

# THE SERVANT



*Our prayers arise  
as the incense...*

*Gordon John Stanley  
leads the Litany.*

**#252**

*Summer 2019*



*The Community in Convocation 2019*

### *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.

## Founder's Forum — The Jubilee Sermon On Fifty Years

*Hine ma tov u-ma nayim shevet achim gam yachad*  
*How good and pleasant is it when brothers dwell together in unity.*



*The Founder preaching his Jubilee sermon*

Several years ago, Bishop Barbara Harris, beginning a sermon said, “What a time, what a time, what a time!” This is just such a time. While the actual date of foundation is September 14, we decided to celebrate around our Annual Convocation. Behold how good it is when brothers dwell together!

On that September night in Riverdale, in the northwest Bronx, at the Visitation Monastery, four of us gathered to make our vows. We did not know — *I* did not know — where that night would lead. And really, right now, here in this place, *we* do not know where the Holy Spirit will lead; what we *do* know is this — on that night our chaplain, Fr Tom Pike, said this in his sermon: “One man is no man. We are called to find Christ and ultimately ourselves in other people. When people decide to form a closer tie it is reason to celebrate.” At the Bible Vigil that night, we repeated the phrase, *How good it is when brethren dwell as one*. And so we celebrate that phrase by doing just that — gathering as one.

There are some interesting aspects to that gathering in 1969, unusual in themselves. Our use of the monastery chapel was approved by Cardinal Spellman. Our gathering was witnessed by thirty cloistered nuns, sitting behind the grille that separated them from the main body of the chapel. And as we sang “They’ll know we are Christians by our love,” we, in a circle, held hands with the sisters, through the gaps in the grille. Pretty amazing and not the norm for us or them!

I imagine it would be good to give an overview here; a sort of quick course of what this amazing gathering is. This is one of the most amazing groups of men you will ever encounter. They run the gamut from medical doctor to priest and rector; from workers among the poor in the street to ministering to the folks in the pew. Some even work on keeping *me* on track. The one common denominator is *service*.



*Fr Tom Pike at the altar with the first four brothers in 1969*

Another hallmark of this incredible community is the love and joy that is hard to contain. Passion for ministry, and to be or become *servants of the servants of God*. And always with the one thing that the brothers here possess: a warm and joyful smile. The blessing bestowed on us is mentioned in Psalm 133: “For there the Lord has ordained the blessing: life for evermore.” He sends this gospel blessing on those who have humbled themselves and love and serve one another.

The Rev Jamie Dunlop wrote a book, *The Compelling Community: Where God’s Power Makes a Church Attractive*. Allow me to change the word *church* into *religious community* — much like the Brotherhood. She writes:

The true community God is looking for is not those fellowships of People Like Us — but of a God-given oneness among diverse people who are drawn together, not by similar outside interests or demographics but because of oneness in Christ. Our unity must have a supernatural basis; it must be attributable to Church; not natural compatibility.

This is the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory. In 1969 at the beginning of what has been a fifty year trip — and it’s been a trip, trust me! — Tom Pike said, “This has been no fast decision. What brings us here started long ago — we are not sure where it will lead. To the extent that you can share your life, you will find Christ.” So the question we, as a community, are faced with every day is this: “What is our relationship to the world?” I think that we, as the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, set an example in that we all differ from each other; this is such a diverse bunch of brothers.

The religious life as a whole today is a mixed bag. Many in the Episcopal Church are still unaware of the presence and witness of brothers, sisters, nuns, monks, and solitaries. In some areas of the country those who have taken on these forms of commitment to the gospel life are still looked at with puzzlement. This group of brothers before you this day is one of those strange animals in this exotic menagerie. We are a mutation: part traditional, part conservative; part contemplative and partly — no, greatly radical — the “Flexible Friars” as we were called by our sometime bishop visitor, Paul Moore.

In an ancient hymn for the feast of the Transfiguration we sing: “Not always on the mountaintop may we...” Perseverance for near fifty years says a great deal. We have learned, as a Brotherhood, from the valleys as well as the hills and peaks. We have followed the way of the cross since that Holy Cross Day, September 14, 1969. We make no demands on God but rather wait for his word. When our attitude is such, we will find some day and in due time that we are suddenly and brilliantly on the mountaintop.

I give thanks to God for making me the vessel for this incredible band of followers of Christ and Saint Gregory. Soli Deo Gloria — to God *alone* the Glory. Amen.

RTB



*Here and there with the brothers*

## Community Notes

*NÆCC / CAROA Annual Conference*



*Representatives of religious orders and communities gathered in Racine*

Ronald Augustine Fox represented the Brotherhood at the annual gathering of the Conference on Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas (CAROA) and the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NÆCC) April 29-May 4 at the Siena Retreat Center in Racine, Wisconsin. The two groups represent the breadth of religious life in The Episcopal Church.

Each day started with small groups for Morning Prayer and Lectio, followed by meetings of both organizations, together and separately, daily Eucharist, and daily Evensong. Former Presiding Bishop Frank T Griswold was featured workshop leader; he recalled associations with various religious communities, starting with his days as an Episcopal boarding school student, then as a seminarian, priest, Bishop of Chicago, and Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church. His talks were greeted with enthusiasm. Bishop of Milwaukee Steven Miller and Assisting Bishop in the Diocese of Southern Ohio Bava Edna “Nedi” Rivera also spoke to the groups.

### *Spring Council Meeting*

The Brotherhood’s Council met March 22–23. Council voted enthusiastically to accept the requests for life profession of vows from Eric Shelley (the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia) and Larry Walter Reich (East Tennessee), and for first profession of annual vows from Tommy Mandri (Southeast Florida); these positive votes required a positive polling of all life-professed brothers for the former, and of all professed brothers in Tommy’s province, for final approval, which was forthcoming in the following weeks. Council voted to release Russell Peter Gallagher (Tennessee) and William Crockett (Central Florida) from the novitiate, with the assurance of our gratitude for their time in vocational discernment and our prayers for their future ministries.

