

HE SERVANT



Max Steele BSG

Birth

1-26-71

Profession

7-22-17

Death

12-12-17

#246

Epiphany 2018



The Servant

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Published quarterly. Address all inquiries concerning this publication to the Editor.

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WHERE THERE'S A WILL

You can assist and further the ministries of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory by remembering the community in your will. If you choose to do so, the following form of wording is appropriate:

I hereby give, devise, and bequeath to The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, Inc., a New York State not-for-profit corporation and its successors for ever \$_____ and/or _____ percent of my estate to be used in such a manner as determined by its Directors.



HAPPY HOLIDAY—REALLY?

Now that we are safely navigating our way into Epiphanytide, I want to reflect on some anxiety I felt this past Advent and Christmas. I have become increasingly concerned that our sacred and cherished holiday — that is, the birth of Christ, has been taken over. It feels as if the “War on Christmas” was lost, and the Occupation settled in. And not just the War on Christmas, but the War on Advent! We are not able to have a real Advent because the trees and wreaths and lights are everywhere even well before Thanksgiving Day! Sure, one can turn eyes away, but it is impossible to ignore. I am especially annoyed by car commercials, whether “A December to Remember” or “Toyota-thon.” More annoying than these are the folks who say “Happy Holiday” — to which I have a response, “What holiday are you talking about?” They are often surprised at the question.

As Christians — perhaps especially for those of us who live under vows dedicated to witness — it is, I believe, imperative that we fight for the serious, religious time that is Christmas. So many holidays have become a sham or to stand for something completely alien to their real message. I am concerned that Christmas not fall into this trap, or at least no further into it. Dear friends — reply Happy Christmas, Merry Christmas — or better yet — Blessed Christmas.

Join me as Advent and Christmas come around again eleven months from now, and as the adage goes — “Keep Christ in Christmas.”

RTB

Here and there with the Gregorians

COMMUNITY NOTES

RIP Sister Helen Bernice Lovell SSG

It is with both great sadness and boundless joy that we announce the death of our beloved Sister Helen Bernice Lovell SSG, who slipped quietly into her well-deserved eternal rest on Wednesday morning, September 27, 2017. Her devoted son Rodney was with her throughout these last days. Helen Bernice was 103 years old at her death and in the twenty-first year of her profession of religious vows in the Sisters of Saint Gregory. She was one of the original members who took part in the formation of this branch of the Gregorian family, as the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory, and participated in the 1999 liturgical celebration of its autonomy. She held the position of treasurer for her community for a number of years, as well as serving on the Sisters' Council.

Those of us who were present for the beginnings of the Companion Sisterhood will always remember Helen Bernice, as a strong and joyful woman who left a big impression on everyone who met her. She knew the joy of living and of the



Helen Bernice Lovell making her life profession of vows to Bishop Catherine S Roskam

knowledge that, though she had already lived a very full and rewarding life, she was ready for new adventures even at the age of 79. In her early days she had been part of one of the final classes of vocationers at the New York Training School for Deaconesses in the early 1940s, later serving as a missionary teacher in the Blue Ridge Mountains; she served in the Civil Air

Patrol and attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel; she had raised a loving family and doted on her vegetable garden at her home in New Hampshire. And at 79 years of age — when most of us are making sure we have our wills and funeral arrangements in order — Helen Bernice applied for postulancy in the just-forming Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory, thereby beginning yet another facet in a lifetime filled with the boundless love of God and of service to God’s people!

Edward Munro, Minister Provincial for Province 3, shared the following reminiscence:

My first meeting with Helen was quite unexpected and well before she became a sister. I was doing an internship at a parish during my deacon formation and after the service as I was standing around in my habit, Helen came up to me and asked, “Are you a part of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory?” I almost fell on the floor because nobody, in my diocese, had ever asked that of me before! It seems she was visiting her son, who was a member of the parish, and she knew our Brother Christian back in New Hampshire. In other visits to her son in Maryland, she would spend a day visiting me at the Seafarer Ministry in Baltimore and had no problem scaling gangways of ships as she joined me in my visitations. She will be missed by all those who knew and loved her.

