



HE SERVANT



*Like stars in the
firmament...*

#250

Epiphany/Lent 2019



The Servant

Copyright © 2019 The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, an Episcopal religious community.

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

Minister General, Richard Thomas Biernacki

Editor, Tobias Stanislas Haller

Community Notes Editor, James Teets

Unless otherwise noted, contents may be reprinted by anyone desiring to do so. Please let us know. Inquiries may be sent to the address below. Visit BSG website at gregorians.org

Snail mail to: 305 West Lafayette Avenue
Baltimore MD 21217 USA

Like to receive notice of posting? Send snail mail or email to [servant \[at\] gregorians \[dot\] org](mailto:servant@gregorians.org).

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.

A TIME OF ANGELS

This is the time of angels. Christmas is just behind us — one of the few times we speak of angels. And yet they are all around us, all the time. The Scriptures are filled with visions of angels; good angels, bad angels. Our Sunday School lessons of years ago and now portray these beings with feathery wings and white robes flying about or just hovering in the sky. Ever met any angels? Sure you have. You've met them on the soup kitchen lines and in the homeless shelters. You've



met them in places you'd least notice. Your parish priest could be an angel. Recently we sang the hymn, "I sing a song of the saints of God," and heard about finding saints at tea and in shops and so forth. It's the same with angels. Granted there were several select ones at the birth of Christ. They were the Christmas types, probably wearing a red mantle of ribbon on their robes! Those are the angels of Christmas. Well, let's talk about the angels of every day.

In the theater, angels provide financial support. Angels for a given show help to see to it that the show goes on. But the church has such angels, too. Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Jr and so many others. We remember our own angels of this past year: Brothers Luke Anthony, Max and Robert James. I know these angels see to it that the work of the Lord goes on now that they have joined the heavenly host.

Now, there are bad angels out there; some spend their time looking for ways to divide and spread hate. The good angels are out there fighting the good fight. Let's think about that at this season of the year. Let's realize that the Christ Child came into a world surrounded by good angels and soon found out that the bad ones were outside the stable door—waiting. They're waiting for you and me and we have to be ready. At Christmas, in Lent, at Easter—all the time. God is around us daily inside the church and outside. So are the angels. Look for them. They are often where you least expect them. Standing next to you and me.

RTB

COMMUNITY NOTES

The Brotherhood's Council held its Fall 2018 Meeting on October 19th and 20th at The Conference Center at the Maritime Institute, located in Linthicum, Maryland. Council meetings always include a full agenda, which centers around the reports submitted by the seven ministers provincial, detailing the ministries of each member of each province, as well as updates on provincial gatherings, quiet days and regional retreats. Reports are also received from the directors of vocations, education and postulants and novices, along with that of the treasurer. And the fall meeting also includes the annual meeting of the Brotherhood's corporation, which elects new officers and board members annually.

Tobias Stanislas Haller, our new Director of Postulants and Novices, updated Council on the development achieved thus far by our newest members in training, as well as his vision for the future in this role. He also spoke about training matters that he is working on. David Luke Henton, Director of Education, reported on the activities of the Education Committee and their plans for program during upcoming convocations. Ronald Augustine Fox, our Director of Vocations, talked about developments in the Brotherhood's application and interview process, which — following action by Chapter this past summer — has evolved from the former process in which interviews took place at each of the two annual Council meetings, towards a province-oriented process. In addition, new postulants might be admitted at Winter Convocation as well as Annual Convocation.

James Teets, Treasurer of the Brotherhood, provided his overview of the health of the community's finances, together with the third quarter closing statement and his draft proposed budget for 2019 — which was adopted by acclamation. Richard Edward Helmer, the community's Webmaster, reported on his activities toward keeping us all linked together and providing the many visitors to our website and to the other applications we support — including the very popular Daily Office app — functioning smoothly. He also updated Council on new possibilities and directions in public relations which the electronic world has made possible for us, for which we are all most thankful.

The twice-annual Council meetings also provide an opportunity for Council and officials to refresh their relationships with each other, an important facet of our life together in community!

Province 1

On November 9th and 10th, the brothers met in retreat at the Bethany House of Prayer, a small retreat and conference center located in Arlington, Massachusetts, operated by the Sisters of Saint Anne—Bethany. All six of the brothers in the province — Donovan Aidan Bowley, Christopher Stephen Jenks, Ciarán Anthony DellaFera, Virgilio Fortuna, William David Everett, and Minister Provincial Enoch John Valentine were in attendance, coming from as far afield as Belfast



The members of Province 1 gather for retreat.

and Appleton, Maine, in the north, and Taunton, Massachusetts, and Woonsocket, Rhode Island, in the south.