Council elected Ronald Augustine Fox (Chicago) to an additional term of service as the Brotherhood's Director of Vocations, and Karekin Madteos Yarian (California) as our Secretary. Council expressed its sincere gratitude to Thomas Bushnell (New York) for his dedicated service as Secretary since 2013.

Council approved outreach grants to ministries in which members of the community serve. The following charitable organizations received approval for their grant requests this year:

- † Saint Nicholas Episcopal Church in Pompano Beach, Florida, for "The Holy Grill" mobile food ministry which provides a hot breakfast for the homeless and working poor in northeast Broward County, and also for the dinner ministry served at the Saint Laurence Chapel Homeless Shelter in Margate, Florida. Since their foundation in September of 2016 these ministries have served 29,000 meals there;
- † Saint Paul's Episcopal Church in Chattanooga, toward the ongoing response ability of the BSG Chattanooga Outreach Fund in providing immediate assistance to the homeless and hungry in downtown Chattanooga with shelter, food, transportation and medical expenses when other resources are unavailable; and
- † Saint John's United Methodist Church in Hazlet, New Jersey, to assist in the purchase of a new freezer unit for Saint John's Food Pantry, a ministry which provides food to 75 to 80 families or single people from the area.

Through such annual outreach grants, the Brotherhood is able to support the ministries of some of our brothers where they are, and we thank God for the ability provided by our individual tithes to respond to such needs.

This Council session also included the final face-to-face meeting of the Golden Jubilee Committee as it continued its work on the schedules and events of the upcoming Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of the Brotherhood.

### *Annual Convocation 2019*

The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory was founded in the monastery chapel of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary on Holy Cross Day, September 14, 1969. Four Gregorians made their first vows of profession on that evening. Now, half a century later, it is time to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of that foundation, and Annual Convocation 2019 was the selected time and place to do so, as the greatest number of Gregorian friars would be gathered to celebrate! Mount Alvernia Retreat Center in Wappingers Falls, New York, has been the site of Brotherhood convocations since 2000.

In 2017, Council formed the Golden Jubilee Committee to brainstorm and organize all that was necessary properly to celebrate this milestone event: 50 years of prayer and service to the church, focused and enabled by the Gregorian vocation and Rule. We give a heartfelt thank-you to each of those committee members for dedicating their time, their creativity and their expertise toward this landmark

occasion; the members of the Committee were Richard Thomas Biernacki (Chair), James Teets (Secretary) William Francis Jones, Richard John Lorino, Ronald Augustine Fox, Karekin Madteos Yarian, Nathanael Deward Rahm, David Luke Henton, and Eric Shelley; Tobias Stanislas Haller and Thomas Bushnell were brought in for consultation on some technical matters. The committee's work would come to fruition this week.

When the time came, and all was ready, the week began with prayer, the “Gathering Service” on Monday night — an occasion to center the group and to acknowledge the purpose for our gathering — each member welcomed at the end of travel — either from as close as Croton-on-Hudson or from around the world — to begin our time together.

Each day began with Morning Prayer, followed by a brief house meeting at which the Brotherhood's Administrator, Eric Shelley (Southwestern Virginia) could share information with the gathered community. This was also a time to

celebrate personal anniversaries under our vows, and on Tuesday morning, the Minister General honored two brothers celebrating their Silver Jubilees: Virgilio Fortuna (Massachusetts) and Gordon John Stanley (Chicago). Both had discerned their diaconal vocation while in the Brotherhood, and have served as deacons in their dioceses and when the community gathers. The Minister



*The Minister General presents Virgilio and Gordon John commemorative plates in celebration of their silver jubilee in vows.*

General presented each of them with an engraved silver commemorative plate, and thanked them for their years of dedication. He was himself in for a bit of a surprise, however, when James Teets (Maryland) stepped forward to make another presentation on behalf of everyone in the Brotherhood. He said, “There is one person here, without whom none of the rest of us would be here or would have had our individual lives changed and enhanced by taking up the Rule of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory: our Founder, Richard Thomas Biernacki! When he said “Yes” to the call to religious life from our Lord Jesus Christ, that little word made a huge change in his life, and through him, in the lives of all of us here today.” James then presented Richard Thomas with a gold-ringed silver commemorative plate engraved with his name and the span which it



*The Minister General receives a plate of his own.*



*The Founder offered reflections on the first fifty years of the community.*

signifies: 1969 to 2019, the Golden Jubilee of the Brotherhood. The assembly rose as one amid applause and the tears of joy which such an incomparable event marked forever.

The whole week carried forward a theme of thanksgiving for five decades of prayer, love, and service. As always, the daily schedule of this convocation was structured upon

the recitation of the four-fold Daily Office and celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The latter liturgies made use of the ministries of a number of the ordained brothers of the community (and two non-members long associated with it): celebrants included Tobias Stanislas Haller (Maryland), Ælred Bernard Dean (Lexington), Mark Andrew Jones (Southeast Florida), David Benedict Hedges (Arizona), our Episcopal Visitor, the Rt Rev Rodney R Michel (Assisting Bishop in the Diocese of Pennsylvania), and the Rev Dr David G Henritz (Director of the Bible and Common Prayer Book Society of The Episcopal Church); deacons included Edward Munro (Maryland), Jubilarians Virgilio Fortuna and Gordon John, and Richard Matthias (Ottawa, Canada). Preachers were Minister General Richard Thomas, Richard Edward Helmer (California), Angel Gabriel Roque (Southeast Florida), David Benedict, and Bishop Rodney. (Texts of some of these sermons are included in this issue of *The Servant*.) Many other brothers performed numerous other liturgical (and other) functions during our week together, which always make this special time run so smoothly, and for which we cannot even begin to express our gratitude.