All who knew Helen Bernice could not help but enjoy her active presence, and she always had a word of encouragement for any situation, which undoubtedly came from her many years of experiencing life in it’s fullness. Sister Helen’s memorial liturgy was held at her long-time parish home, Union Episcopal Church in Claremont, New Hampshire, on Saturday, October 21, 2017. Her life was an icon of joyous faith in a loving and forgiving God, her service was open to all who met her, and we are left with wonderful memories of a sister whose love was as boundless as her energy.

RIP Brother Max Steele BSG

Max slipped away on the morning of December 12, with his beloved wife, Sonya, and his loving son, Sam, at his bedside in hospice in Chattanooga. Bo Alexander Armstrong, Minister Provincial of Province 4, had visited earlier that morning and both Bo Alexander and Larry Walter Reich had been there in the days leading up to Max's death.

Max was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer early in 2017, but was determined to attain an important goal in life — to make his first profession of vows in the Brotherhood. He reached that goal this past summer during Annual Convocation. Max didn't have much time to enjoy the fellowship and the ministry opportunities which his profession would have given him, but those last months meant the world to him, and we rejoice to have been a part of his life and to have known him, even for this short while.

Richard Matthias beautifully summed up our shared relationship with Max:

I will miss Brother Max. I will miss his honesty and joy, his willingness to engage, and his desire to grow. Max was Max — you got what you saw: no evasions, no deceptions; just pure, simple, transparent friendship and brotherly love mixed with a strong desire to serve God and God's creation. May he rest in the eternal love of God. I will miss him.

Max's funeral was held at his parish, Saint Paul's, Chattanooga, on Saturday afternoon, December 16. Every Gregorian Friar and Postulant was present in spirit and in prayer as we echo Richard Matthias' heartfelt words: "I will miss him." (See page 15 for the sermon preached at Max's funeral.)

Pilgrimage 2017

In October Joseph Basil Gauss participated in a two-week pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi and Constantinople, and he shares this account.

On Wednesday, October 11, our group attended the General Papal Audience. We then went to the Vatican Museum, then to the Sistine Chapel, and then finally inside Saint Peter's Basilica. While I had been inside Saint Peter's 24 years earlier, this was the first time I wanted to find and see the Saint Gregory Altar underneath which Saint Gregory's relics are interred. If you've been inside Saint Peter's you know it is an immense space with a great number of side altars. I tried asking several of the 'ushers' working there for the location of the Gregory Altar — I don't know if it is surprising or not, but they could not tell me. A majority of the people there



Joseph Basil at St Gregory's Altar

wanted to see (1) Michelangelo's *Pieta* and (2) where Pope John Paul II was interred right near the *Pieta*.

The way I found the Saint Gregory Altar was that I searched through my phone for "Altar of Saint Gregory — Saint Peter's," saw the image that would be over the Saint Gregory Altar and found it pretty quickly after that.

Keeping in line with my "Images of Gregory" from the Brotherhood's 2017 Winter Convocation, the image over the altar is actually a mosaic work by Alessandro Cocchi and Vincenzo Castellini, copying a 1627 painting by Andrea Sacchi, often called "The Miracle of Saint Gregory." Gregory is depicted in the act of cutting a linen cloth that had been on Saint Peter's tomb which suddenly bled.

The day after visiting Saint Peter's our pilgrimage coordinators facilitated a visit to San Gregorio Magno al Celio, for which I am eternally grateful because it was mostly for my benefit. San Gregorio Magno al Celio is steps from the Circus Maximus. The experience was quite different than being at Saint Peter's with the crush of people the day before. San Gregorio Magno al Celio is somewhat out of the way. Once you are there you need to be buzzed in by the staff. San Gregorio Magno al Celio is to this day a monastic church next to an active Camaldolese Benedictine monastery. There were just a handful of visitors.

The site of this church was originally Gregory's family villa which in his lifetime he turned into a monastery. The patron of Gregory's monks is Saint Andrew — sometimes the church is called Saint Andrew's and Saint Gregory's. The exterior of the current edifice is 17th Century, while the interior is mostly 18th century baroque. A chapel that runs parallel to the main nave — The Saint Gregory Chapel — holds Saint Gregory's Chair which was the reason for my visit and was most meaningful for me.

