

The Servant



*We present our selves, our
souls and bodies, to be a
reasonable, holy, and living
sacrifice...*

Brothers lie prostrate in
preparation for their
professions of vows, at the
Roslyn Retreat Center in
Virginia

#273

Michaelmas 2024

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Founder, Richard Thomas Biernacki

Minister General, Ciarán Anthony DellaFera

Community Notes Editor, James Teets

Editor, Tobias Stanislas Haller

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305 West Lafayette Avenue
Baltimore MD 21217

Send inquiries, and requests to be added to our e-mailing list, to [servant \[at\] gregorians \[dot\] org](mailto:servant@regorians.org) or by snail mail to the address above.

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.



Brothers outside the chapel at Roslyn Retreat and Conference Center

A new day

“So I say to you, search and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened for you...”

My brothers, today we will open a door that has never been opened — a door beyond which we will greet the first elected Minister General in this wonderful creation of God, the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory. Our door has been open to the Holy Spirit since 1969, as we welcomed the Spirit's guiding, forming, and keeping us as the flexible friars. But today — this is the first time we give ourselves over into the Holy Spirit's hands to lead us to choosing new leadership.

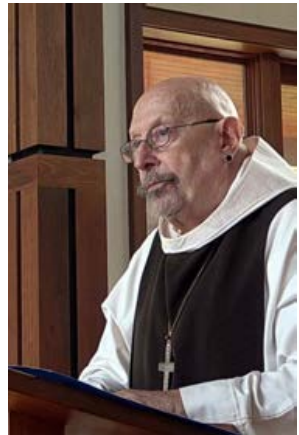
Psalm 139 opens: “O Lord, you have searched me and known me,” and further on: “Where can I go from your spirit?”

Today we will enter into Conclave. Much like our Roman brethren, we will trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit as we cast our votes in silence.

I am taken back to the Visitation Monastery and Sr Margaret Mary, later Sr Helen Joyce. It was time for the Visitation to elect a new Mother. She was a favorite and concerned at the possibility. So we sat, she and I, praying. As it happened, she was elected. There I was, in the shadow of the new Mother and the Holy Spirit. It was a short time after that we prayed again; and you and I in the Brotherhood are the result of *that* intercession.

That prayer, that intercession, I believe, is supported by 1 Corinthians 12:11, “All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.” The Holy Spirit prompts us to take action. We will rarely hear an audible voice when the Holy Spirit speaks to us. What we will sense is a strong leading to do something. Or we might feel strongly to go in a certain direction. The Holy Spirit wants to show us God's plans and purposes for our lives.

My brothers, the door is open. Let us trust in the Spirit to lead us today. As we embark on a journey into the unknown to this Community, repeat after me in prayer: Come, Holy Spirit; Holy Spirit, be present in my heart; Breathe into me, Holy Spirit; Holy Spirit, help me to be patient; Come, Holy Spirit; Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.



RTB

From the Minister General

A guide and servant

Who are you? What do you want? Where are you going? Whom do you serve, and whom do you trust?



Richard Thomas and Ciarán Anthony in 1988, after his first profession

On August 27, 2024, thirty-six years and one week after my first profession, I accepted my brothers' call as the first elected Minister General for our community. Between ballots, a brother asked me if I would accept election. My first response was, "It wouldn't be very *servus servorum dei* of me to say No." He smiled, and my second response was a quiet and gentle, "Yes." I have always thought of myself as a servant of God — not in any haughty or self-important way, nor in any self-effacing or falsely modest way, but in a quiet and gentle way. My parents were servants, my father a US Marine and my mother a Roman Catholic nun who left the convent when she felt God was calling her to the

ministry of motherhood. Throughout my formative years my parents made it clear that people's centers should be outside of themselves; that God created all of us to care for, shepherd, guide, parent, celebrate, teach, and uphold one another in Christian love and service. This truly is The Great Commandment, that we should love God and love one another as ourselves. This means putting the needs of others first, while also making sure to sustain and support yourself so that you have the stamina, as we counsel our postulants, "to run with courage the race that is before you." As a physician, I learned this lesson during residency; there is no way that I can safely care for patients if asleep on my feet.

The evening after my institution as Minister General, I was asked if I had a vision for my new responsibilities. My response, somewhat inelegantly said at the time (it had been a long day), was "to listen, to guide, and to serve my brothers in love." As I listened to my brothers that night and subsequently prayed over what they shared then and since, I have felt those initial thoughts blossom and take on shape. The first and foremost theme that emerged is, as one of our brothers said, to engage in a process to truly know ourselves and our community. Fifty-five years ago, the Spirit led Brother Richard Thomas and a few intrepid men to challenge the conventional and push the boundaries of how the church understood the vowed religious life. Over the years since, we have rejoiced in the fact that everyone who comes to us changes us; each one a gift and blessing whether they chose to stay or to journey onward. We must continue to push the boundaries of the conventional, but to do this we must journey together into a common exploration of social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion, so that we can be free to be Christ for the world, so that our community may continue to grow and thrive for fifty-five more years and beyond. As

