

The Servant



#258

Epiphany/Lent 2021

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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.

Worship in the Catacombs

In these very difficult and unusual times we have discovered and experienced many ways to gather to worship and pray. I keep picturing the early Christians and Jews discovering and experiencing such safe places to pray and worship under threats from those who were not believers. We are doing the same thing but not to hide from the officials and government; no, we are hiding from and being wary of coronavirus. It is the current threat to our well-being. It is a very dangerous virus that has caused our churches and other places of worship to be closed. Did any of us ever imagine such a thing could or would happen?

The catacombs of Rome are part of the underground burial grounds from early centuries of the modern era; they were principally used by Christians and Jews. These subterranean passageways were places of burial and commemoration.

In the 60s and 70s it was thought a novel idea to have “home church.” I remember hosting one of these. In recent times one parish here in New Jersey had “Dinner Church” and “Burger Church.” But alas, now we have to worship in new places, not too different from the times when the early Christians, to escape persecution, conducted their worship in the places of burial: the catacombs. Today we are found worshipping in our homes. Some churches are conducting worship and important meetings in their parking lots. When we do gather, we are wearing masks to protect us from the virus. The early Christians hid underground for worship; the underground was their mask of protection.

There are, I know, many (myself among them) who rely on the many things that, in many ways, make worship *authentic*. But, now, with the restrictions on gathering and the size of gatherings, social distancing and masks, we feel that much of what we hold dear and necessary is no longer “there.” In reality, we know that *we* are the necessary; *we* are the church. “When two or three are gathered in my name, I am in the midst of them.” Bread and wine — offered up; prayers both spoken aloud and mentally offered in the heart — these are an authentic offering. These are the things we need in the catacombs of today. We do not know how long we will be in some form of “underground” but we do know that when we gather and open our hearts to God, our worship anywhere is real.

Having been an organist for more than fifty years, I find that hymns flow in and out of my mind all the time. I don’t know why, but this one appears more than most: “*There is room in my heart, Lord Jesus, there is room in my heart for thee.*” In our catacombs of today, whether hidden or seen, stripped to the bare essentials or equipped with the various liturgical trappings we love, take heart and remember that, if we are open in any situation, God is present.

RTB

Here and there with the Brothers

Community Notes

Province 1

Donovan Aidan Bowley has been keeping up his spirits (and vocal tone) by continuing to take part in the musical work of the Down East Singers. Their spring concert performance of Brahms' *Deutches Requiem* was derailed by the COVID-19 outbreak, but persistent practice in isolation (with the help of some electronic musical aids) eventually led to an outdoor, masked, and safely distanced performance in a very windy hayfield along the estuary of Maine's Georges River (pictured below).



Along with several other of our brothers working in the medical field, Ciarán Anthony DellaFera was among the first to receive the new coronavirus vaccine in mid-December. In order to encourage participation, Ciarán posted a video of the event to his Facebook page. Physicians and nurses need to receive care if they are to give care.



Province 3

Holy Cross Day 2020 was the 51st Anniversary of the foundation of the Brotherhood, and with the memory of last summer's gala celebration of our Golden Jubilee still alive in our hearts, the brothers observed this feast day in their own areas. In July Edward Munro, the Minister Provincial, convened the members of his province to discuss what might constitute appropriate observation of this Gregorian holiday. Given the pandemic, a virtual gathering was all that was possible, and the day began with social orientation, followed by Morning Prayer at 10:00 AM. All of the members

of the province were in attendance via Zoom conferencing, plus Ed Gallop, a vocational inquirer from Virginia. James Teets officiated the morning office, assisted by readers. Then the participants engaged the topic of racism beginning with a video titled “Racial Trauma: A Dialogue on How We can Heal.” This video recorded a conversation between Bishop of Maryland Eugene Sutton and scholar Ford Rowan of Annapolis. The video provoked much discussion and reflection on race relations and reconciliation, and the participants shared personal stories of encounters and experiences.

Noonday Prayer punctuated the morning retreat session, officiated by Edward, and a break for lunch began at noon. The afternoon session consisted of a conversation on how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting our sense of vocation and living out the Brotherhood’s Rule, and touched on each member’s parochial activities and the restrictions generated by not being able to meet in person — either as a parish or a religious community. The conversation was animated, and everyone seemed pleased to be meeting together — even though at a great distance — and the retreat day closed with warm farewells among all.