Council Meeting

The Brotherhood's Council met in October; due to schedule conflicts five members were unable to attend and a lack of a quorum required the use of a conference call to hold a vote on a few matters. Among these was addressing Peter Budde's move to Virginia, into Province 3 and away from Province 7, of which he had served as Minister Provincial. Council reviewed its procedures for electing a new Minister Provincial as well as for carrying on with the ministries of that province — all of which was found to be most helpful. [Members of Province 7 later made use of the procedure to elect William Henry Benefield as Minister Provincial.]

Council interviewed applicant Chris Werth and approved his continued discernment as a postulant-prospective.

Province 2

John Henry Ernestine, Minister Provincial of Province 2, represented the Brotherhood at the Bishop of New York's annual luncheon meeting with representatives and Episcopal Visitors of the religious orders and communities serving the diocese. Also present were representatives of the Community of the Holy Spirit,



Meeting of communities in New York: (front, l to r) Robert James Magliula OHC, Bishop Andrew Dietsche, Bishop Suffragan Allen Shin, John Henry Ernestine BSG; back (l to r) Shane Phelan CMA, Bernard Delcourt OHC, Ann SSM, Ms Esslie Hughes (Chief of Finance and Operations for the Diocese), Faith Margaret CHS, Carol Bernice CHS. (Photo: Arlene Bullard)

the Society of Saint Margaret, the Order of the Holy Cross, and the Companions of Mary the Apostle. (Unfortunately, Bishop Rodney Michel, Visitor to the Brotherhood, was unable to attend.)

† Minister General Richard Thomas Biernacki attended the Convent and Investiture of the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple at Jerusalem, in which he is a Knight and Priory Organist. The service took place at Saint Peter’s Episcopal Church in Perth Amboy NJ. The Rev Dr David G Henritz OSL served as religious officiant leading the prayers and blessing each new Knight and Dame.



Richard Thomas with the Templar mantle (Photo: David Henritz)

Province 3

At the October Maryland diocesan clergy retreat Bishop Eugene Sutton announced his appointment of Tobias Stanislas Haller to his team of spiritual directors.

† James Teets and Tobias Stanislas attended the 57th annual gathering of the US Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem in Washington DC.

† In Advent, James, Tobias Stanislas, and Minister Provincial Edward Munro traveled to Enola PA to spend the day with Luke Anthony Nowicki. Joining them



(l to r) James, Luke Anthony, Susanna Bede, Edward, Tobias Stanislas

for the day was Sister Susanna Bede SSG, who also lives in Central Pennsylvania. They enjoyed time for prayer and catching up with news of the Sisters. Noonday Prayer was dedicated to special prayers for Max Steele, whose funeral was taking place that day. After prayer the group enjoyed lunch at a nearby restaurant, where they continued to socialize for much of the afternoon. It was a wonderful day of prayer and fellowship that we hope can continue regularly for years to come.

Province 4

Hurricanes ravaged the Caribbean Islands and Florida last fall with a ferocity most people have never experienced before, and the devastation and loss in their wake will remain for years, if it is ever remediated. Our local brothers — Mark Andrew Jones, novices Angel Gabriel Roque and Tommy Mandri and postulant William Crockett — provided assistance through their several ministries to many in need. Mark Andrew shared a vignette:

Hurricane Irma was a long storm event, unlike Hurricane Wilma several years ago, which plowed through and then was gone. We sustained only very minor damage at home. Lots of trees down and no power, of course. Monday was clean-up at home, and by Wednesday afternoon clean-up at church was nearly complete. The church sustained only minor damage, except for our monument sign which



The Holy Grill of St Nicholas

was destroyed. Our parishioners also were fortunate; only one experienced flooding. We had The Holy Grill out on the streets the Tuesday after the storm, feeding the homeless along with some storm victims who had not eaten a hot meal since the previous Thursday. We've been serving breakfast and dinner since Tuesday.

The Brotherhood extended an outreach grant earlier this year to Saint Nicholas Episcopal Church, Pompano Beach, to support their "Holy Grill" ministry. We are pleased to be a part of this vital ministry.



Tommy at the console (Photo: Edwin Pineda)

† Bishop of Southeast Florida Peter Eaton made an Episcopal Visitation to Tommy Mandri's parish — Todos los Santos, Miami — in early October. Tommy served as organist, among those who greeted and served with him that day — Tommy being the parish organist — and he has provided photos from that day. Tommy also tells us that everyone was very pleased with the bishop's visitation and turned out to welcome him.