someone who considers himself an early Gen-X-er, I am keenly aware that the generations after me are increasingly leery of any groups that foster exclusivity (e.g., only white, only American, only cisgender, only straight, etc.). Of course, our community does not embrace any of those exclusivities, but as humans we unintentionally absorb the tendencies of society around us to create convenient and comfortable boxes of exclusion. That is not to say that we are growing wild without a “trellis,” not at all; we follow the guides set forth by our vow of obedience to “Christ, to the discipline of the Episcopal Church, to the Rule of the Brotherhood, and to the ... pastoral officials appointed over [us] in this life.” We still must “do the work” to understand what boundaries are necessary and which are not. We want to draw a circle to bring others in, not to keep them out. We are called to serve, and those we serve must see themselves in us. This is not about my personal desires, but rather about the needs and desires of our entire community and the wider church. This journey may not result in any substantive changes to who we are as a community, but like those on the road to Emmaus, it is likely that it is we who will be changed. As we journey together, we will explore the Gospel, learn from each other, and, God willing, more deeply encounter Christ in one another on the road. As we are reminded every time we gather, “a time [has] come for new wine skins for new wine.” We must be “true to the vocation to which [we] are called, and continue to proclaim the Gospel, in both word and deed.”

As the Spirit would have it, on the 55th anniversary of our founding I was blessed to join my brothers in Province 5 at a retreat with Fr Brian Hastings, who reimaged that Gospel for us as the “five finger Gospel.” He offered that the Gospel calls us to recognize that (1) we as humans have been given a magnificent gift by God, (2) this gift comes with significant cost, (3) we must embrace that gift with all our heart, (4) we then must give all of it away to the world around us, and only then (5) would we receive it all back in love through Grace. This is the essence of servanthood, the recognition that this is why we have been put upon this earth.

Who am I? A servant of the servants of God. *What do I want?* To serve my brothers and the world in love, and to encounter Christ more deeply through the Gospel. *Where am I going?* Wherever I am needed. *Whom do I serve, and whom do I trust?* I serve my brothers and those who look to me for aid. I firmly believe that trust is bestowed and not earned. I freely offer you my trust, for “God’s Word is my trust, and my food is the bread of heaven.” This is the essence of servanthood, this is the foundation of our community, this is why we call ourselves *Servis Servorum Dei* — Servants of the Servants of God, and this is why we take upon ourselves the motto of our patron Gregory the Great: *Soli Deo Gloria* — To God Alone the Glory.

CAD



Here and there with the Brotherhood

Community Notes

Annual Convocation 2024



The Brotherhood met for Annual Convocation on the last week of August at the Roslyn Conference and Retreat in Richmond. This was our first visit there, so everyone was both interested and apprehensive, and Roslyn proved to be a fine facility for us. The chapel, the housing, the conference facilities, and the food were all topnotch, and the staff there was professional and anxious to assist.

The Bishop's Chapel (left) — named in honor of Bishop Peter Lee — proved to be flexible: The loose chairs allowed us to create our traditional choir, which always includes a named seat for each member of the community and our Bishop Visitor, whether able to attend or not. The entire (liturgically) eastern wall is all glass, looking out onto God's woodland creation. It provided us with

sufficient space for everything we wanted to do, with the one regret that the musical instrument is a grand piano instead of an organ.

Advance arrangements were made by our Administrator and Sacristan, Eric Shelley (Southwestern Virginia), who developed a fine working relationship with the staff. He made an early site visit, and was able to organize all of the details of our visit before we arrived. Director of Convocation Music and Liturgy Nathanael Deward Rahm (Chicago) oversaw the music for the Daily Offices and Eucharist, and organized the schedule and the rota of daily musicians: Richard John Lorino (Central Florida), William Henry Benefield (West Texas), Enoch John Valentine (Rhode Island), Tommy Mandri (Southeast Florida), and himself.



The Brotherhood gathers at the Roslyn Retreat Center. Seen here are most of the brothers, not including two in seminary and a few dealing with health concerns. The brothers are arranged by province: (left to right) Province West, Province 5 (Midwest), Province 3 (Mid-Atlantic) surrounding the Founder (seated), Province 4 (Southeast), and Province 1 (New England) including the newly elected Minister General Ciarán Anthony.



Tobias Stanislas lays on incense with Ronald Augustine, at the first Eucharist of the Convocation.

This gathering was known by all in advance to be unique, since our Founder, Richard Thomas Biernacki (New Jersey), had announced his retirement as Minister General — a position he held throughout the fifty-five years of the Brotherhood, though that office has been known by different titles, including Superior, Superior General, and then Minister General. That retirement being noted, the one title which will forever be held by Richard Thomas is that of *Founder*. So for the first time in its history, Chapter would gather to elect a new Minister General, and this alone was a source of great emotion and object of focused prayer.

Each Annual Convocation begins with The Gathering Service, which recalls our many ministries throughout the church since our last time together, and calls upon each of us to reflect upon our Religious Vows and our Rule, within the context of our Baptism. It is a rite of memory, as the Minister General invites each one of us to “Remember that you are incorporate in the Body of Christ, and that you are sealed as Christ’s own for ever!” It is a moving way to begin our time together. For Richard Thomas, as this would be the final occasion at which he would gather his community as officiant in this moving liturgy.