Two special guests joined the brothers of the province when they Zoomed again in mid-December for an Advent day of reflection: aspirant Ed Gallop from Virginia and Bishop Visitor Rodney Michel. The gathering prayed the Offices together and spent some productive time reflecting on the constraints of Coronatide and the hopes and fears held and raised in response to it, in particular in light of the Advent theme of expectation.

1/19/2020

Select Office:  

NOONDAY PRAYER

O God, make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it
was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Alleluia.

A suitable hymn may be sung.

Psalm 119: Resh *Vide humilitatem*

153 Behold my affliction and deliver me,*
for I do not forget your law.

154 Plead my cause and redeem me;*
according to your promise, give me life.

155 Deliverance is far from the wicked,*
for they do not study your statutes.

156 Great is your compassion, O LORD;*
preserve my life, according to your judgments.

157 There are many who persecute and oppress me,*
yet I have not swerved from your decrees.

158 I look with loathing at the faithless,*
for they have not kept your word.

159 See how I love your commandments!*
O LORD, in your mercy, preserve me.

160 The heart of your word is truth;*
all your righteous judgments endure for evermore.

Shin *Principes persecuti sunt*



Province 4

On Saturday, September 12th, members from Province 4 gathered for its first virtual retreat. The event was well-attended, with thirteen participants. Although it was a bittersweet experience for some who have fond memories of past in-person provincial gatherings, it was a wonderful opportunity to

reconnect and catch up. We welcomed Orlando Veguilla and Lucas Crossland, who have begun the initial steps as inquirers into the community.

After a brief time for introductions, we settled in for Evening Prayer. Afterward, David John Battrick — our brother from Australia, a member of Province 2 and our guest retreat leader — offered a compelling reflection on “Being an Agent of Positive Change.” His presentation was very well received and a lively discussion followed. Despite the limitations of virtual meetings, our time together was a rousing success.

Province 5

On Holy Cross Day Province 5 brothers gathered together on Zoom from Chicago IL, Richmond IN and Sarasota FL for a provincial gathering. The Very Rev Patrick Raymond, Rector of Church of the Ascension in Chicago — where Minister Provincial Nathanael Deward Rahm is the parish’s office manager — presented reflections on personal and home altars. During the retreat the brothers also said Morning Prayer and Noonday Prayer together. And, as is typical of the gathered community in any format, the province members managed to chat amongst themselves beforehand, between times of reflection, and after the formal time together had ended. The brothers finished the day with Evening Prayer, also on Zoom.

Personal Altars

BSG Foundation Day Retreat + Holy Cross Day 2020

Gracious God, our creator and sustainer:

Open the eyes of our hearts to the beauty of the world you have created and given to us for our mortal sojourn.

Open the eyes of our hearts to the faith and witness of all who have been and are the lights of the world in their generations and in our own.

Open the eyes of our hearts to the blessings you have so richly bestowed upon us: our daily bread; friendship and fellowship; the wonder of seasons; moments of inspiration, tenderness and delight; the blessed Sacraments.

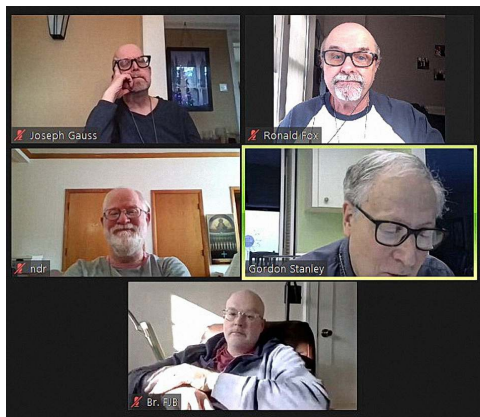
Open the eyes of our hearts that we may more knowingly abide in you, persevere in faith, glorify and serve you with the commitments and labors of our lives and evermore become living icons in and through whom others come to know, love and follow your Son our Savior Jesus Christ.

Open the eyes of our hearts. Amen.