† In October Novice Angel Gabriel Roque took part in a nine-day training course for Hispanic Ministry in Chicago. Canon Anthony Guillén, Missioner for Latino/Hispanic Ministries and Director of Ethnic Ministries, and the Office of Latino Ministries of The Episcopal Church, developed the course, which included presentations on bilingual challenges in congregations; theological perspectives; ministry on

the border between Mexico and the United States; multi-generational Latino evangelism; Latino liturgies; social media evangelism for Latino ministries; the history of Latin American and Latino Christianity from the beginning of the conversion of the natives and the introduction of African slavery; popular religious practices in Latino culture; the history and background of Our Lady of Guadalupe



Angel Gabriel (far l) with the gathering of ministry leaders (Photo: Ed Giraldo)

and its connection with Mayan religious practices; Afro-Latino and Caribbean history and religious practices, including Santería; social media evangelism and its connections with emerging cultures; and last but not least, a presentation on Social Media Revolution Statistics and the future of the church.

Angel also met with a group of “Dreamers” from the US Government’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program. The group also visited a halfway house for people released from jail after the Immigration and Customs Enforcement had taken them in. The multi-faith ministry to asylum-seekers provides spiritual guidance and counsel. Angel asked about how LGBTQI emigrants are treated; many come to the US because of legal persecution in their home countries.

Angel made use of the time to witness to the Gregorian Way. Most of the participants in the course were clergy from all over the US and Canada; they were very interested in hearing about the Brotherhood.

† Postulant William Crockett recently accepted a position as a Family Services Counselor at North Brevard Funeral Home, and continues to work as an on-call chaplain at Parrish Hospital and as a spiritual support volunteer, as well as co-mentoring EfM and serving at Saint Gabriel’s, Titusville, as a Lay Eucharistic Minister and Visitor.

† In mid-November, Bo Alexander Armstrong, Minister Provincial of Province 4, traveled to South Florida with his wife, Lynn, to visit our brothers in the greater Miami area. Novice Angel Gabriel, along with Angel’s spouse, Darwin Pitts, and Novice Tommy joined Bo Alexander and Lynn for a wonderful dinner and evening of fellowship. The brothers attended the ordination liturgy at Trinity Cathedral, Miami, where Bo Alexander served as a presenter for the Rev Benjamin Thomas Jr, Assistant Rector at Saint Gregory’s Episcopal Church, Boca Raton. Angel Gabriel served as one of the Vesters for Deacon Dwayne Allen McKeller of Saint Anne’s, Hallandale Beach. The liturgy was a joyful celebration and the



*Tommy, Bishop Eaton, Angel Gabriel, and Bo Alexander, at the Cathedral
(Photo: Eduardo S Rivera)*

brothers received a warm welcome from parishioners, clergy, friends, family and Bishop Peter Eaton of South-east Florida.

The following day, Bo Alexander and Lynn attended the liturgy and visited with Mark Andrew at his parish, Saint Nicholas, Pompano Beach, where Mark Andrew serves as rector. They had a guided tour of the “Holy Grill of Saint Nicholas” and learned more about this mobile feeding ministry which serves the homeless population of the area.

The last stop was Saint Gregory’s Episcopal Church, Boca Raton, where the newly ordained Rev Ben Thomas was preacher and celebrant.

Ⓣ In early December, Brian Lee Cole was ordained and consecrated the Fifth Bishop of the Diocese of East Tennessee, and Larry Walter Reich was in the middle of things, or more precisely, in front, serving as verger for the liturgy.



*Tommy, Angel Gabriel, Darwin, and Bo Alexander
(Photo: Lynn Armstrong)*



*Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and
Larry Walter (Photo: Canon Michael
Buerkel Hunn)*

Province 5

On Holy Cross Day the Chicago brothers gathered for Evening Prayer and Holy Eucharist at the Church of the Ascension, Chicago. Gordon John Stanley served as



(l to r) Nathanael Deward, Gordon John, with Catherine CG and Daniel-Chad CG (Photo: Joseph Basil Gauss)

deacon for the mass. All of the brothers of Province 5 gathered in Indianapolis on the following weekend, at All Saints' Episcopal Church, Francis Jonathan Bullock's parish, for a retreat facilitated by Rector Suzanne Wille. There was time for fellowship with members of the Community of the Gospel.



