



# HE SERVANT



**#213**

*Michaelmas 2009*

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*The Servant*

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## **CONVOCATION 2009— THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY**

Back when I decided to preach for this 40th Anniversary Eucharist, I thought I would probably have a lot to say. Then as I began to prepare this sermon, what came to mind was the line from a popular hymn: “Here I am Lord, send me.”

Send me? There is really no way to recount 40 years without both boring you and tiring me. I am at once taken back to the Monastery of the Visitation in Riverdale NY. I am reminded of the incredible courage of those sisters. Think of it: 1969—the ecumenical movement was just really getting started. Crazy me—deciding to start a religious community! And then more incredible—a bunch of cloistered nuns, all of whom believed in the idea and believed in me.

I often wonder what the founders of orders past felt. Was there a voice? Was there just a feeling? Or was there a presence that cannot be described but which pushes and shoves and causes one to move! I must admit, even in the recounting of those days, much of it is a kind of buzz. I still to this day do not think I had any idea what was in store—but those nuns knew. And more especially, one in particular knew and had the vision with me.

Our beloved Brother John Peter (who is now in heaven praying for us) was reading Julian of Norwich in his early days in the community and when he was questioned about the book he said, “This woman is crazy!” The same thing might have been said about the one woman who shared the vision I had—as unformed and provisional as that vision was.



Sister Margaret Mary Joyce was the co-visionary. We spoke daily in the convent parlor, and she helped me to see God’s will. It was an amazing time—and probably much like the time when Jane Frances de Chantal and Francis de Sales spoke together of their shared vision. That was in 1610 in Annecy, France. Jane Frances did not know how her life would change and neither did I. That change didn’t stop with me. In real humility, I remember our other dear friends, Marion Pierce and Cecil Berges, who said many times, “Look how many lives you have changed.” But only because I was changed first.

Change and challenge have been two of the patterns of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory through the years. We continue to grow and change; we continue to look at what we were and how we have moved through the years—and to see what we have become, and wonder about what we will be.

As I recounted tales of the early days with the brothers this week in both formal and informal conversations, so much seems as fresh as yesterday and yet at the same time—strange. While I was writing this I reached over and grabbed my prayer book.



It actually flipped open to the Service for Confirmation—page 415 and the bottom line, which is one of the responses to questions asked of those about to be confirmed read: “*I do, and with God’s Grace I will follow him as my Savior and Lord.*” I can safely say that we—not just me but all of us here and those absent—have done exactly that, for these many years. That is the constant that remains in the midst of change.

On the evening of September 14, 1969, in the Bible Vigil that Sister Margaret Mary and I wrote, we read from Psalm 80. I am reminded of verse 14: “*Turn now, O God of hosts, look down from heaven; behold and tend this vine; preserve what your right hand has planted.*” We didn’t know that what was planted that night would become what it is today—nor do we know what it will be forty years from now. Everything changes—but the journey following the Lord remains the same.

In closing, I would like to quote from *Story of a Monastery*, the history of the Monastery of the Visitation in Riverdale. It was given to me on September 14, 1969 by Sister Margaret Mary:

A monastery is not just a building. It is a blazing flame made up of human sparks, shooting up to join a Flame that is a Spirit. These human sparks would never have been lit unless God had struck a match of inspiration in their inmost center. They would never have burned on unless Eternal Love had fed their feebleness with Fire.

We say that we carry our monastery on our shoulders. The flame blazes and joins the Spirit. This is the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory. As the Visitation Sisters say—*Live Jesus*—and I pray that we continue to do just that. God bless us all!

