point that the day of my death is much closer in time than the day of my birth. I've also experienced the deaths of a lot of important people in my life: members of my family, including my parents, nine members of this community, various friends, and at least 24 residents of Fessenden House. I keep finding myself confronted by mortality, my own and others' — but this is the way the universe is. Everything comes to an end. Nothing lasts forever. No person lives forever. The planet on which we live will some day cease to exist, as will our sun. If cosmologists are right, the ever-expanding universe will get colder and darker as the stars wink out one-by-one. Eons upon eons from now matter itself will lose its cohesion and disintegrate. Nothing material is permanent. Everything is temporary.

As I was thinking about this, the words of today's collect came to mind: "Grant....that our rest here upon earth may be a preparation for the eternal rest promised to your people in heaven." That phrase reminds me of the traditional formula from the old Requiem mass, "Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord," which is also used in several places in the Prayer Book. But what exactly is this "eternal rest" that we're praying for? We can't fully answer this question, of course. It is a mystery obscured by our limited ability to see "beyond the veil." I think we can say with a certain amount of confidence that we are not talking about an everlasting nap or a perpetual vacation, attractive as these possibilities sometimes seem. Eternity is not merely time extended into the future indefinitely. God is calling us to much greater things than this.

Time is a strange thing in any case. We tend to see time in an absolute way. Here we are in the present moment moving forward on the arrow of time at a constant and unchanging rate. The past is behind us, frozen, immutable, unchangeable, while the fu-

ture opens up in front of us with seemingly infinite possibilities. But this view of time is inaccurate. Time is not absolute. As Albert Einstein demonstrated so convincingly, it is relative. It is affected by velocity. It is affected by gravity. These effects are too small for us to perceive on a day-to-day level here on planet earth, but they are large enough to affect our satellites, our GPS devices, our interplanetary probes, and our perception of the universe. It is impossible, even nonsensical, to speak of a temporally “present” moment for the universe as a whole, or for our galaxy, or even our own solar system. We can get away with it in our day-to-day lives because we can fudge the imperceptible differences, but our limited perception breaks down as soon as we expand beyond the scale of the tiny speck of dust we call earth. Albert Einstein was able to demonstrate this mathematically 100 years ago. Experiment and observation have confirmed his insights. But these insights are not found just in physics. Throughout history mystics and poets, both Christian and non-Christian, have intuitively perceived this aspect of reality. I am reminded of Julian of Norwich’s vision of the universe as a walnut held in the palm of God’s hand. Or the opening lines from T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*: “Time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future...” From a God’s-eye perspective, the universe exists in its totality — past, present and future — in an ever-present moment. There is no before. There is no after. There is only “Now.”

For the Kingdom of God always
was, and is, and is to come...

We experience this even if we often lack the vision and the heart to perceive it. We experience this in all our liturgies, but most obviously in the Holy Eucharist. In the celebration of the Eucharist we enter into the saving acts of Jesus on the cross. We participate in his passion and death — we make them present here and now — even though those events happened in the supposedly immutable, unchangeable past. We experience his Risen Presence among us here and now because his Risen Presence is always with us here and now, where eternity intersects with time and space. We partake of the Heavenly Banquet, not just in some undefined and distant future but again, here and now. And we are joined by a great cloud of witnesses, by angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven. That company includes John and John Peter, Thomas Joseph and William, Charles and Bernard, Edward and Damian-Curtis, Patrick Ignatius and the myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousands, ten thousand times ten thousand joining us in the heavenly choir. They are here with us because they have always been here with us. In God’s eyes they have never not been here with us and we have never not been here with them. For the Kingdom of God always was, and is, and is to come.

And so let us prepare for that eternal rest not by taking a nap or going on vacation, as necessary and pleasurable as these things may sometimes be. Let us prepare for our eternal rest by opening the eyes of our hearts to the Reality that is right here, right now. Jesus rose from the dead, and we rise in glory with him here and now. The pioneer and perfecter of our faith is blazing a path for us, and he invites us to join him in

that work. On the other side of our Sabbath Rest is the New Creation, the Heavenly Banquet, the New Jerusalem. On that great Sunday, the eighth day of creation, heaven and earth are made anew. All our human toil and labor and drudgery are subsumed into the redemptive and transformative Love of God. Our wandering days are over. The Prodigals return. The prisoners are set free. The lost sheep are found. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, places us on his shoulders. The Resurrection and the Life carries us to our heavenly home. It is here. It is now.

Christopher Stephen Jenks

THEOTOKOS

(answering the call)

Alone
I hear a voice
Unexpected
Clear
Strong
It is Gabriel.

Perplexed and shaken
I shrink at the thought
of being called
Lunatic
Adulterer
Heretic.

Gabriel speaks once more,
My fears and confusion fade.
Overshadowed by the Spirit
My heart and womb open wide
To receive this Holy One,
Son of the Most High—
Savior.

Listen to my prayer.
Say it with me
Willingly
Humbly
Full of awe—

O come, o come Immanuel.

Robert C Cottrell a/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

John Peter Clark d 2.25.94

William Francis Jones Mon

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

Bernard Fessenden d 8.10.93

Donovan Aidan Bowley Tue

Edward Riley d 9.15.05

Christopher Stephen Jenks

Ciarán Anthony DellaFera

Damian-Curtis Kellum d 10.9.07

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

Patrick Ignatius Dickson d 7.20.05

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 Batrick

Will Harpest

Bo Alexander Armstrong

Francis Jonathan Bullock

Postulants

Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands

Brad Pethoud

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

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

The Order of the Holy Cross, and

recovery after the loss of the

Santa Barbara Monastery; and

the Order of Saint Helena in a

time of transition and change

Associates and Friends of the

Brotherhood

For the intentions of

Joseph Richey House

Fessenden Recovery Ministries

Baltimore Int'l Seafarers' Center;

Saint Paul's Grayson St, San

Antonio

Brothers Edward, Ronald

Augustine, Karekin Madteos,

William David, Thomas,

Thomas Mark, Emmanuel, Luke

Anthony, Charles Edward, James

Mahoney, Ælred Bernard, John

Henry, Ron, David John

Aldersgate UMC Dobbs Ferry,

Saint Christopher's, Kilean TX;

Saint James, Austin

White Plains Hospital

Episcopal Parishes of Yonkers

Ian, David, Dennis, Dean, Scott,

Tim, Johanna, Virginia, Nancy,

Kathleen, Debra, Steven, Austin,

Tom, Maureen, Deborah,

Richard, Elizabeth, Derek, Troy,

Jim

For the Departed

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