Each day of our convocation is bounded by prayer and celebration — the Daily Office and the Holy Eucharist. Throughout the week together each member will serve in a ministry as Officiant or Reader or in a role in the Eucharist, each according to his order and talent. Celebrants this Convocation were Tobias Stanislas Haller (Maryland), Ælred Bernard Dean (Indianapolis), Mark Andrew Jones (Southeast Florida), David Luke Henton (Rio Grande) and David Benedict Hedges (Arizona); Deacons serving were Edward Munro (Maryland), Virgilio Fortuna (Massachusetts) and Gordon John Stanley (Chicago); assisted by Acolytes James Teets (Maryland), Joseph Basil Gauss (Chicago), Francis Jonathan Bullock (Indianapolis) and Eric; the Thurifer daily was Ronald Augustine Fox (Chicago). Excellent preaching was offered, and the texts of sermons appear elsewhere in this issue.



David Luke celebrates at the final Eucharist of Convocation, assisted by Edward.

On our first full day together — Tuesday, August 26th — following Morning Prayer, the Convocation work began with the Chapter Meeting. This Chapter had a specific focus around the election of a new Minister General. In addition

to providing some minor amendments to provide for the transition to a new person in the role, Chapter also adopted a special order of business for the election itself, set for that afternoon directly following the Holy Eucharist — a votive of the Holy Spirit. In preparation for the liturgy and election, the community gathered after lunch for a program set up by William Henry, Director of Education, and the Education Committee. This was a session based on the *Listening Hearts* model designed by Suzanne Farnham and others, allowing for discernment in small groups, reflecting on an excerpt from Saint Gregory the Great’s *Book of Pastoral Care*. Chapter reconvened in the chapel immediately following the liturgy for the sole purpose of the election. Secretary Joseph Basil conducted the election process, and novice Clayton DewAndre Johnson (Pennsylvania) and postulant-prospective Shawn Harold Anderson (California) served as tellers. All professed brothers were entitled to vote, including those unable to be physically present due to illness or seminary commitments — their votes were received by telephone by each of their Ministers Provincial. On the fifth ballot, Ciarán Anthony DellaFera (Massachusetts) was elected by the requisite three-quarters majority.

That evening, Christopher Robert Werth (Maryland) renewed his annual vows, in an individual meeting with the Minister General and his Minister Provincial — while other members enjoyed some catching-up time. All regathered in the chapel for Compline as at every evening we’re together.

The following day — Wednesday, August 27th — included meetings of the six provinces of the Brotherhood. The members of Province 2, realizing that the physical limitations of three of their five members rendered it impossible to gather for retreat or in-person meeting, chose to petition Council to dissolve, and to assign the members to other provinces where they might be more easily able to participate. Pending Council’s approval (which came at its meeting on Thursday), Richard Thomas and Thomas Bushnell (New York) would join Province 3 (Mid-Atlantic), and John Henry Ernestine (New Jersey), Richard Matthias (Ottawa, Canada), and Maurice John Grove (Central Philippines) would be part of Province 1 (New England). In other provincial actions,

Province 3 elected Eric, Province 5 (Midwest) re-elected Nathanael Deward as Ministers Provincial.



Council met on Thursday morning, August 29th, and after approving the actions of the provinces, voted to accept Shawn Harold Anderson as a candidate for postulancy, his admission to which took place later that day at Evening Prayer. He is seen at the left with David Benedict Hedges.

But first came the Rites of Life and First Profession of Vows at the Holy Eucharist that day. This year, two men were nominated for life profession, and



Tommy receives the ring that symbolizes his life vows.

one novice to make his first vows. All nominations were ratified by the required bodies giving consent. Those brothers were Richard Edward and Tommy for life profession, and Clayton DewAndre for first profession. At the Litany during the Eucharist, the candidates came forward and

lay prostrate before the altar. The two making life profession, as a symbol of the permanence of the vows they were about to make, were covered with a funeral pall, symbolizing their death to their previous lives. Master of Ceremony James and

Sacristan Eric presided over this ritual, assisted by James Patrick Hall (East Tennessee), Larry Walter Reich (East Tennessee) and David Benedict as pallbearers — three brothers who have most recently made their life professions.

When Deacon Gordon John concluded the Litany, the Celebrant added the final collect, the pall was lifted and the three candidates rose to make their individual



...and following the liturgy

vows before Richard Thomas.

Richard Thomas later officiated at that day's Evening Prayer, at which Shawn Harold was admitted to the postulancy, and William Henry was formally commissioned as Director of Education (he had been unable to attend the Convocation directly following his appointment); Mark Andrew Jones (Southeast Florida) as Director of Postulants and Novices; and Eric Shelley as Minister Provincial of Province 3. Heartfelt thanks was expressed



Clayton DewAndre preparing to make his first vows...



Richard Edward and Tommy



Eric, Mark Andrew, and William Henry, at their Commissioning

for the faithful service rendered by those stepping down from these positions: Tobias Stanislas, Edward, Thomas, and John Henry.