The Brotherhood's Education Committee organized retreat workshops for the week, including a session on "Anniversary Reflections of the Minister General," which gave our Founder the opportunity to recall events from the community's past for which, in some cases, he holds the only living memory. He also answered numerous questions from the attentive members. A second retreat session consisted of the eight-part set of video reflections on the Rule, edited by Tobias Stanislas, based on archival footage and photographs, and interviews with broth-



*The gathered community members shared their own vivid memories of the first five decades.*





Chapter, and the Corporation. After the office ended, the community posed for the annual photograph, which appears on page 2 of this issue.

Saturday began quietly, with no retreat events or meetings scheduled, other than a brief introduction to the rite of rededication

that would form part of the afternoon liturgy. The rite was composed by members of the Golden Jubilee Committee, and James reviewed the text with the community, in which Richard Thomas and all present life professed members would renew the Godly promises that each had made in past years.

Guests began to arrive for lunch as the Noonday office passed. The Rev Dr David G Henritzky had arrived the previous evening; he was to be the Concelebrant of the Holy Eucharist with our Episcopal Visitor, Bishop Rodney Michel. David is a dear friend and has been a major supporter of the Brotherhood since its earliest days. Sr Susanna Bede Caroselli SSG also arrived the previous evening; she had been admitted to the postulancy of the developing Sisters of Saint Gregory in the summer of 1994, in the midst of the 25th anniversary observances held at Graymoor, Garrison, New York. Other guests included Br Robert Sevensky OHC, former Superior of the Order of the Holy Cross and a long-time friend and visitor to the Brotherhood's annual events, together with Br Robert Pierson OHC, the order's Director of Formation and Sub-prior, and Maximillian Esmus p/OHC; the trio came for lunch, to meet and re-acquaint with our brothers, and to celebrate our Golden Jubilee with us. And from the new Mission House Friary of the Society of Saint Francis in New York City, at the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, came Br Damien Joseph SSF and Br Thomas SSF. It is also noted with thanksgiving that the Society of Saint Francis celebrates their 100th Anniversary this year, and the Order of Saint Helena marks their 75th Anniversary. Needless to say, it was quite a joy to receive the greetings and best wishes from these fellow-pilgrims.

The liturgy for the Brotherhood's Golden Jubilee Celebration was truly joyful. Even with the high heat and humidity that day, July 6th, the liturgy began on schedule at 2:00 pm. Following an instrumental prelude provided by Gotham Brass quartet, organist and choirmaster Nathanael Deward Rahm (Chicago) began the introduction to Saint Patrick's Breastplate: "I bind unto myself today, the strong Name of the Trinity" — which set the active yet prayerful mood and intention for all that was to follow.

The procession began in a cloud of incense — thanks to thurifer Ronald Augustine, followed by the cross and torches, concelebrant David Henritzky, founder and Minister General Richard Thomas; and celebrant, Episcopal Visitor Bishop



*The Rev David Henritzky assisted in administration of communion at the Jubilee liturgy.*



*Gordon John proclaims the Gospel...*

Rodney, accompanied by deacon Gordon John and subdeacon Francis Sebastian Medina (California).

The Minister General delivered a rousing homily (which appears as the “Founder’s Forum” in this issue). Gordon John chanted the litany, as the three brothers who were

about to make their professions of vows came forward to lie prostrate in the midst of their brothers — Tommy Mandri (Southeast Florida) making his first vows, and Eric and Larry Walter Reich (East Tennessee) their life vows. The two brothers making life profession were symbolically covered with a funeral pall to symbolize death to their former selves.

Then came the rededication of vows for those in life profession that had been rehearsed earlier that morning. The Minister General and his life-professed brothers restated those vows which some had made decades ago and others as recently as last year. Bishop Rodney presided, and pronounced his and the church’s acceptance of those



*... and chants the Litany...*

and pronounced his and the church’s acceptance of those vows, “May the Lord’s grace uphold you, and strengthen you in service!”

Then came Eric’s and Larry Walter’s presentation as candidates for life profession by the assembled Ministers Provincial, and then each candidate knelt and recited the same words which had been stated by all those who have made life profession as Gregorian friars. After signing



*...as those about to make vows of profession lie prostrate.*

the Instrument of Life Profession, the Minister General blessed a gold ring for each brother, symbolizing the endless continuity of his vows, and the Minister



*Larry Walter makes his life vows.*

Stanislas, Director of Education David Luke, Minister Provincial Edward Munro (standing in for Bo Alexander Armstrong who was unable to attend this convocation), and his Mentor throughout the vocational training program, James Patrick Hall of Colorado, together attested to Tommy's preparedness to make his first vows. Then, kneeling before the Minister General, he clearly stated his commitment, that he had sought to make over the previous three years, culminating in this ceremony today. He was vested in the symbols of profession: the cincture bearing the visible reminder of the threefold vows, the scapular as apron of service, and the profession cross of the Brotherhood, presented with these words: "Receive the cross of the Brotherhood, that in all things you may glory in the cross of Christ alone." Taking the new cross in his hands, the newly professed brother kissed it and said: "O God, who has given me grace to wear the cross of the Brotherhood

General placed a ring on Eric's and on Larry Walter's finger, after which he reminded them of their Baptismal promises as they were sprinkled with blessed water, just as they were when they entered the Brotherhood's postulancy eight years earlier. "The Lord bless you and keep you, all the days of your life; God preserve you and guide you, as you fulfill your vows day by day!"