RTB

*Here and there with the Brothers*

## COMMUNITY NOTES

*In Love and Service Bound: 40th Anniversary of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory*

The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory celebrated its 40th Anniversary of Foundation within the context of its Annual Convocation and Chapter, held at Mount Alvernia Retreat and Conference Center in Wappingers Falls, New York. Gregorian Friars



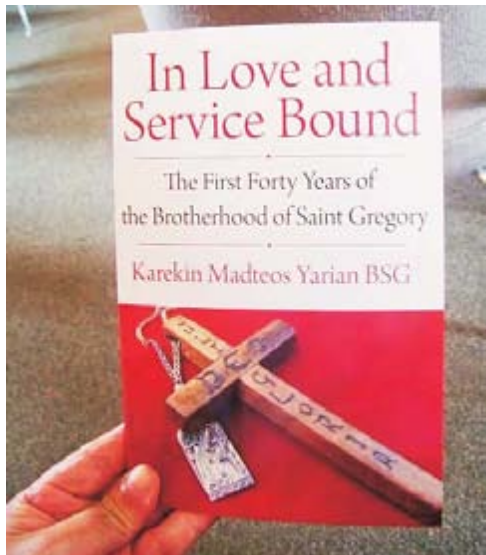
from around the world traveled to participate in this historic event, which also served to launch a new book on the community's history: *In Love and Service Bound*, by Karekin Madteos Yarian (Diocese of California). This week apart was designed to enhance the experience of recalling early members and long-past family events as well as the personalities and accomplishments of each of the nine Gregorian Friars who have died within the community since its Foundation in 1969. The first three



*Will Harpest and David John Battrick*

Episcopal Visitors who lovingly served the community in their time and now rest with the angels were also reverently remembered: Bishops Horace WB Donegan, Paul Moore jr and Walter D Dennis. The Brotherhood's current Visitor, Bishop Rodney R Michel of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, was able to spend the entire week with the community and he actively participated in the events and the daily worship services.

As always, Gregorian Friars of the priestly order were called upon to celebrate the daily masses during convocation; these included Tobias Stanislas Haller (Diocese of New York), Emmanuel Williamson (Alaska), Michael Elliott (Swansea & Brecon, Wales) and David John Battrick (Newcastle NSW, Australia), ably assisted by Gregorian deacons Edward Munro (Maryland), Charles Edward LeClerc (New Hampshire), Gordon John Stanley (Chicago) and Thomas Mark Liotta (New York), and lay leadership. Preaching during this week was again inspiring, and those who contributed included Bishop Rodney, Founder and Minister General Richard Thomas Biernacki (New Jersey), Donovan Aidan Bowley (Massachusetts), William Henry Benefield (Chicago) and Novice Bo Alexander Armstrong (East Tennessee).



Gregorian religious life is celebrated most especially in the Rites of the Brotherhood, and this year two novices made their First Profession of Annual Vows: David John Battrick and Will Harpest (Chicago), with the Gregorian community assembled to cheer them on! Earlier in the week three postulants were admitted to the novitiate: Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands (Utah), Tikhon Pethoud (California) and James Patrick Hall (Oklahoma), and two were admitted to the postulancy: Eric L Turner (Tennessee) and Millard S Cook (New York).

The week included much time for reflection on the history of the Brotherhood—including highlights from the living memory of those who have been part of it for much of its life, as well as insights and impressions from newer members. Every member present received a copy of Karekin’s new book, and at one point the community recreated one of the book’s enduring closing images: the long line of the members of the community preparing for the annual group photograph.



*General Convention  
2009: Anaheim,  
California*

The Brotherhood was well represented at the Anaheim General Convention, in a wide variety of positions. Bishop Rodney was present as a member of the House of Bishops, and Tobias Stanislas Haller was a deputy from the Diocese of New York and a member of the Legislative Committee on Ministry. James Teets — as a member of the Presiding Bishop’s staff — reprised his long-standing role as he ministered to the needs of the numerous international guests from around the Communion, also serving shifts along with colleagues in the exhibit hall representing the Episcopal Church



*Thomas Mark Liotta and Tobias Stanislas Haller at the latter’s book-signing*



*James Mahoney at the NÆCC display*

Center. Edward Munro and his wife Barbara staffed the Companion Diocese Network booth in the hall each day, and spoke with numerous bishops, deputies and conventioners throughout the ten-day event. On the far side of the hall was the booth representing the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NÆCC), where both James Mahoney and Thomas Mark Liotta were on deck daily. When not telling the story of NÆCC, Thomas Mark joined the corps of GC volunteers and took his shifts serving in the House of Deputies. Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands also served as a volunteer in the

security detail, while his partner, Scott, served in the staff room assisting other members of the Church Center Staff in their daily duties.