James invests Ciarán Anthony with his cross, now borne on the gold chain symbolizing his office.

Friday, August 30th, featured the a liturgy new to the life of the Brotherhood since it's founding 55 years ago: The Institution of a Minister General. While the text of the Rite prescribes that it “be accomplished by the Bishop Visitor of the community,” Bishop Visitor Rodney Michel was unable to attend this convocation and serve in this capacity due to health restrictions, and gave his blessing to have the

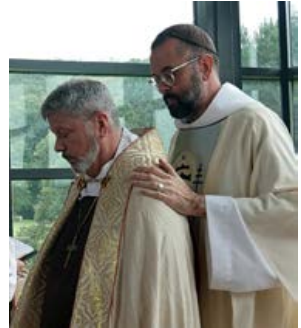
Founder take on the Bishop Visitor's role. With the guidance of James as Master of Ceremonies and the close cooperation of the entire community, Ciarán Anthony DellaFera was instituted as Minister General.

Another joyous presentation took place later that day at Evening Prayer, the first at which Ciarán



Ciarán Anthony offers the prayer of self-dedication, assisted by James, as Richard Thomas looks on.

Anthony served as Officiant in his new capacity. Bishop Rodney had recognized the deep symbolism in the Rite of Investiture when Richard Thomas presented the new Minister General with his own crozier — the staff which he had carried for decades, ever since Bishop Paul Moore Jr had served as Visitor — and Bishop Rodney did not want the symbolism to pass without adding his own presence to the moment. So he had arranged for James to present the Bishop's own personal staff to Richard Thomas, together with a special citation he had written for the occasion. And so James read the citation and handed the ornamental staff to our Brother Founder, as a symbol of an office unique to him.



David Benedict invests Ciarán Anthony with the Gregorian cope (bearing Gregory the Great's coat of arms on the hood).

Annual Convocation began with The Gathering Service, as Richard Thomas welcomed and anointed each member with a reminder of Baptism. Similarly, Convocation concluded with The Mission Service as the new Minister General laid his hands upon each

member in blessing: “May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you, that in all things you may serve and glorify God.”

Thanks be to God, to whom alone be glory!

Province 3 (Mid-Atlantic)

Thomas Bushnell (right) sang the Intercessions at the Solemn High Mass at the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin in Manhattan, on Sunday, August 18. (Photo by Marie Rosseels.)



For the second year in a row, Saint Luke’s Germantown Philadelphia, sponsored a Gun Buyback Program, and Clayton DewAndre Johnson was a leader in that effort. The event removed 78 handguns, 40 assorted rifles (below), as well as ammunition, from the streets of Philadelphia. The previous year reaped 118 guns and what looked like a grenade launcher; no launcher appeared this year.



At the Gun Buyback (top l then clockwise): Baptist pastor James Lovett, Rector David Morris, Clayton DewAndre, and Donna Drake.

On Sunday September 7th, Jason Peter Seta and fellow seminarians from VTS attended worship at Christ Church Rockville Maryland, as part of the seminary’s requirement that first-



year students visit a new parish each Sunday, in preparation for field placement in 2025. Jason Peter was aware of the historical connection between the Brotherhood and Christ Church, as that was the home parish of John Nidecker BSG, who served there for many years and whose funeral was held there in June of

1988. At John’s urging, the Brotherhood held its second convocation there, in June 1978. The current rector, the Rev Tim Carr, was delighted with this visitation and he invited Jason Peter to serve as Eucharistic Minister for that service. The photo above shows seminarian (l to r) Sam Armstrong, Jason Peter, and Adam Steele, with Tim Carr.]



Another after-Convocation visit took place at Saint Paul's K Street Washington. Jason Peter was there continuing his parish placement exploration. After the liturgy and lunch, brothers visited VTS (l to r) Ronald Augustine, Jason Peter, Nathanael Deward and Eric).

Province 5 (Midwest)



Minister General Ciarán Anthony DellaFera visited the Province on its Foundation Day weekend in Chicago. The brothers had some social time on Friday, September 13th, and on Saturday the 14th had a province gathering and attended the liturgy at Church of the Atonement. The brothers engaged with facilitator the Rev Brian Hastings, retired rector of Chicago's Church of our Saviour, for a discussion of religious life, the soulfulness in each one of us, and the hidden mystics among us. On Sunday, Ciarán Anthony and Joseph Basil Gauss sang with the Atonement summer choir, and Ronald Augustine Fox was MC. Shown above are (from left), Francis Jonathan Bullock (Indianapolis), the Rev Brian Hastings, Joseph Basil (Chicago), Ronald Augustine (Chicago), Ciarán Anthony (Massachusetts) and Nathanael Deward (Chicago), Minister Provincial of Province 5.



After Convocation, Joseph Basil and David Benedict stopped by Saint Peter's Lewes Delaware, and among other things saw an icon of Blessed Absalom Jones commissioned from Tobias Stanislas some years back.