The Rev Suzanne Wille with Nathanael Deward

Province 7

With Peter Budde's move to Province 3, William Henry Benefield was unanimously elected to be the new Minister Provincial of Province 7.

† David Luke Henton and his spouse, Tim Kruse, attended the Rio Grande Diocesan Convention in El Paso, Texas in late October. Tim is a candidate for the Diocesan Executive Council there and David Luke staffed the display booth for the Diocese of Rio Grande Borderland Ministries, an outreach organization which serves the poor and needy throughout the New Mexico and West Texas area.



The Society of Catholic Priests met in Chicago in October. At the mass at Church of the Atonement, Ronald Augustine Fox — seen in the front row center in this group photo — was Master of Ceremonies. (photo: The Rev Tripp Norris SCP)



(l to r) Fr Landry, Tim Kruse, Scott Michael, William Henry, Erica Pomerenk, David Luke, James Patrick, Christopher Bryan (Photo: Dale McNeil)

† The brothers gathered in San Antonio for an Advent retreat. William Henry Benefield, David Luke Henton and James Patrick Hall from that province, Scott Michael Pomerenk from Province 8 and spouses Tim Kruse, Christopher Bryan, and Erica Pomerenk attended the weekend. The retreat began with Evening Prayer and a House Eucharist for the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and a welcome dinner at the home of William Henry and Christopher Bryan. The Rev Brad Landry, Rector of Saint Paul’s Grayson Street, presided and fellow San Antonian James R Dennis OP, Master of the Anglican Order of Preachers, the Dominican foundation in the Episcopal Church, was a guest. Saturday’s retreat focused on Christology with a comparative look at other major World Religions. The retreat was directed by the Rev Nate Bostian, chaplain and faculty at TMI — The Episcopal School of Texas. The Daily Office and Holy Eucharist also formed portions of the retreat day. For recreation, the group enjoyed a Saturday evening trip to the Alamo, dinner along the San Antonio River Walk, and a River



David Luke (l) and Scott Michael (r) with Fr Nate Bostian (Photo William Henry Benefield)

Barge Cruise around the city to view the holiday lighting. Sunday’s activities included the liturgy at Saint Paul’s Grayson Street, a concert of Spanish Colonial Marian Music from the Americas by the San Antonio Vocal Arts Ensemble at the Motherhouse Chapel for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. Advent Lessons and Carols at Saint Mark’s Church, the former 19th-century cathedral for the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, closed the retreat weekend.

† James Patrick Hall has graduated from Regis University in Denver with a Bachelor’s degree in Religious Studies (Peace and Social Justice). James Patrick formed an exploratory group for the Lazarus Gate project; its mission is to end the tragic history of medically fragile people dying on the streets of the Denver metropolitan area by providing a supportive and safe haven for individuals who have nowhere else to go in time of medical crisis. Lazarus Gate is endeavoring to be a Social Model Hospice House providing a place and staff for palliative hospice care. This model has spontaneously appeared around the country and was first developed during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s.

James Patrick has also just begun a new job as Product Lifecycle Management Administrator in the data management software field for Swisslog Healthcare of Denver.

Province 8

The brothers of Province 8 gathered in San Francisco in early September to celebrate the Brotherhood’s Foundation Day (Holy Cross) and hold a retreat at Grace Cathedral. They were joined by spouses and family members on Friday evening for dinner near Karekin Madteos Yarian’s home in the Castro, and then by several members of the Grace Cathedral community on Saturday at the cathedral for a day of prayer and lectio divina based on John 12:31-36, with Minister Provincial Richard Edward Helmer facilitating. The brothers prayed the Daily Office in the Chapel of the Nativity and the Chapel of Grace, joined by pass-



Brothers of Province 8 reflect on the Gospel of John with members of Grace Cathedral. (Photo: Richard Edward Helmer)



Karekin Madteos walks the Labyrinth at Grace Cathedral. (Photo: Richard Edward)

ers-by and tourists. Canon Mark Stanger, director of the cathedral’s formation, hosted the day, which concluded with an open conversation about religious life and the life of the Brotherhood. Canon Stanger invited the brothers to return to lead another quiet day next year

† Novice David Benedict Hedges was elected to the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Arizona. We wish him well in the challenges of this new responsibility.