When not serving in some official or formal capacity, the brothers took part in experiencing the round of nightly receptions mounted by organizations throughout the church, and they even found one evening to get together and go out to dinner, thanks to the organizing efforts of Thomas Bushnell, who lives in the Orange County area, and gathering the bishop, the brothers and their households in two packed cars managed to escape the Disney environs for an evening of fine Chinese food and good fun.

Tobias Stanislas also had a handful of extra-curricular tasks on his plate. As a member of the Chicago Consultation, he attended a luncheon and led a table discussion on Full Inclusion in the Anglican Communion. With Dean Nicholas Knisely of Phoenix he co-convoked a workshop for new deputies on issues surrounding resolution 2006-B033. Early in the convention he signed copies of his new book, *Reasonable and Holy*, at a Church Publishing event, and later that day was one of six deputies invited to meet privately for a very productive conversation with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

One less pleasant note was sounded during the Joint Session of Convention as the budget was presented. Acknowledging a multi-million dollar shortfall in projected income for the next triennium, convention was left with no choice but to reduce staff support at the Epis-



*(l to r) Canon Habacuc Ramos-Huerta(Anglican Church of Mexico), Canon Bruce Woodcock (Church Pension Group), Canon James Teets (BSG), the Very Rev Aren Jebejian (Armenian Church of America)*

copal Church Center and its field offices. At this writing 43 positions will be eliminated by the end of the year, and among them is James Teets' Office of Grants and Covenants. After 23 years of service to the world mission of The Episcopal Church on the national and international levels, both in program and finance, James will enter early retirement as he awaits God's next assignment for him. A similar circumstance befell Minister General Richard Thomas Biernacki a few years ago, and budget cuts are seemingly inevitable at times of national recession. We give heartfelt thanks to God for the dedication and commitment expressed through the ministries of so many who serve the church on all levels—parochial, diocesan and national/international—and we pray that new opportunities for those gifts and talents to advance God's mission will quickly arise.

### *Province 1*

Ciarán Anthony DellaFera continues his medical training and work far from home at La Romana in the Dominican Republic. While there, he enjoyed a visit with Bishop William Skilton, who has exercised a long ministry with the people of La Romana. (Picture right) Bishop Skilton joins Ciarán Anthony and the Rev Milquella Mendoza, Rector of Todos Los Santos



### *Province 2*

Minister General Richard Thomas Biernacki has been elected Chair of Region 3 of the English Speaking Union and ex-officio a member of its national board. He will be in charge of about 7 branches and will chair a regional meeting once a year.

### *Pennsylvania*

We are delighted to note our Bishop Visitor Rodney Michel's new ministry as Assisting Bishop of Pennsylvania. The diocese welcomed him in a splendid celebration in late May. As reported by Jerry Hames, the bishop admitted he saw "more challenges than a sane man should probably be taking on at my stage of life. But I must tell you that I feel that I have been called by God to enter this fray and address these challenges. A crisis is a terrible thing to waste, and I believe it is God's will for me to be here in this time of crisis, or great necessity, and use it for good and for God. My prayer today is like the prayer of Solomon centuries ago: that God will give me the wisdom to be a faithful bishop of the church and bring peace and harmony to God's broken people, a new vision of mission and ministry to the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, and to help everyone work together to let justice roll down like the waters, as they live out their baptismal vows." We wish him and the people of the diocese all the best in their new ministry together.