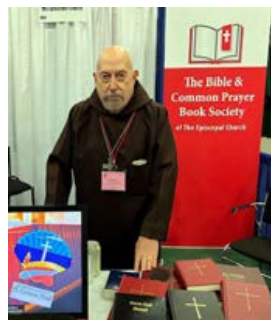
Province West

Angel Gabriel Roque received word from Rio Grande Bishop Michael Hunn that he has been admitted to postulancy for the priesthood!

From General Convention



(L to r) Scott Michael, David Benedict, Richard Thomas, Richard Edward, and Angel Gabriel



Richard Thomas in the exhibit hall



Angel Gabriel with the Youth Presence (and one slightly older prelate...)

Several of our brothers served as Deputies or Alternates at this year's meeting of the General Convention, and others were present in other capacities: Angel Gabriel working with the Youth Presence, and Richard Thomas serving in the exhibit hall booth for the Bible and Common Prayer Book Society. Richard Thomas also took the opportunity to grab selfies with numerous members of other religious communities present at the event. (See page 14 for photos).



Two brothers contributed visibly to the debates on the floor of the House of Deputies: Richard Edward Helmer (California, left) and David Benedict Hedges (Arizona) at the microphones.

More from General Convention:



Keeping tabs on Presiding Bishops former and pending: Richard Edward and David Benedict with Bishop Curry (l) and David Benedict with Bishop Rowe.

Richard Thomas' selfies with members of the various religious communities:



Ellen Francis OSH



Faith Margaret and Claire Joy CHS



Hilary, OJN



Promise SSM

For the Commemoration of Augustine of Hippo Transformed for Use

At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven."



It is no news to any of us gathered here that we are living in a time of considerable “shaking” — not just for our secular world, but also for our community. We are in a time of transition, of restructuring, of change. I will not say the old has passed away, or that everything has become new, but there has been change, and more will come.

Episcopalians are rather notorious for their resistance to change — some of them, anyway. Why, there’s now even a virtual “Society for the Preservation of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer,” memorialized by General Convention; to say nothing of the number of Episcopalians needed to change the light-bulb that was a memorial to the donor’s grandmother.

But we, as a community, this Brotherhood — we have a tradition of transformation — ironic, isn’t it: a *tradition of change* to meet new circumstances — rightly earning Paul Moore’s sobriquet as “Flexible Friars.”

So it is good to be reminded of the teaching in the Letter to Hebrews: that the purpose of the shaking is to allow what cannot be shaken to remain. Under the guiding of the Spirit, change is not chaotic or aimless; the entity changing has a firm footing on something rock-solid that does *not* change, something in which it is rooted like a tree, a tree that grows and changes, but is constantly supported and nourished by a source of stability at its base.

Let me remind us of the call to religious communities that Pope Paul VI made in the sixties, and the triple foundation upon which he advised all change to be firmly planted: the founding charism of the community, the signs of the times, and the gospel. Note that only the signs of the times are variable — and the changing signs are in dialogue with the stable charism and the eternal gospel. Novelty arises out of that dialogue, that tension.

There is a wonderful image of this process in our reading from Wisdom. The author tells of wonders of transformation, in which things depart from their essential *natures* to *change* their qualities — all in service to God’s *constant* will. Among these is the bread from heaven, the manna that becomes, for each one who eats it, entirely suited to their taste. The manna “is what it is” yet it is

experienced by each who eats it to have a different taste. This bread “ministers” to the desire of each, each “serving” of bread literally *serv*ing them.

Of course, Christians have long seen the manna as an anticipation of the Holy Eucharist. Some got entirely carried away with this passage from Wisdom, as in the Arthurian legends of the Holy Grail, where the Eucharistic Bread — the only thing the knights of the Grail consume — changes into roast beef or pheasant to suit the taste of each. This takes Wisdom too far: for the Eucharistic Bread does not change, (at least not into roast beef) but each knight *perceives* it differently.

So too, God is constant, but our understanding and our service vary, and each of us is given gifts that *differ* by the one *unchanging* Spirit of God. This is a key aspect of our founding charism: although the Brotherhood began as specifically musical it was clear within the earliest days that our charism wasn’t music, but *service*. That charism of service has remained constant as a still point around which our community has grown and developed: we *serve* in many ways, as our gifts suit the ministry of each; like the bread ministering to the taste of each one served. And if you accept it, we serve as bread for the world, made one here as we gather, then broken up and distributed back to each place and people we serve.

Which brings me to the second foundation for renewal: the gospel. Jesus uses the language of travel when he declares himself to be the *Way* to the Father. Every voyager will experience their journey along the Way differently, but the Way is always constantly *what it is*. It is no accident that the early Christian church called itself The Way. This has strong resonance for us as we live by a Rule of life, a “way of life” that is set and uniform for *all*, but which *each* of us experiences differently.

The Gospel is the same — it is a set text, yet each hearer of that lively word will gain some personal insight or inspiration from it. It is also a guide for our community life: the Gospel will tell us when we are heading off track into unproductive byways. Every development in our lives as brothers and as a community is tested against this touchstone of discernment.