When the applause ended, Novice Tommy came forward as Director of Postulants and Novices Tobias

of Saint Gregory, give me grace to be worthy of the vocation to which I am called!" He knelt and was blessed with holy water and incense, symbolizing the continually-rising prayers of his brothers to God, with the words: "Soli Deo Gloria — To God along the glory,"



*Eric receives the life profession ring...*



*... and signs the instrument of life profession.*



*Tommy about to sign the instrument of first profession*

and “*Servus servorum Dei* — A servant of the servants of God!” Boundless applause followed!

After the Peace came the opportunity for Bishop Michel to make a few comments, followed by those of Dr Henritzky and then Sr Susanna Bede, who also read a congratulatory letter she brought

from the Sisters of Saint Gregory, who were meeting in their own convocation in

## The past is prologue

The last time I had an opportunity to address this distinguished Brotherhood, Bishop Browning was the Presiding Bishop and the Brotherhood was meeting in a church in Greenwich Village — Saint Luke in the Fields.

As I remember that occasion I must confess that I think I channeled my spiritual predecessor, The Rev John Wesley. As you may know, Wesley was a very popular preacher. Although he was a priest of the Church of England, he most often preached in fields and other outdoor places, because he was a highly vocal critic of the Church of England and so was not always welcome inside church buildings. I mention I channeled him because his other claim to attention was that he frequently preached for three or more hours at a time. And on that occasion in Greenwich Village I feel, in retrospect, that it felt like a very long time.

I remembered that as I was planning what to say now. And my first conviction was that I was going to be significantly shorter. Brother Karekin, in his book *In Love and Service Bound* mentions a time when Brother Richard was a community of one. The Brotherhood began as a group of four in 1969 — a year notable for many events. It was the year of the Stonewall riots, exactly fifty years plus a week ago. It was the year our country put a man on the moon.

Richard’s group of four, for one reason or another rather quickly became a community of one. I appeared on the scene in 1972 and encouraged Richard to get out of the doldrums and begin to move forward. Leslie Morgan appeared on the scene and it was my great privilege, on behalf of the church, to receive his profession of vows. Brother Leslie stayed. And the rejuvenated BSG was on its way.

Karekin also mentions in his book that Richard’s vision, and that of the Brotherhood, is to put deeper meaning into one’s life and work. The diversity of ministries and occupations represented by this community is testimony to that. The commitment of all of you to living a deeper life of faith and ministry is testimony to that. Through all of the challenges along the way, Richard’s commitment to the vision is testimony. Congratulations on 50 years and may God continue to bless you.



*At the reception following the jubilee liturgy*

Cincinnati. As the offerings of the people were collected, the Brotherhood’s Schola sang an anthem under the direction of Nathanael Deward. The Holy Communion which followed was a joyous affirmation of our fellowship and unity with one another.

At the end of the worship, most of those attending repaired to a large tent set up on the west lawn, for a gala reception, which only ended after two hours due to the approach of a serious thunderstorm.

Even that wasn’t the end of the day or of Annual Convocation 2019. At nine pm the community gathered once more in prayer, for Compline, followed by the Brotherhood’s Mission Service, which officially concludes Annual Convocation. Here the Founder and Minister General led the community in giving thanks for this time together in God’s presence, and reminded each that, while Jesus occasionally took his little flock away to a quiet place in order to rest and refocus upon what was truly important, that it is the prayer life and the ministry which emanates from that life of prayer, worship, and thanksgiving that forms the heart of the Brotherhood’s Rule of Life.

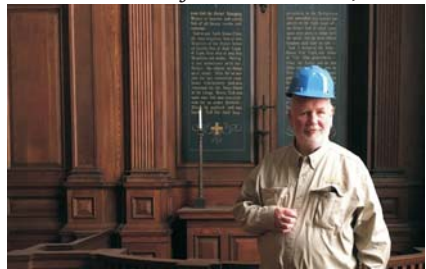
Minister General: Servants of the servants of God, go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit!

Assembly: Thanks be to God, to whom alone be glory!

### *Province 1*

In early April Virgilio Fortuna informed the community that he was among the chaperones taking a group of fourteen teenagers — seven from his parish of Saint Mark’s in Foxborough, and seven others from the local Lutheran Church — from Massachusetts to New York City for a Lenten pilgrimage, to join other youth in the Night Vigil at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, and to visit the National September 11 Memorial and Museum in Manhattan.

At the invitation of Bishop of Rhode Island Nicholas Knisely, Christopher Stephen Jenks has moved to Providence to serve as Clerk of the Works for the ongoing repair and restoration of the Cathedral of Saint John. Worship at the cathedral was discontinued in 2012 due to deterioration of the



*Christopher Stephen in Saint John’s Cathedral, Providence*

building, which was constructed in 1810, and lack of funds to make repairs. Bishop Knisely has made reopening the cathedral as a center for diocesan life and mission a priority, and progress has been made in recent years. However, the main body of the cathedral is still unsafe. Christopher Stephen will be working with the bishop and cathedral chapter to devise a master plan for the cathedral, and he will be working with contractors as repairs progress.

Christopher Stephen is also volunteering with the Church Beyond the Walls, a street-church ministry jointly sponsored by the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island and the New England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In addition, he is helping out as needed with the Center for Reconciliation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the work of racial justice and racial reconciliation.

**†** On June 22nd Thomas J Brown was ordained and consecrated Bishop of Maine at a gala liturgy at Saint Luke's Cathedral in Portland, and Donovan Aidan Bowley was present for the occasion. He shared that at the end of the liturgy he was leaving by the side door out to the cloister, and ran into the new Bishop Brown as he was going back into the building to change and rejoin the altar party. Donovan Aidan took the opportunity to introduce himself, and extend the best wishes of the Brotherhood

### *Province 3*

In May, James Teets, Tobias Stanislas Haller and Christopher Werth staffed a Brotherhood table at the 235th convention of the Diocese of Maryland, in Ellicott City. A number of the clergy and lay delegates came by to greet the brothers and to re-connect since last year.