#### Province 4

Ron Fender appeared in an interview on National Public Radio's Weekend Edition, in a story from a series on Main Streets of America. It begins,

On the surface, Main Street in Chattanooga, Tenn., looks nice. There's a newly developed arts district with galleries, upscale restaurants, a packed breakfast joint called the Bluegrass Grill, even houses that have been certified as environmentally friendly. But if you stray from these newly renovated blocks, there's a different side to Chattanooga's Main Street. "In Chattanooga, we have this underbelly," Brother Ron Fender says. "You can walk down Main Street, and you don't know that just over there, there's prostitutes—or just over there is a camp where people sleep in the woods at night." Brother Ron, as he likes to be called, is a monk. He's a member of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, a Christian community that's part of the Episcopal Church. Brother Ron helps to run the Chattanooga Community Kitchen, a day center that provides food, medical care and case management to the homeless.

Of course, Ron is not actually a monk — but getting the secular press to understand the difference between monks and friars is about as hopeless as getting them to grasp the difference between suffragans and assistants! Visit NPR at [tinyurl.com/fendernr2009](http://tinyurl.com/fendernr2009)



#### Province 5

Gregorians were well represented in the liturgy of Corpus Christi at Chicago's Church of the Atonement—and in the outdoor procession. Ronald Augustine Fox was MC, Joseph Basil Gauss crucifer, and William Henry Benefield bore the Gospel-book.



#### Province 8

Karekin Madteos Yarian was one of many arrested in San Francisco in June following the announcement of the California Supreme Court decision to uphold Proposition 8 overturning same-gender marriage in California. He spent four hours in custody with several other pro-marriage equality religious leaders in San Francisco. Those detained included nearly forty Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, Unitarian, Lutheran and Jewish clerics. Many in the city reacted with anger after the

decision, and there were protestors, police in riot gear, helicopters overhead and many who just seemed stunned. The court upheld existing marriages, so Karekin’s own is unaffected, but as he noted after this experience, “It is bittersweet to watch those of my brothers and sisters who waited, confident that the court would uphold their cause while I personally no longer have anything to lose. For them, I mourn deeply, profoundly.”

### A Convocation Sermon

## CLARITY

In the year 1212, a young and lovely beauty, wealthy and admired, perhaps even envied, listened to the preaching of a young man ten years her senior—and her world was changed. Her name was Clare; a fitting name, for throughout her subsequent life she became a living icon, a window through which the world would see part of the kingdom of God.

Though the calendar does say that this is late summer, here at Mount Alvernia on Saint Clare’s Day we indeed are in spring, for Alvernia—*monte la verna*—means “mountain of spring.” As the Song puts it, “Come away, my love, my fair one, for lo, the winter is past... the time of spring has come...” Spring, the time of beginnings—and with Clare, the beginning of a new thing.

How fortuitous it is that this year as we begin our first full day of Annual Convocation, we observe her feast. Fortuitous, for her life is intricately linked with our Gregorian vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.



*Donovan Aidan Bowley (far right) looks on as (l to r) the Minister General, William Francis Jones, Ælred Bernard Dean and Eric Turner pore over a scrapbook with memorabilia from the BSG foundation.*

Poverty, clearly, for she was a great exemplar of the radical poverty set forth in the Gospel and preached and lived by Francis, her mentor. As Jesus is quoted by Luke, “Have no fear, little flock, for your father has chosen to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give in charity. ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Clare was a model of that poverty which in action becomes chastity, for her treasure was in the love of God, in the poor of her city, and in the sisters gathered around her. She became the servant of the poor, and led her sisters by that example and by service to them as well; and after the death of Francis, she counseled and nourished the brothers.

However, and perhaps surprisingly, Clare is most closely linked to a prayerful and even mystical aspect of our vow of obedience. Another more recent Clare, Mother Mary Clare of the Sisters of the Love of God, expressed this eloquently and succinctly: “Obedience is rooted in the latin *obediere*, to listen”—to truly listen, not just to hear. To listen actively, attentively, expectantly—O God, thou art my God, I seek thee early with a heart that thirsts for thee...” and perceiving the true message—a word that resonates in the heart, a message from God—to *act* upon that word.