Christopher Stephen led the retreat, focused on three phrases in the profession rites of the Brotherhood and their associated vows: Poverty: "...it is only through Christ, who inspires both the will and the deed, that I am able to do any good at all;" Chastity: "...that I may love others without trying to possess or control;" and Obedience: "...that I may lay aside self-will, and do only as God wills." Each retreat session began with a short reflection by Christopher Stephen, followed by a time of silence and meditation. Following this, the brothers "took sweet counsel together," discussing the ways in which they have exercised these principles and, just as importantly, the ways in which they had fallen short. The following excerpt from Christopher Stephen's reflection on the vow of chastity gives some sense of the character of the retreat:

"...that I may love others without trying to possess or control."

When I joined the staff of Fessenden House, my sponsor in Narcotics Anonymous said, "Oh. Now you're going to be a *professional* co-dependent." That stung a bit, because it's more than a little bit true. Scratch any addict or alcoholic, and we all bleed fountains of massive co-dependency. In my case that co-dependency manifests itself as trying to smooth over conflict rather than resolve it, as trying to *fix* everybody else's problems for them, and generally as just trying to make everybody happy. All of this sounds nice, but it is a violation of our vow of chastity. I cannot resolve conflict by papering over it. I cannot fix anybody's problems for them. I cannot make people happy.

The weather was stormy and very windy for most of the retreat, but at midday on November 10 the weather began to clear and the brothers took the opportunity to tour the lovely gardens and exquisite chapel on the grounds of the convent. The brothers departed by mid-afternoon to accommodate those with Saturday evening liturgical commitments. This verse from Psalm 133 captures the character of this time together: "Oh, how good and pleasant it is, when brethren live together in unity!"

Province 3

Following on Province 3's successful Lenten Retreat last March at the Ecumenical Institute at Saint Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, the province again visited this vast institution, this time for their Advent Retreat on November 30th to December 1st. A larger group attended this event than in Lent; including all members of the province: Minister Provincial Edward Munro, James Teets, Tobias Stanislas Haller, Peter Budde, Eric Shelley and Postulant Christopher Werth, and to this number were added Director of Vocations Ronald Augustine Fox from Chicago, and vocationer Jason Seta from Philadelphia, who was invited for his application interview. This was the first time that the interview process took place outside of a full Council setting, and everyone was delighted to meet our applicant and to have Ronald Augustine and Jason with us for the retreat.



Retreatants in the Saint Charles Borromeo Chapel at Saint Mary's Seminary

Great, is Homily 33, and the retreatants enjoyed a thoughtful and inspiring in-depth exploration of what amounts to a Gregorian reflection on grace and repentance. They took full opportunity to respond to or express the many facets of Gregory's densely packed sermon.

Saturday began with breakfast, followed by Morning Prayer. The interview team met with Jason to explore with him the process in his sense of ministry and religious vocation. It was an informative time for all concerned and it was a pleasure to get to know Jason at this point in his spiritual journey.

The second Conference, held in the late morning, was Tobias Stanislas' "Reflection on the Lord's Prayer," which called out the Advent themes in Jesus' response to his disciple's request: "Lord, teach us to pray." At the end he revealed that this meditation is based on the closing chapter of his forthcoming book, *Re-membering God: Human Hope and Divine Desire*, due to come off Church Publishing's presses this April. Noonday Prayer followed, then lunch and the closing Holy Eucharist for the feast of Deacon Nicholas Ferrar, at which Tobias Stanislas served as celebrant and homilist.

Tobias Stanislas led the meditations for the retreat, and celebrated the mass on the Saturday afternoon, assisted by our deacon, Edward, and all present. Two retreat sessions were provided — one on Friday and the other on Saturday, plus the Daily Office, and there was still time for everyone to get acquainted with Jason and to catch up with each other since our major gathering in August at Annual Convocation.

This year's assigned study for the whole community from the writings of our Patron, Saint Gregory the

Province 7

Members of the province gathered on September 28-30 in Cloudcroft, New Mexico in the Diocese of the Rio Grande for a Michaelmas retreat. In attendance were the Minister Provincial, William Henry Benefield; David Luke Henton, who hosted the event at his retreat house, Saint Brigid's Rest; Steve Poindexter from Saint Patrick's, Broken Bow, Oklahoma; John Knopp of Ascension, Cloudcroft; and David Luke's husband, Tim Kruse. The retreat was led by the Rev Carolyn W Metzler, who recently retired from Saint John's Cathedral in Albuquerque and is



The Rev Carolyn Metzler

a priest, spiritual director, and retreat leader. Her retreat program for the weekend was titled "Wilderness Spirituality," drawing on the work of Belden Lane, author of *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*.