☐ Province 5 brothers gathered again via Zoom on December 5th, for a provincial Advent retreat, facilitated by Gordon John Stanley. Even though he’s in Florida for the winter, he remains a faithful member of the Midwestern Province 5. Gordon John reflected on the collects for Sundays of Advent, in meditations interspersed with Advent music.

The day began with Morning Prayer, officiated by Ronald Augustine Fox with Francis Jonathan Bullock as reader. While it isn't the norm to have music for the brothers' Morning Prayer, "Comfort ye," sung by Ian Bostridge, was heard after the Collects. Prior to Gordon John's first meditation, the brothers listened to "Lo He Comes" from the CD *Music for Advent 2* by the Schola Cantorum of Saint Peter's in the Loop (a Roman Catholic Franciscan parish in Chicago). Nathanael Deward was the organist on the CD. Preceding the second meditation was "E'en so Lord Jesus, quickly come," by the National Lutheran Choir. Finally, brothers



Great Judge of All," again from the Schola. The brothers were inspired by Gordon John's fine work in his meditations on the three Collects. Before Noonday Prayer, the brothers heard the Schola perform "Rejoice in the Lord Alway." Joseph Basil Gauss officiated Noonday Prayer, at the beginning of which the hymn "Long is our winter," also from the CD, served to set the theme. Nathanael Deward was the reader for this office. The brothers made use of the Zoom facility to record the retreat and shared it with the entire community.

Province West

Six members of Province West and two inquirers into the life of the Brotherhood gathered virtually for a retreat on September 12th. In addition to fellowship and two daily offices, the gathering engaged in spiritual reflection with the facilitation of Prior Chad-Joseph Sundin OSBCn of the Community of Saint Mary of the Annunciation, a Benedictine community based at Saint Augustine's Parish, Tempe, in the Diocese of Arizona.



On October 17th Richard Edward Helmer served as secretary for the convention of the Diocese of California; it was also the diocese's first virtual convention, as is the case in so many other dioceses now. Despite

much planning, everything — from the Zoom interface to staffing of the Grace Cathedral tech crew (their lead, unfortunately, out due to a family illness) — threw one obstacle after another into the course of the nine-hour meeting. Somehow, everyone managed to pull in the same direction and accomplish the business of the day. Three hundred members of the convention attended remotely — with great patience.



Another Gregorian Friar from the other coast was also at work, unbeknownst to Richard Edward at the start: one of the Spanish translators serving the convention was none other than our own Angel Gabriel Roque of the Diocese of Southeast Florida; he bore with the technical issues along with the rest of the participants. One of Angel Gabriel's close colleagues in Florida — Adia Milien — is the newest staff member of the Diocese of California (working remotely, of course) in their communication office. She led the translators and came up with a technical solution to problems with the election process, as all of the Zoom polling features inexplicably imploded.

David Luke Henton continues to enjoy his field placement at Saint John's Episcopal Church in Alamogordo NM. With the dawn of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Daily Office ministry has grown and flourished. David Luke participates in Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer Monday through Friday on Zoom and Facebook; he officiates and preaches on Fridays and as assigned, and monthly on Sundays. The parish is working out ways to do pastoral care without physical contact, which offers both challenges and rewards, as David Luke finds the constraint actually forces him to be both more prayerful and more *present* via the technology. The parish's Community Kitchen continues to provide meals every Tuesday night to any and all in need, typically feeding 40-80 folks. In December, David Luke and Rector Michael Drinkwater alternate cooking duties to provide some respite to the teams of regular volunteers. David Luke's seminary work at the Diocesan Bishop's School for Ministry (part of the Iona Initiative of the Seminary of the Southwest, where he earned an MA in Spiritual Direction in 2009) goes well, and just about the time this issue arrives he will be taking the General Ordination Exam. (Note: one of David Luke's sermons follows immediately!)

A sermon from Saint John's Alamogordo NM

Of sheep and goats... and a King

*The LORD is a great God * And a great King above all gods.*

The closing portion of the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel holds one of the most difficult of Jesus' teachings. When I hear it, I do not think of the times that I have fed the hungry, offered drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, welcomed the stranger, or visited the sick and imprisoned. Rather I think of all the times I have *not* done these things, all the times I have looked the other way — the times I have turned away from Jesus panhandling on the street; Jesus abandoned and bereft; Jesus struggling with mental illness or addiction; Jesus hungry, destitute, homeless, and hopeless.