According to Fr Roch Niemier, it was Clare who first taught the Franciscan way of contemplative prayer: “Gaze, Meditate, Contemplate, Imitate.” That is, look intently upon the ordinary things, people, and events of life; look with clear focus, particularly through the lens of Christ’s incarnation; then think carefully about how those ordinary things reflect the descent of God into the world and the incarnation of Christ; contemplate God’s presence, and then imitate the example found in that contemplation; in effect be transformed more and more into the image of Christ. Fr Roch has said that for the Franciscan, “Deep contemplative prayer is not so much learning how to contemplate God by some method, as it is becoming aware that it is God who is contemplating us.”

Clare gave her full attention to the message of the gospel as first conveyed to her through Francis, and found in it words that struck her heart. From that first burning experience of the presence of God, she remained faithful and obedient to God throughout her life, following holy poverty and charity in her chaste, compassionate life. At her death forty-one years later, surrounded by



*Eric Turner enters the postulancy.*



*Nathanael Deward Rahm (f) and William Henry Benefield (r) confer on an organ composition.*



*Jame Teets (l) and Richard Thomas Biernacki, prior to the blessing of habits*

those whom she loved and who loved her, her last words were: “Go forth in peace, for you have followed the good road. Go forth without fear, for he that created you has sustained you, has always protected you, and loves you as a mother. Blessed be God, who created me.”

One is humbled to see the extent to which brothers in our own community have taken this same message to heart in the varied settings in which they live—humbled, and gladdened. As this week proceeds, we shall learn what others

have been doing since we last saw one another. As our circumstances are varied, so are the ways in which we serve. Common to all is that deep joy which Clare experienced, as we listen actively, attentively, expectantly, eagerly—seeking the presence of God in our hearts and those of others, and living out the good news as we become, more and more, servants of the servants of God.

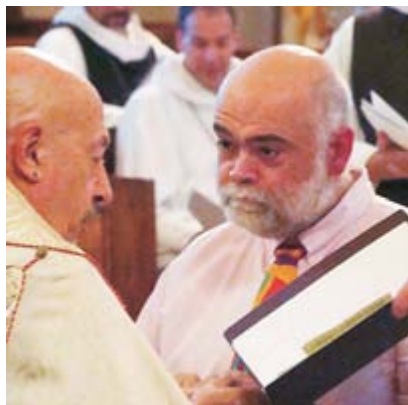
*Donovan Aidan Bowley BSG*

*Reflection on Jonathan Myrick Daniels*

## **SAINT FROM THE SEMINARY**

God chooses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. That was certainly true of Jonathan Daniels. To be honest, I had never heard of him until three years ago. As I began to pick up bits and pieces of his story I immediately placed him in the category of “Saint”—that is, a *very special person* who I greatly admire but who seems to have little relevance to my life in the real world. However, as I have read more about him, I have learned that he was an ordinary person, just like you and me.

In early March of 1965 Martin Luther King jr called for students and clergy to come south and participate in a Freedom March between Selma, Alabama and the state capital in Montgomery. Daniels was in his second year of seminary and argued very strongly against participation. He believed a one-time event would be an ineffective witness. However, one night



*Millard Cook enters the postulancy.*



*Bishop Michel and Ronald Augustine Fox*

during evening prayer he was overwhelmed by an experience of God's presence as he and his fellow seminarians sang the Magnificat. "He hath put down the mighty from their seat and exalted the humble and the meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things." It was in that moment that he knew he had to go to Selma.

We do not have to pretend that his motives were 100 percent pure. I do not think he fully understood what was happening in the world around him or even within himself. But I do believe that he had come to understand the Magnificat. God had broken into his life in a very powerful way but he realized that he could not hold that experience in isolation, separate from the suffering of the poor and oppressed in the real world. Although he had been insulated by privilege

his entire life he could no longer afford the luxury of camping out where he was comfortable or being just an occasional tourist to the places where God's children were hurting.

So Jonathan Daniels did go to Selma and that is where he was transformed.

Of course not everyone could see the hand of God at work in those days. Tom Coleman could not. He was an ordinary person too. Like Jonathan Daniels he came from a good family that had distinguished itself in public service. But Tom Coleman was afraid. All he could see was a threat to the way of life he had chosen, the way of white supremacy. His fear turned to anger and that anger festered into murderous hatred.