† James Patrick Hall traveled to northern Italy in September on business and when he had the opportunity to visit shrines and historic places, he did so with great pleasure and reverence. One such opportunity presented itself when he was in Turin and visited the chapel of the Shroud of Turin, adjacent to the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist. While there he took time to remember each of our brothers and postulants by name in prayer, for which we are all most humbled and grateful.

† David Luke Henton attended the consecration of Michael Buerkel Hunn as tenth Bishop of the Diocese of the Rio Grande in early November. He described this event as "a glorious liturgy in English, Spanish, Navajo, and Zuni, and with great participation from our Sister Diocese of Navajoland! There were thirty bishops present, reflecting the breadth of the Episcopal Church, in acknowledgment of Bishop Hunn's service on the Presiding Bishop's staff." He went on to write:

Bishop Hunn's first diocesan act will be to celebrate and preach at the International Border Summit that Rio Grande Borderland Ministries is hosting in El Paso/Juarez on November 16-18. I am the registrar for the Summit and am especially overjoyed that Bishop Hunn will be able to join us in welcoming our Sisters and Brothers from both Mexican border dioceses and from the dioceses of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Thanks be to God for these wonderful beginnings!

And we give thanks for your presence in the midst of such positive changes, dear brother!

GIVING ALMS

Lent is a journey — one in which we accompany Jesus on the way to Jerusalem, the place of the fulfillment of his Passion, death, and Resurrection. Lent reminds us that Christian life is a path we take as we encounter the Person of Christ and seek to welcome Jesus and to follow him. One profound way to follow Christ is to enter into the three traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during Lent. Many of our parishes offer wonderful opportunities regarding prayer as well as teaching on fasting. But the giving of alms can be confusing, and is sometimes thought of as simple charity. Our Lord makes the call to almsgiving more personal by identifying himself with the poor so intimately that by saying what we do for them, we do for him.

Giving opens us to receiving in return: “...give and it shall be given to you” (Luke 6:38). We hear these ideas expressed countless times in Scripture, and God drives this message home by being unfailingly generous, as well as by warning us that an unmerciful heart, closed to the needs of others, is unhealthy. We have been given much, and our gratitude for what we have received should inspire generosity in return.

Gratitude and generosity can take a number of forms, and almsgiving is one of many. The giving of alms is often defined as material service rendered to the poor for Christ’s sake. In the Book of Tobit, we are told, “Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness... It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life...” (Tobit 12:8–9). This text shows us how the giving of alms, “accompanied by righteousness,” benefits us who give as well as those who receive. For Jesus, almsgiving is a normal and even necessary part of Christian life, saying “*When* you give alms,” not *if* (Matthew 6:2–3).

Every Holy Week we hear Christ’s command to wash (or perhaps one could say, “care for”) each other’s feet. One method of following Christ in this way is to provide socks or shoes for the homeless. As you can imagine, those without homes or permanent shelter suffer from many foot-care issues. We can enter into the spirit of this Gospel command by gathering socks, shoes, and other foot-care products for ministries that serve the homeless, such as the Saint Francis Center right here in Denver.



This ministry is a refuge for men and women who are homeless in Metro Denver, providing shelter along with services that enable people to meet their basic needs for daily survival and to transition out of homelessness.

We ask folks to gather socks, toenail clippers, athlete's foot powder, and women and men's shoes. Ideal examples of the latter are shoes comfortable for walking, work boots (steel toe if possible because it helps with construction job placement), and hiking/walking boots — all these are especially welcome. Women's and men's sizes 8 to 12 are great offerings. Homeless folks have a terrible time being on their feet so much of the time; keeping their feet clean and dry is especially difficult. These items are vital to helping our friends who are in great need, and giving in this way honors Christ's command to care for one another, most especially the suffering and weakest members of his large family.

Gratitude for what we have received
should inspire generosity in return

Typically, parishes ask members to bring the items to church during Lent, and then a designated person collects them and delivers them to the final location of a ministry serving the homeless. While a continuing example of work in Denver, this is an idea worth replicating in any setting, by many a parish, in many cities or towns, in the many paths trod by the homeless, for whom those with resources bear the responsibility of care. It is not for us to close our eyes, our hearts, or our doors on “those who pass by.” Recall once again his words: “As you have done to the least of these... you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40) Blessed are those who hear, and act.

James Patrick Hall

This essay originally appeared in The Colorado Episcopalian in February 2018, in somewhat different form.