### *Province 4*

Richard John Lorino helped plan a Lenten Retreat Day for his parish, Saint Augustine of Canterbury, Vero Beach, Florida, and delivered one of the three meditations. The theme, *Faith+Art=Soul*, centered on using different art forms as expressions of the spiritual journey, particularly in preparation for the events of Holy Week and Easter. The retreat was attended by thirty-three parishioners.

**†** On May 19–23 Angel Gabriel Roque took part in a Justice Pilgrimage convened by the Diocese of Atlanta on behalf of the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing. This was a pilot program designed to bring approximately twenty people of all backgrounds together to discuss real and unredacted American history, and to visit sites where slaves were brought, processed, sold, resold, and punished. The group heard presentations on justice, prayer, and current events, and opportunities to discuss matters of racism and discrimination were provided in a safe, open and honest environment. Thirty days after the Justice Pilgrimage ended, each participant informed the Absalom Jones Center as to what each one will do in their own diocese to enable this conversation to be widely provided. Each must keep in mind that every person brings a different background and each



*Conversation during the Atlanta Pilgrimage*

is also a part of a diocese at a different level of the conversation. Within six months each participant will implement time for providing this conversation. Some of the participants might do this at a parish or at a diocesan level.

During the Pilgrimage, the participants had many conversations based on the pain that some participants had seen and suffered because of racism. They had conversations about white supremacy, slavery, and the incredible amount of American history that they have redacted. They visited sights where so much pain had been inflicted on their brothers and sisters, and they saw how the church itself had played a part in this pain. These conversations were not easy; they were difficult and painful, but they brought the participants together. Wounds cannot heal when they are undisclosed. One facet of this Pilgrimage was always notable — when conversations were engaged with love, respect and honesty, each person began their own healing process. It was evident throughout this time together that the church can be a part of healing and reconciliation when egos are left at the door and each person's heart and brain is brought into the conversations. Angel Gabriel will be designing and preparing short healing retreats — one in English and one in Spanish — with discussion and prayer about the Justice Pilgrimage and facts about the slave trade. Participants will hear testimonies of racism and there will be lots of conversation. The retreat ended with a healing service after lunch. We wish our brother very well with this new endeavor, which will hopefully make a difference in numerous lives.

### *Province 5*

Members of the province gathered on March 15-16 at Church of the Atonement, Chicago, for Stations of the Cross on Friday evening and a retreat all day on Saturday. The retreat, led by Dr Alberto Verona, was an actual Quiet Day, spent in silence, apart from the liturgies. Dr Verona provided guidelines and materials for several silent practices and activities that encouraged turning toward the presence of God and inviting God more deeply into one's heart. All agreed that, since some had not done that type of retreat outside of the rare quiet breakfasts during Brotherhood convocations, the day was well-used and all benefitted greatly from the experience, especially from the group sharing at the close of the silent portion of the retreat.

† Dean of Providence Theological School (PTS), the Very Rev Paul Mottl and Director of Studies the Rev Christine Mottl notified Ronald Augustine Fox that he has been awarded the degree of Master of Theology *summa cum laude*. PTS is a distance learning school based in Maryland. The Mottls previously served with



the community's Visitor, Bishop Rodney, in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. Bishop Michel highly recommended the school to Ronald Augustine, who previously was awarded a Master of Ministry from PTS. The Brotherhood adds a heartfelt and proud "Congratulations!"

† Joseph Basil Gauss, an active member of the LEAGUE Foundation Board, was recently elected the Board's Secretary. LEAGUE offers scholarships to LGBT young adults going from high school to college. Sincerest congratulations and thanks for your commitment to service, dear brother!

### Province 7

The brothers of Province 7 gathered in San Antonio on April 5-7 for a Lenten Retreat led by priest, spiritual director, and author the Rev Mary Earle. The retreat



*James Patrick and the Rev Mary Earle*

was given at the home of Minister Provincial William Henry Benefield and his husband, Christopher Bryan. James Patrick Hall, David Luke Henton, and other guests were able to join the brothers for the weekend. The retreat began on the Friday evening with Evening Prayer and outdoor Stations of the Cross. Earle devoted the retreat to the writings of Julian of

Norwich from her book: "Julian of Norwich: Selections from Revelations of Divine Love Annotated & Explained." The Daily Offices and Holy Eucharist rounded out the retreat. Brothers were treated to a Tex-Mex dinner Saturday night and then gathered for the Low Mass on Sunday at Saint Paul's Episcopal Church before returning home.

### Convocation sermon on "God's Wisdom"

#### The yeast rises

One of my favorite things to cook is waffles. I use a recipe that includes yeast — you make the batter the night before, and mix in the yeast, and let it rise overnight. In the morning you also have to separate the eggs, and beat the whites by themselves. Between the egg whites and the yeast, the result is a waffle that's crispy on the outside but super fluffy inside. My daughter basically won't eat any other kind of waffle any more.

Most of us who cook or bake know how great yeast is. It's the thing that transforms flat doughs into wonderfully spacious, fluffy sponges. We think of yeast as

a good thing. So when we read the parable of the yeast in today’s Gospel, we probably go right along with the idea Jesus is going for here, that yeast is a lovely symbol of the explosive and life-giving growth that comes in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We also probably imagine, when we hear that the woman in the parable mixed her yeast in with three measures of flour, that this would be about three cups or so. But a *measure* in the Hebrew system of measurements actually works out to about a bushel — so imagine an amount of flour about the size of a laundry basket. This woman is making a whole lot of bread. However, the original hearers of this parable would not have thought about yeast as an obviously good thing, as we do today. They had a bit of a love-hate relationship with yeast, because it could ruin things too. If it was spilled, or if the jar was broken, it would get where it didn’t belong and spoil foods with its fermenting power.