Finally, I return to the signs of the times, and here I will mention Saint Augustine. (You were probably wondering what had become of him.) Well, Augustine lived in a time of tremendous change and upheaval. The church was being assailed by partisans of the theological left and right within, as well as by attacks from the pagan world without. And Augustine had a vision of two cities: the human city, and the heavenly. The human city is completely *occupied* with the “signs of the times” but

without any reference to a stable base of founding vision or gospel. It is focused on the self and its needs; a dog-eat-dog world that lacks any higher calling or goal, or any foundation. It is doomed, when the great shaking comes, to collapse like the Tower of Babel.

The City of God, on the other hand, is guided by its Founder and his Gospel; it is firmly set on the Way of Jesus, the Way that *is* Jesus. When shaken — as it will be shaken by the assaults from the other city — it will remain steady and endure, for it has both a *foundation* and a *calling*.



Our Brotherhood is meant to be like that, and I am happy to say that, in my forty-four years as part of it, it *has* been like that. It has been shaken from time to time, but because it has a firm foundation in embracing its charism in service to the church, and a calling through the Gospel in the Way of Jesus, it has endured. It has changed — believe you me, it has changed *a lot!* — while remaining constant in that which is unchanging. So we need not fear any present or future shaking. It will only make us stronger. Faithful to our Rule, alert to the world’s needs, guided by the Gospel, fed with bread from heaven for the journey, “safe and secure from all alarms,” by God’s will our Brotherhood will continue many years in this grace-filled Way.

TSH

For the professions of our brothers

Some bodies

I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. — Romans 12:1

We hear it frequently, right? It’s an offertory sentence from the Book of Common Prayer. But Paul says *bodies* and the Prayer Book says *selves*. Why is that; I mean, is that from anywhere? I looked in my Bible and it said *bodies*; I looked in a different translation and it said *bodies*; I looked at the King James: *bodies*; I looked at the Greek: *bodies* — but in Greek. Why? Why would the Prayer Book editors or revisers tone it down in this way? I asked a colleague of mine, and he sighed, “The Enlightenment, probably.”

The Enlightenment brought us all sorts of 19th-century ferment, religiously and spiritually — mostly spiritual



but not particularly religious — movements like Spiritualism, Swedenborgianism, and so on. And it is out of the Spiritualism movement that we get this old saw, which you hear people say sometimes, and which I've even heard Episcopal priests say from their pulpits: "You don't have a soul; you *are* a soul. You *have* a body." That is decidedly not Christian thought. That is a kind of mild Gnosticism creeping back in. For Christians, you are a body and you are a soul — both. You are both. A body without a soul is a zombie (which is gross) and a soul without a body is a ghost (which is scary). You are neither.

Even if Paul says, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind," he is beseeching, begging the Romans, to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is their spiritual worship. The spiritual and physical are — for the Christian — utterly connected. Our faith is not a spiritual concept or abstraction; our faith is the love of the soul carried out by the action of the body. What did Gregory himself say? "Love is in the action; where love ceases to act, it ceases to exist." The actions are performed by the body.

Richard Edward, Tommy, Clayton: as you make your professions today, your soul — that interior part of you which discerns right and wrong, and which makes decisions — your soul has made this decision: this decision for poverty; this decision for chastity; this decision for obedience — and obedience is the punch-line, because the poverty and the chastity are all in the obedience. Your soul has made this decision; your mouth is about to declare that decision; your body will make it true — your body will make it real.



Your body will sing God's praises; your body will administer the sacraments; your body will receive weapons from those who have laid them down; your body will lead people in the worship of

God. Your bodies will feed hungry people and minister to their suffering. Your bodies will weep for your own sins and for those of the people. Your bodies will compose and deliver sermons and exhortations. And so your body will be clothed with this scapular — this work apron — for the work your body will do. Your body will wear a ring on the finger as a sign of your soul's dedication. Your body will be laid out upon the floor, as a sign of total and complete self-giving. Your bodies will here today be presented, and they will continue to be presented for the rest of your time in vows, for the rest of your natural lives. Your bodies will be presented as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.



David Benedict Hedges

This is Not the Sermon

Jesus came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

Those of you who have been part of the Brotherhood long enough will remember the visit we had from the Dzieci theater troupe eleven summers ago. Following a difficult season in our community life, a company of actors joined our prayer and fellowship for the week to help turn our annual convocation inside out, breaking us open for healing grace with their workshops, including song, dance, role-play, and Dzieci's centerpiece production: the Fools Mass.

The Fools Mass is a play about a 14th-century village parish where the pastor has suddenly and poetically died in the sacristy — and yet the mass must go on. And so it does, produced by a devoted congregation made up of quintessential village idiots — caricatures of almost every



personality and character you might encounter in your congregations, in your workplaces, or, yes, even here in the Brotherhood.



As I was preparing for today, a recurring line from the Fools Mass — one perhaps paraphrased by the frailties of memory — kept coming to mind. It is connected to the scene where the gospel has somehow been miraculously read, and now the community

is engaged in hijinks to generate a homily. What I remember is one of the characters repeatedly turning to the beleaguered congregation after each effort, and saying with a crescendo of exasperation: "This is *not* the sermon!"