I am convicted by this difficult Gospel, and if I am honest, my first reading of it fills me with remorse, disappointment in myself, and even shame for the times I have neglected the clear imperative to minister to the least and the lost, who are particularly beloved of God, and who should be among the most beloved of my sisters and brothers. And, of course, in the process I can't help but imagine myself at the Last Judgement — one of the goats at Jesus' left hand.

Of the four Gospels, Matthew's is the most at pains to highlight the Jewish origin and identity of Jesus and his first followers, more than any other work of early Christian literature. Matthew quotes heavily from the Hebrew Scriptures in his portrayal of Jesus as God's anointed, the Messiah. And today is a good example: Jesus draws from Ezekiel, as well as from the later voices of Daniel and Enoch in his teaching of the Last Judgement.

Some scholars argue that "the nations" in this Gospel passage are neither Jews nor Jewish Christians, but pagan Gentiles; with "the goats" referring specifically to the Gentiles who have persecuted the Jewish Christian Church of Matthew's day, while "the sheep" represent the righteous Gentiles who have fed, visited and clothed the persecuted Jewish Christians. That being said, I'm not sure we can readily escape the call of today's teaching for our own lives and ministries.

However, there is a curious and powerful feature in this Gospel passage: Both the goats and the sheep are equally surprised at their fate. *Both groups* respond, "Lord, when did we see you hungry, thirsty, naked, a stranger, sick, or imprisoned?" Neither the goats nor the sheep have acted towards others in this life with the expectation that their works would lead them to a particular place for eternity. So what then led the sheep on the right hand, what moved them to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, and visit the sick and imprisoned? What was their motivation?

The sheep on the right hand were not "earning" their way into heaven; heaven was not their motivation. They were motivated by human compassion to engage in acts of mercy with the suffering and the oppressed. These acts were ends of goodness in and of themselves: They were not transactional; they

were not undertaken with any hope of personal gain. They are the response of experiencing God's compassion and mercy in one's own life. In the process of engaging with compassion in works of mercy, the sheep on the right hand also discovered or uncovered not just the work of God, but the realm of God. In the process of engaging with compassion in works of mercy, they discovered God himself! No wonder Jesus responds, "Truly, I tell you: Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Theologian Dirk Lange of the Lutheran World Federation notes that in this Gospel passage both the judgement and the salvation have to do with the *motivation* of compassion and mercy; rather than the works themselves. This passage is about living in the spirit of the beatitudes: incorporating them into our own lives. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy." As we begin to live the spirit of the beatitudes, the *spirit* of compassion and mercy will lead us naturally and inevitably to *acts* of compassion and mercy. The beatitudes will lead us to compassion and mercy specifically as we experience God's compassion and mercy for us. As we are loved by God, so we are called and drawn to love others. As we experience God's boundless compassion and mercy toward us, so we are called and drawn to be compassionate and merciful to others.

We have just recently re-experienced the Nativity of Our Savior, the gift of the infant babe Jesus who will become Christ the King. The green space after Epiphany will soon give way to Lent, with its call and opportunity for self-examination and amendment of life. One of the great gifts of the Christian journey is that we get to begin anew each day. One of the challenges of the Christian journey is that we are invited and called each day to be a new creation. One of the great gifts of the liturgical calendar, is that we get to begin anew in each new season, and especially so in Advent and in Lent. The challenges and opportunities of our daily Christian journey are mirrored in the liturgical calendar's invitation and call — again and again — to be a new creation.

In God's realm, no one is hungry, no one is thirsty, no one is naked, no one a stranger, no one sick or imprisoned. In God's realm the least and the lost are treasured, cherished, and lavished with love. This Lent, may we take to heart the message and call of the Gospel parable of sheep and goats, the Gospel spirit of the beatitudes, the Gospel mandate of Christ our King to serve the least and the lost of his and our sisters and brothers — with compassion and mercy. May we do so not with fear of judgement or thought of the life of the world to come, but with gratitude to God for God's compassion and mercy upon us in *this* life — today, now — may we live and work and serve in God's realm with compassion and mercy — today, this coming Lent, and all the days to come!

David Luke Henton