*Will Harpest and David John Battrick prior to profession of vows*

As I mentioned earlier, Jonathan Daniels did go to Selma but it was not for a one-time event. During the summer of 1965 he participated in civil rights marches, voter registration work and efforts to integrate the local Episcopal Church. On August 14 of that year he was arrested and jailed, along with several other volunteers, for picketing white businesses. Six days later they were all released and went to a local establishment to



(l to r) Will Harpest, Ron Fender, and Karekin Madteos Yarian, with copies of *In Love and Service Bound*

use a pay phone. Tom Coleman confronted them there. He cursed them and then pointed his shotgun at Ruby Sales, a young black volunteer. Daniels pushed her out of the way, just as Coleman fired his weapon twice at point blank range. Daniels was killed instantly and one of his companions severely wounded.

A couple of months ago, I sat in the dining room of Dr Bob Hagood who has become a dear friend of mine. Bob is now 95 years old and on that particular evening he was reminiscing about his younger days in Alabama. As it turns out, his family's home was situated on the state highway that runs between Selma and Montgomery, the same highway where the Freedom March took place. At one point he told me, "Right up the road in Hayneville is where they killed that young man; he was an Episcopalian." I said, "That was Jonathan Daniels." He said, "Yes, I believe that is right." He paused for a moment and then said, "I knew Tom Coleman; we attended the same school." When I think of that moment my blood runs cold because it brings me back to the realization that Tom Coleman was not the incarnation of evil that I have created in my imagination. He was an ordinary person, just like you and me.

God chooses ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

The prophetic voice of Mary's Song proclaims it. The life of Jonathan Daniels bears witness to it. Our presence and work in the world testifies to it. Wherever we are the holy presence of God comes to us again and again, drawing us into the world. We are called to go out into the world among the poor and the oppressed, the sick and suffering, to those enslaved by fear and hatred, to the forgotten places where God's children are hurting.

That is where God is waiting for us and that is where transformation takes place.

*Bo Alexander Armstrong n/BSG*



*David Luke Henton (rear) and Elfred Bernard Dean (far right) present (l to r) James Patrick Hall, Tikhon Pethoud, and Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands to enter the novitiate.*



*(Above, clockwise) David John and Will make their first profession of vows and are clothed with the scapular of service, and the community gathers on the altar steps for a group photo.*

# INTERCESSIONS

## For 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*

## 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

Ælfred 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

David John Battrick

Will Harpest

## Novices

Bo Alexander Armstrong Sat

Francis Jonathan Bullock

Blane Frederik van Pletzen-Rands

Tikhon Pethoud

James Patrick Hall

## Postulants

Eric L Turner

Millard S Cook

and for Associates and Friends of  
the Brotherhood

## For Religious Communities

Sacramentine & Visitandine Nuns

Society of the Atonement

Order of Friars Minor

Community of the Paraclete

Companions of Saint Luke~

Benedictine

Community of Celebration

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

Order of the Holy Cross

Order of Saint Helena

Community of Saint John Baptist

Society of Saint Francis

## For Ministries

Joseph Richey House

Fessenden Recovery Ministries

Baltimore Int'l Seafarers' Center

Saint Paul's Grayson St, San

Antonio

Aldersgate UMC Dobbs Ferry

Saint Christopher's, Killeen TX

Saint James, Austin

White Plains Hospital

## For the Departed

Benefactors, Friends & Associates:

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Louise Lemarier, Norman Hall,

George Koerner, Henry Fukui,

J Steward Slocum, James

Gundrum, Cecil Berges, Marion

Pierce, Helen Marie Joyce

VHM, Kenneth Staples,

Elizabeth Holton, Richard A

Belanger, Brendan W Nugent,

Sarah Elizabeth Wells SSG, Sue

Bradley, Jack Merryman; Paul

Power, William Russell, Mark

Domoguen; Elizabeth Mary

Burke SSG

Corazon Aquino

Edith Batten

Robert Beal

Rodolfo Bernel

Jesse Bradley

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