It is tempting to open my sermon today by noting that our Minister General elect joined the Brotherhood in the late 1980s — at the time the youngest ever to join this strange, rapidly evolving band of brothers. It is tempting to reflect on Jeremiah's calling we just heard: "O Lord, I am only a boy..." Tempting to opine on how we can all feel like children when we are elected, appointed, or

otherwise thrust into new leadership. All the more so since Ciarán Anthony is the first — the first of what we hope will be many — to fill those impossible-to-fill shoes left by our beloved Founder. But — this is not the sermon!

It is also tempting to speak to the value for many gifts in Christian community we hear in the Letter to the Ephesians, as our liturgy and presentation will focus in a few short minutes on Ciarán Anthony's investiture, and the spiritual gifts he both brings and is called to nurture as our next shepherd. But — This is not the sermon!

Or we could go down the road of opining on servant leadership in light of Jesus' teachings in the gospel we just heard — the subject of countless books, courses, articles, workshops, and more homilies than we might care to count in God's green earth. This is not the sermon, either!



The Founder and Minister General



Richard Edward after making his life profession of vows

The truth about calling new leadership for a long-esteemed position in our beloved community, the truth about our jostling over procedure and praying and discerning around multiple ballots in conclave, the truth about calling someone with the enormous and illustrious gifts our beloved brother brings to this calling — along with the undoubtedly sleepless nights, stressful conversations, and beautiful gatherings of the community that will come bidden and unbidden — all that he is expected now to navigate and help oversee: The truth is that the calling of a new Minister General is just as much about us as it is about Ciarán.

And so the sermon is about how we will be a part of this historic transition in our community that began even before the cope is wrapped about his shoulders, the gold chain about his neck, and the shepherd's staff is passed; even before we remind him to guide, empower, heal, and proclaim. The sermon is about how we support this new leader called forth in our midst by the Spirit, and how each of us and all of us together will be prepared to engage Ciarán anew in our community.

We inhabit a society and, by extension, a church, that can treat leadership quite badly. We love our celebrity leaders — until we don't. We expect our

celebrities to lead us too often only so that we can blame, criticize, and gossip about them, even if things are going well; and especially if things are going badly. And we enjoy undermining and cutting our leaders down after a time — a deeply human pattern that some trace back to the primitive instinct to scapegoat and kill our kings after we have raised them up. I could argue that the wider democracy in which all of our ministries unfold is predicated on this revolutionary pattern, and so we constitutionally enact this ancient cycle of raising up and cutting down in our customary electoral fervor every four to eight years. But that's not really the sermon, either.

So try this on: At the center of our faith tradition is a king — a leader — who is raised up — and crucified! Now we are getting closer to the sermon.

Our greatest leaders — both outside and inside the Church — and, of course, Jesus himself — know this about us, and so they must learn to accept the shade, the attacks, and even their ultimate demise along with the perks and the privileges of authority in this life. They must engage the struggle of finding their greater calling and even wisdom in the face of, and indeed despite, all the very human reactivity to their elevation.



One of many high points in Dzeici's "Fools Mass"

And it is the greatest among them who hear and take to heart that critically important verse in the mystical gospel when Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world." And so over and against a world of power, ego, and privilege, they, like Jesus, figuratively wrap themselves in a towel and wash the feet of their friends, their siblings, their beloved — and particularly those they have been called to serve.

So this is the sermon: How will we respond when Ciarán — perhaps invoking the memory of our beloved departed brother Ron Fender — approaches to wash our feet to heal and empower us? How will we relate to one another and our calling in the Spirit when he holds us to account to our vows, to the love that is demanded of each of us, to the perseverance and humility that our Rule requires? How will we hold Ciarán to account when he stumbles and seeks the forgiveness and shared wisdom of the community he has been called to serve? And will we be prepared to summon our better angels when he seeks them out in us? And will we be prepared to call forth his better angels when he needs that from us as well? And will we together seek our best when we hear the Spirit calling it forth for the future and well-being of this body?

For all the wonderful ideas and innovations Ciarán might bring and we might expect in this coming term, I wonder if we all might do well to be reminded

that our next Minister General will not save us. Jesus has already done that! I wonder if we all might do well to be reminded that the office will shape our new Minister General in ways he can't expect, even more than he will shape it — shape him in order to afford him, buoyed by Council and the pastoral ministry of our ministers provincial, opportunity to prayerfully help us shape our life and witness together. I wonder if we might do well to remind one another regularly to listen as attentively to the prophetic voice of our young new shepherd — in the grand scheme of things still only a boy after all! — just as much as we should expect him to listen to our cares and concerns.

This is the sermon, after all: When Peter first resists the upside-down world that his Lord and Savior presents as he approaches to wash Peter's feet, Jesus must confront the rawness of human ego in this sharp-edged, impetuous newly-minted leader he named "Rocky" — this raw human ego each of us shares — and demand that Peter and each of us lay it down again and again for the good of the whole; lay it down for the good of this new world that Christ offers Peter and offers to us today with Ciarán Anthony, gathered here, ready to launch a new chapter together in our life and ministry; a new world that is being offered through us to all whom we serve: servants — as we are called — of the servants of God.