This is why other references to yeast in the New Testament are not so glowing. Saint Paul uses yeast as an image of sin — in the First Letter to the Corinthians, that famous passage we use at Easter, “Let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Or in Galatians, “A little yeast leavens the whole batch,” referring to the way that unchecked sin can ruin a church community from within. Jesus also warns his disciples to “beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees,” referring to their hypocrisies.

Today we read the Apostle’s words to the Corinthians: “We speak wisdom, not of this age, but God’s secret and hidden wisdom decreed before the ages. These things God has revealed to us through his Spirit.” I can’t help but think of this past Sunday’s epistle, in which Paul spelled out what this looks like in practice — the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

This wisdom, this spiritual fruit, this is the leaven that we should be mixing in with three measures of flour. This leaven is not the wisdom of the rulers of this age. The rulers of this age do not know what to do with things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. To turn back to Sunday’s epistle, and read it together with today’s, the wisdom of



*David Benedict lays on incense prior to the proclamation of the Gospel.*

this age is that which Paul contrasts against the fruit of the Spirit. This is an age and a wisdom of fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissension, factions, envy, drunkenness, and carousing. Indeed, many of these appear to be deliberate and active strategies of the rulers of this age.

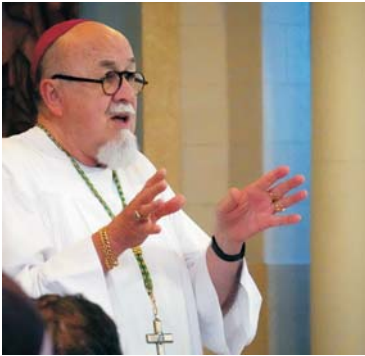
Brothers, it is our job to be the yeast — to live according to God’s secret and hidden wisdom. To live lives ripe and bursting with the fruit of the Spirit. To live lives of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This is our yeast, and we are to mix it in with the flour, to mix it into the dominant wisdom of the rulers of this age — and to spoil their whole batch.

*David Benedict Hedges*

*Convocation sermon in memory of  
Robert James McLaughlin*

**Well done...**

*And I will raise them up, and I will raise them up,  
And I will raise them up on the last day.*



*Bishop Rodney*

Dear Brothers in Christ, we have come to remember our beloved departed and to celebrate the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. In particular today, we remember our beloved brother Robert James McLaughlin, and I still have trouble remembering that he is no longer physically with us on this earthly pilgrimage, even though I pray for his departed soul every single day.

I know we are not to have favorites amongst our children or our siblings but Robert was a favorite. I just loved that man and I know that most, if not all of you did too. I recently read some words of the late Jean Varnier, may he rest in peace, who said: “We are not called by God to do extraordinary things, but ordinary things with extraordinary love.” And immediately I thought of Robert James. Think of that now famous picture of our brother at the beach, holding a beautiful child, both dressed in white, and the look of beatific joy and love on Robert’s face. Ordinary things with extraordinary love. Oh Brother, where art thou?

You know I live in a CCRC — as one of our residents calls it, “A Geezer Farm” — and I am surprised at the number of people who get to be octogenarians or younger, and really begin to wonder if all this resurrection of the body and life everlasting stuff is true. I didn’t suppose I would ever have doubts like that but occa-

sionally I think seriously about it, and of course, to doubt flies in the face of everything I ever believed or taught or preached.

Skeptics say that religions that believe in an afterlife came up with that teaching to make people more accepting of death. I can't buy that because the fabric of our Judeo-Christian heritage is sewn through with teachings and promises about the afterlife. Isaiah the prophet, centuries before Christ, could proclaim, without hesitation: "The Lord God will swallow up death forever, wipe away tears from every face and part the veil and shroud which separates life here from life in eternity..." — right through there!



Isn't that right, Robert James? Indeed, the veil is thinnest and flutters with the breath of Holy Spirit each time we gather for the Great Thanksgiving and join with angels, archangels, and *all* the company of Heaven to say or sing: "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might."

Isaiah speaks of parting the veil and John the Evangelist records Jesus saying: "This is my Father's will: that all who see the Son and believe in him will have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day." And you may not be a fan of Suzanne Toolan's or Betty Pulkingham's music but Susan was right on with her "I am the Bread of Life" composition.

For centuries Christians have been praying for their beloved departed and I hope, dear brothers, that you do as well. There is a sort of antiquarian devotional society known as the Guild of All Souls which promotes prayers for the departed and can be helpful for those wanting to know more about this aspect of our prayer life. We do not remember our beloved departed to speed them along their journey in Paradise but as a way of continuing to express our love and care for those we see no longer but are very near to us in eternity. And of course, each time we say the Creed or renew the Baptismal Covenant we express belief in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. I don't think we can say that with our fingers crossed, or a big maybe in our minds. If we say it, we believe it, and believing it, we should live it and incorporate it in our broadcasting of the Good News of Jesus the Christ.

Let me just leave you with an image. When Robert James and all the brothers who have gone before us arrived at the Gates of Paradise they might have knocked at the great doors, and from inside a voice may have said: "Who seeks entrance into Paradise?" And the answer would have been: "It is Robert James, a child of God, baptized in Jesus Christ and a servant of the servants..." and the great doors would swing open and there, just inside would be a crowd with Jesus, all the saints, loved ones and Brothers of Saint Gregory — Ron, Max, Luke Anthony, Thomas Joseph, Charles, Damian-Curtis, Edward, Patrick Ignatius, Michael, and all who have gone before us: standing with open arms and huge smiles saying: "Welcome home; we've been waiting for you!"

I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. And so today we are reminded, dear brothers, to live a life that matters. Live a life of love. Live a life centered on, devoted to Jesus Christ and his example of love — for God, for others and for ourselves.