Homily for a departed brother

GOD WITH US

*Job 19:21-27; Psalm 150;
Rev 7:9-17; John 11:21-27*

The Gospel we’ve just heard finds Martha of Bethany—along with her sister Mary, and Jesus himself—in deep grief over the death of Mary’s and Martha’s brother Lazarus. It’s appropriate to imagine a sobbing voice—or even an angry voice—in Martha’s admonition to Jesus: “Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.”

And if you’ve ever felt that grief is somehow inappropriate for a Christian who believes in the Resurrection, take heart in verses 33 and 35 of this same chapter of John: “When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved... Jesus began to weep.” Jesus knows what he is about





Max and Scott Michael on the day of their first profession of vows

to do; he has just told Martha, “Your brother will rise again.” and still he weeps over Lazarus’ death and the pain around him.

We are all in this house of prayer today because we love and grieve for Brother Max. We love and grieve with Sonya and Sam. Scripture assures us that Jesus grieves with us. But it also assures us of more than this: When Martha talks about her brother rising on the last day, Jesus tells her, “I am the Resurrection and the life.”

Brother Max had faith in this declaration. He had faith in all these Bible passages we have heard this afternoon: the redemption promised in Job; the salvation promised in Revelation. Like the Psalmist, Max was unabashed in his praise of God. He was an example for all of us to follow in his faithfulness to God’s call.

I met Brother Max when he and I interviewed as aspirants to the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory in the spring of 2014. Together with another aspirant, we had a few hours to get to know one another the evening before our interviews, and in those hours we shared our life stories and became fast friends. I went to sleep that night thinking, “If we don’t get into BSG, I want to start a community with these two guys.” And the next morning, the three of us found that we were already community: the interview process is—appropriately—intense, and in between sessions, we met in the chapel to talk, pray together, and cheer each other on. We were all admitted that day as postulants-prospective, and we continued to be community over the next few months as we waited for Summer Convocation and the chance to actually enter the postulancy of the Brotherhood: we had several phone calls to talk about life, theology, and our hopes and plans for our vocations.

All this is to say: Max was born to be a brother. Born to serve, support, and love the people around him. Born to be faithful to God’s call.

The Brotherhood has two mottos: “Servants of the Servants of God,” which I think we can all agree Max embodied; and “Soli Deo Gloria: to God alone the glory.” Shortly after we became postulants-prospective, Max began to put “Soli Deo Gloria!” in his e-mail signature. It was completely natural and genuine in him to glorify God and not himself; it was so true to the good, humble servant he already was.

I’m moved by Max’s choice that the passage from Job be used at his funeral, particularly the lines:

For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that at the last he will stand upon the earth;
and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
then in my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see on my side...

It reminds me of a part of a hymn we often sing at the close of Palm Sunday: “O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded” — “that I may fight befriended, and see in my last strife to me thine arms extended upon the cross of life.”

There’s an extent to which each of us dies alone. I know that Brother Max was surrounded in his final days by Sonya and Sam, by brothers and family and friends. And I know that his trust in God was so strong that he had a sense of peace about his death—that his only worry was leaving Sonya and Sam bereft. But none of the mortal humans at his side could share his experience of death; no one could entirely understand what was happening to him.

One of the blessings of the Incarnation is that God in the form of Jesus Christ has experienced death. That Jesus—immortal and eternal—has an intimate personal understanding of human mortality. Jesus was present with Max throughout his dying in a way that no other living human could be. And Jesus extended his arms from the cross to “guide Max to springs of the water of life, and to wipe away every tear from his eyes.”

Which brings us back to Jesus and Martha, weeping together at the graveside of Lazarus. In the Incarnation, God knows the deep sorrow of losing a dear friend. Jesus, weeping for Lazarus with a company of mourners, bestows holiness upon the very act of mourning.

Even though we are confident that Max is with Jesus, and will rise again in the Resurrection on the last day, we grieve at his apparent absence from our lives here and now. But Max is still with us. He is present in our memories of his sweetness, his warmth, his humor and laugh, his service to his fellow human beings. He is with us in the ways that his personality has rubbed off on Sonya and on his brothers and friends. He is present in Sam. We see him in Sam already, and will no doubt see him more as Sam grows. And he is present in the communion of saints who pray for us and with us and walk among us. Every time we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we are united not only with Christ and one another, but with every Christian who has celebrated the Eucharist over time. Max is there with us, probably saying to each of us in that wonderful Alabama-Tennessee baritone, “Aren’t you a sight for sore eyes!”