Richard Edward Helmer

On the Commemoration of Aidan of Lindisfarne **Follow this example**



One of the wonderful things about our Anglican tradition is that it encourages us to remember faithful women and men of God who have gone before us and learn from the example of their lives. The church remembers Saint Aidan on August 31st, the anniversary of his death in 651.

Aidan was a missionary whose life was completely devoted to telling the Anglo-Saxon people in the north of England about the good news of God. As I have been contemplating and considering the life of Aidan I think there are some things we can learn from his way of mission and devotion to telling others of God's good news.

He was passionate and totally focused on telling others the good news of God, devoted to telling of God's salvation through his son Jesus Christ. He was called "little flame" — and this hints at his being on fire for God and his total fixation on proclaiming and telling others of the love

of God. At the same time, Aidan was known to be gentle and kind in his approach to proclaiming the message. More significantly he was known to be authentic in his relationships and friendships with others. He genuinely wanted to be involved with the people with whom he interacted. He was willing to spend time with people and get to know them well.

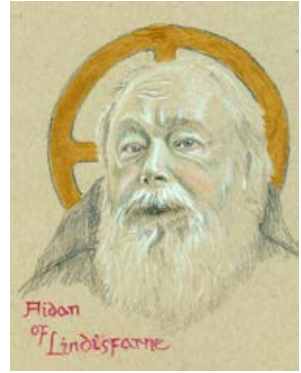
This is perhaps best shown through his reputation for walking everywhere to be amongst the people. Walking gave him time to be with people and build relationships. It was out of this platform of genuine and authentic relationships that he earned the respect and trust of people, so that he was then able to tell them the good news of God.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians Paul writes, “I have become all things to all people, that I by all means might save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel” (9:23-24). This willingness to become all things to all people was also true of Aidan and his approach to telling people about the love of God. He would relate with ease to both the poor and the rich, the angry and the joyful, the weak and the strong, the slave and the landowner, the King and the pauper.

Whether English or Scottish, Irish or Welsh, pagan or priest — he could relate to them all and proclaim God's good news to all. For Ciarán Anthony, our new Minister General, perhaps this is a lesson and a challenge for you and for all our brothers as well: to be willing to be involved in people's lives, and be all things to all people, genuinely getting to know them and trust that in doing so we are also taking the presence of Christ to them.

A second lesson from Aidan's life was his willingness to tend to and love people in practical ways. He was generous with his wealth and gave it all away to tend to the poor, the lost and the lonely and the sick. He was also willing to speak out when he saw injustice. He spoke out against slavery and did all he could to buy people out of slavery and give them their freedom. He saw the needs of people and met them as he was able. In the words of Bede, whose historical account of Aidan's life has been the primary source of information on his life, “He used his priestly ministry to check the proud and powerful; he tenderly comforted the sick; he relieved and protected the poor.”

A third lesson from Aidan's life was that he placed a high priority on teaching others about God and encouraging people to grow in their faith. He was also one of the first to teach reading and writing to all people and not just the rich and wealthy. The monastery he founded on the island of Lindisfarne was very much a center for learning, where people joined the monks and studied the



*Aidan modeled by our own
Donovan Aidan*

Scriptures and psalms and encouraged each other in their walk with God. Wherever and whenever Aidan went people would know that inevitably he would engage them in some study and pondering on Scriptures and psalms. Bede wrote about Aidan's approach to discipling others,

This [the reading of Scriptures and psalms, and meditation upon holy truths] was the daily employment of himself and all that were with him, wheresoever they went; and if it happened, which was but seldom, that he was invited to eat with the king, he went with one or two clerks, and having taken a small repast, made haste to be gone with them, either to read or write.

A fourth and final lesson from Aidan's life was that he was a man of prayer. He valued solitude and time alone with God. His life was characterized by a rhythm of regular daily prayer and study. It was also characterized by a regular rhythm of retreating to the monastery on Lindisfarne to find solitude in prayer and contemplation and simply to be alone with God. Out of these times of retreat Aidan would then go forth on foot to be among the people and preach and proclaim the gospel to all who would listen. Aidan knew that to be able to take the presence of God to others he first needed to spend time alone in the company of God. This rhythm of prayer and retreat followed by preaching and proclaiming the gospel is best encapsulated in a beautiful prayer attributed to him:

Leave me alone with God as much as may be.
As the tide draws the waters close in upon the shore,
make me an island, set apart,
alone with you, God, holy to you.
Then with the turning of the tide
prepare me to carry your presence to the busy world beyond,
the world that rushes in on me
till the waters close again and fold me back to you.

Saint Aidan is considered by many to be the first missionary to bring the gospel to the English. His way of mission and his devotion to telling others of the good news of God was considered by many to be responsible for the spread of the gospel of Christ amongst the English. As we look to our own friendships and relationships in our community in 2024 there is much that we can learn from the life of Aidan about how we too can take God's gospel and God's presence to the busy world around us.

Ronald Augustine Fox