Dear Robert James and all our beloved departed Brothers, the angels have led you into Paradise and the martyrs have received you at your coming. We give thanks for your lives and your witness and your love and pray for the day when we will all be together in God’s nearer Presence and glory. Blessed be your memory! I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. And I am anticipating it, but as my old granny used to say, “I ain’t a-cravin’ it.” Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief!

*Rodney R Michel*

*Convocation sermon on diversity*

## Being true, being dangerous

*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*

Love your enemies? How in the heavens do we do that? How do you love those that persecute you and mean you harm? These are questions that I ask myself often. But even as I ask myself often it seems that the answer is always fluctuating. Some days I may say yes; I love my enemies! And other days I say, Nope! Screw you! Screw you! Screw you and you over there in the corner! Yeah! Screw you too! After these thoughts calm down a bit I go back and ask myself this question: How do I love those that persecute me and dismiss me, or call me impulsive because I might mention something that they prefer to ignore? Or who bring up the usual, “Oh, you are just a millennial!”



*Angel Gabriel*

My solution is to be *dangerous*; dangerous and foolish enough to believe that I can inspire someone to think differently, hoping that their abusive or dismissive behavior might change for the better; foolish enough to believe that I might inspire my enemy to see me as me, as a person. Hopefully, we as religious and as followers of Christ can inspire ourselves and others to see the person; not a medical chart, a person; not the addiction, a person; not what they happen to wear that day, but a person; not their past, or their country of origin or language. Being dangerous means that I will do my very best to love others, more and more every day. The more they hurt you and insult you, the more you love them. Sometimes when I have sat and chatted with someone who clearly does not like me, if I start a

good conversation and show my love for them and maybe a bit of vulnerability, I end up having a good time with them, and sometimes even find a new friend.

Let me tell you a story. A couple of years ago when I was in culinary school, I had this very interesting English teacher. The class was English Composition and she gave us the task of writing an essay that reflected a childhood experience. At the time I was fresh out of Puerto Rico and even though I have spoken English from the age of seven, I have never written in English very well. I had a terrible speech impediment that took years of therapy to fix, so learning how to write in English was not a priority at the time. I decided to write about my “pet” piggy named Pepito. Pepito was an adorable eight-pound black piglet with a rosy nose in the shape of a heart.

I loved Pepito and Pepito loved me. Pepito loved me because I fed him lots of food. I just loved how Pepito used to chew his food very loudly. I loved how loudly he chewed because it made my mom really upset. Unfortunately, Pepito had to live with my brother-in-law’s family. I wanted Pepito to live with us, but mom refused, saying that there was only space for two pigs in the house! (She was referring to me and my father. Mom has always had a crude sense of humor.) She said that Pepito would mess up her porcelain-white floor. Because of this I had to visit Pepito every weekend when I had a chance.

Many months later my father and I attended a wonderful feast at my sister-in-law’s home in the valley of El Yunque forest. That was one amazing party I must say. I arrived late because I was at a retreat. My mom asked me if I was hungry and brought me to the kitchen. She served me all my favorite foods and I must say, it was awesome. While eating I grabbed this delicious piece of pig skin that was so crunchy and delicious! I did notice that the skin was incredibly dark, but it was not burnt; it was crunchy and salty and fatty and delicious. At that moment for some weird reason Pepito came to mind. Mom was behind me washing dishes and I asked her where was Pepito. Mom’s face became pale. But then, and with no shame, she said, “Right there on your plate,” and her nervous reaction was to laugh until she cried. I was devastated, but if my memory serves me well, I did finish my plate.

My essay caused much laughter and entertainment in class even though that was not why I wrote it. Finally, the teacher, while giving everyone’s grade, said to me in front of the whole class, “There is no way you could write an essay like that. Somebody else must’ve written this essay for you. Nobody in this class can learn that quickly. I must give you a D for this, nothing and nothing higher; aren’t you from Puerto Rico anyway?”

I was very upset with the teacher and I felt very embarrassed. But I had to play nice and pass the class. Sometimes people reduce you to a term or a class of person, but they never *see* you, let alone *believe* in you. Back in the early nineties my parents moved to Sanford, Florida, when I was six or seven. I was riding the bus which was so exciting to me because I’d never been on a school bus before; my parents always drove me to school. Suddenly there was a commotion and the driver — an older white-haired lady — instructed a student to communicate us-

ing signals and to tell me to be silent during the bus ride. I thought, “No problem,” so I stayed silent. Suddenly one of my friends asked me a question and of course being a kid, I answered and I started chatting with my friends again. One day the bus suddenly stopped in the middle of the highway and we all thought OMG we hit an alligator. Suddenly the lady bus driver runs back to the end of the bus where I was placed and said very loudly, “You *do not speak in this bus you little Spick.*” I did not understand this, as I was a bit young. But my mom noticed that I was very sad all the time after school and after her usual questioning I explained what happened, and she exploded and confronted the lady. Then two months later my math teacher in first grade slapped me in the face for asking a question in Spanish.

It is difficult to love those people sometimes. But by your loving them and maybe even engaging them in conversation you can inspire them to see *you*. Being dangerous is scary sometimes. I have noticed that to be truly dangerous we must be a bit vulnerable and be true to ourselves and to others. There is something about mixing love in conversation that inspires people to think differently.

How do we inspire change in this noisy world? How do we inspire change within us? Being religious in this world is already dangerous. Jesus teaches us to love others and to pray for them. Tough job we have, brothers! My hope is that in the next fifty years to come we embrace that true diversity in the hope that it will move us closer to reflecting the image of God.

Let us pray: May the God who created a world of diversity, color and vibrancy, go with us as we embrace life in all its fullness. May the Son who teaches us to care for strangers and foreigners go with us as we try to be good brothers in our communities. May the Spirit who breaks down our barriers and celebrates community and inclusivity go with us as we find the courage to create a society that welcomes all. May we become the true image of God in this world!