At this altar, we receive abundant, unconditional love from a God who knows and can empathize with our deepest pain and grief. We receive nourishment to give us strength and faith to go out into the world and serve God and God’s people, to God’s glory.

Scott Michael Pomerenk



FOR THE TIME, BEING

There are those who see the present in terms of where they have been — “I have come this far.” It means the present is captive to all that has come before it — one’s whole life is the definer of the present — the present in which one prays, “Thy will be done.”

What is one actually praying when one prays in the past-captive-present? How can God’s will be done when the person praying this prayer is a mere echo of other times and events — life as gossip? The present grovels to the errors and sins, or struts in braggadocio for things claimed to have been accomplished but only in one’s imagination.

And there are those who see the present in terms of where they want to go — a spring board to somewhere else. Once again the present is captive but to the future, the present genuflecting to “plans and schemes.” The fulfillment of the very purpose of the present is only in a time and place yet to be — awaiting some sort of exoneration by accomplishments yet to be realized and highly doubtful will happen.

When we pray “Thy will be done” we are praying only in the present, for the present, because of the present. We do not pray based upon who we have been or who we want to become but it is me, just as I am, that prays, “Thy will be done.”

For many years I was not able to face the fact that my early childhood was lived in the fear of an older brother who would inexplicably explode into a face twisting rage with hands flailing, literally foaming at the corners of his mouth. I could not talk about it for the loss of not having a civilized brother was more than I could manage. And then one day I told someone about this time in my life and there was a freeing experience. I could talk about the terror and pain, the shame I felt for being a whipping boy for whatever demon drove him. This story finally filled out, fleshing out in detail what I had experienced, what molded me into who I “am” — who I had become — whatever, whenever that “am” was speaking. I had a personal story which gave shape to me and sense to what I remembered.

It took me years to realize that “my story” was about the past and only by breaking free from it could I know a valid “me” who lives in the present. All of this raised in my mind, how could I ever know what I was praying (Thy will be done) if the one praying it was a person who lived, bled, suffered, and cried in the past. It was a ghost praying from deep within some mist of remembrance. But it wasn’t a “me” who lived in the moment in the presence of God. To be in the presence of God one has to be in the present — not living the life of a person long gone.

Then there were/are the times when I see myself as “becoming” as Gordon Allport would say. I am not a static being but one taking shape constantly — a moving person, evolving, ripening. All of which sounds wonderful but when looked at in the words of our prayer it is a “not yet” praying for the gift of God’s

presence now. How can one have their heart, their head, their faith in such a prayer when who they are is unknown but some day will find form and meaning?

Once again my own path brought me to be this kind of a pray-er along side the one re-telling his story of brutality and fear. Both the past and the future prayed a prayer meant solely for the present. As a clergy person there was always the need to lean forward in time to see oneself as who one wanted to become. The pressure of the pastoral needs, the demands of intellectual honesty, the lip-biting needed to survive in an institution which was narcissistic all the while looking to how I could improve, succeed, impress. The day was coming when I would be who I have planned to be. And I thought I was in the right place at those moments to pray “Thy will be done.”

What I have discovered is, Thy will be done is about now. Not back then nor sometime soon. When I stand in the presence of God and embrace that presence, that present, by praying, I am celebrating that God and I exist at the same time and the same place.

Who you have been, who you have discovered you are becoming, who you strain to see in the future casts a dark shadow on you as you seek spiritual light. The struggles you have experienced, are experiencing, will experience are about past and future. It is only God who offers you the present — and that means who you are is not evangelical or Anglican, gay or straight, male or female, Jew or Greek. It means you are God’s beloved and as His beloved you embrace his presence by living in the present.

The Buddha says it this way: enlightenment is living only in the present.


Thy will be done is not an act of history or a futuristic hope.

It is a celebration of now.

Lord, keep us alive as long as we live.

Peter Budde



ongratulations to The Revd John
Hebenton, Vicar of Gate Pa,
Tauranga, New Zealand, elected as the
new Minister General of the Third Order of
Saint Francis.