My brothers, be dangerous. The world needs you! Amen

*Angel Gabriel Roque*

*A first sermon by one of our postulants*

## Near to a neighbor

Our readings today, which span several centuries, speak to us about being open to God’s commandments, being guided by him, taught by him, so that we may lead lives “worthy of the Lord.” They speak of opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit and letting God act through us to heal a broken world. Pretty heavy, huh? How on earth can we ever live up to that exhortation from Paul and live a life worthy of the Lord? There is nothing we can do to live up to that. There is nothing you or I can do that will make God look down and say, “Boy, that Seta kid sure is doing great — give him some extra salvation.” God loves us and opens his arms to us not because we are morally upright or perfect in righteousness (‘cause we aren’t!). He

loves us despite our imperfections; just our *being* is enough. But there it is in the Letter to the Colossians: we are called to live a life that is “worthy of the Lord.”

Theologians have been intellectualizing the parable of the Good Samaritan for two thousand years — I doubt very much that I will break new theological ground this morning; but here we go. In this parable we have a vivid look at life in the time of Jesus. The journey between Jericho and Jerusalem was notorious for its danger: the route was called “The Way of Blood.” A story about someone being robbed and beaten on this journey would not have surprised anyone. I’m sure that as soon as Jesus started the parable with, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho,” the folks kind of knew where the story was going. But Jesus makes a Samaritan the hero of the story — the righteous neighbor — and in so doing Jesus was using the 33 AD equivalent of a guy in a black trench coat with a curly mustache turning out to be the Good Guy. In the eyes of Jesus’s audience, the Samaritan was a Bad Guy. Worse than that even. The Samaritan was an outsider, a feared and despised enemy. The Jewish people and the Samaritans *hated* each other. Their cultural conflict lasted for many years and included such atrocities as the Jewish people destroying a Samaritan temple and then the Samaritans desecrating the temple in Jerusalem.

But the Samaritan in the parable saw the victim lying broken, naked, and bleeding in the street and was moved to pity. He didn’t see an enemy. He wasn’t filled with disgust. He didn’t turn a blind eye like the other passersby. His response to his neighbor in need is extraordinary. He didn’t simply offer “thoughts and prayers.” He bathed the man’s wounds, picked him up out of the dirt, clothed him, went out of his way to put him up in an inn for a few days to heal and rest, and picked up the bill on his way back. We are given an unmistakable model in this story.

I want to share with you the story of my neighbor, Joe. His story stands in diametrical opposition to the parable of the Good Samaritan. Joe was an addict. He was often unsheltered. When he couldn’t find a friend’s couch to sleep on, he made do in empty lots, construction sites, alleys. He was well known in the neighborhood serving as a handyman to local businesses and residents doing odd jobs to scrape out a living. One evening in May, Joe was using. Standing on a street corner, struggling for consciousness, “dipping out,” righting himself over and over, he collapsed onto the street. He was run over by a car and died in the hospital a few days later. We know that this is what happened to him because down the block from him was a car load of people, recording him on their phone. They laughed as he dipped and stumbled. When he fell in the street, it was amusing. And when he was run over, their response was not to come to his aid. They simply finished recording and shared the whole video on social media. It was the driver who stopped and called 911. Joe was taken to the hospital where, as I said, he died



Jason



a few days later. The people filming him did not see a neighbor. They didn't even see Joe as a human being. He was a joke, just another addict. He didn't matter.

How often do we open our hearts to those we see in need? We've all done it. I've done it: we see someone asking for money, say; possibly unsheltered; maybe hasn't had a shower in a while; wearing dirty clothes. And we look away. We cross the street. We think of something else, stare at the sidewalk, and walk by as fast as possible. It can be difficult or scary to engage with those neighbors who are on the fringes, who are suffering. And, yes, sometimes, you have to consider the safety of the situation. No doubt about that. But if you keep it simple and remember that in them you are seeing Christ, you can act in a way worthy of the Lord.

Look, religion can be *very* complicated. Our liturgy, the Daily Office, prayers and creeds, incense, bells, traditions, customs, vestments, altar furnishings, gestures; even coffee hour! It's a *lot* to do. But it's not all that complicated. Have you ever seen that acronym KISS: "Keep It Simple...Saints!" That's it: Keep it simple.

Our Lord summed up the entirety of the Law and the Prophets: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Get that? 1,200 pages, 5,000 years of divine revelation, summed up in four sentences. See? Simple.

No one is perfect; we will have moments when we don't live up to our own aspirations. We're human after all. But, the truth is that if we try — just a little — most of us can do more than we think. We don't have to be the Samaritan, putting folks up at the Roadway Inn every time someone asks for spare change. But, we can give, even if we only give a little. Give to the church, give to shelters, volunteer with the nutrition ministry here. Donate items you can spare to the clothing nook. If you're not afraid of extemporaneous praying, offer to pray with a neighbor you see who is in need (for the record: I am very afraid of extemporaneous praying). Or it can be as simple as a smile — acknowledgment — when you see someone in need, even if you cannot help ease their hunger or give them a place to sleep — a smile can make a huge difference to someone who spends their lives being looked past, ignored.

The irony is that, while you're keeping it simple, doing little things to try to help, you are, in reality, acting as God's hands and heart in the world. And every time you open your heart to the Holy Spirit and allow God to work through you, you will be inspired to let God do more through you. You will find ways to help that you never considered. You may also find you are inspired to reinvigorate your prayer life: use the prayer book, come to bible study. When you open your heart and let God work through you, you will feel God's presence in your life and, as the Rule of the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory teaches us, you will be a messenger for the one who is the light. And that, my friends, is worthy.

*Jason Seta*

