

The Servant



Boston Pride 2025

#276

Summer 2025

The Servant is Copyright © 2025 The Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, an Episcopal religious community. Published quarterly. Address all inquiries concerning this publication to the Editor.

Founder, Richard Thomas Biernacki

Minister General, Ciarán Anthony DellaFera

Community Notes Editor, James Teets

Editor, Tobias Stanislas Haller

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

On Separation

By now, many of you are aware that I have retired as Minister General — after fifty-five years in that position. Retirement does not mean I am not busy. These days I find I am always on the run, mostly to doctors and more doctors. My cancer has returned; on top of that I recently fell, and am being treated for a compression fracture at T11.

In addition, separation is now part of my experience — this summer will be my first time ever missing the Brotherhood's Annual Convocation. It's hard to put how I feel into words. The separation from this annual event means that, with few exceptions, I will not see most of my brothers for perhaps as long as a year.

Separation is now part of my experience...

I know I am not alone in this feeling and experience. I think there is a great deal of separation in our world, more than I have ever felt. It is especially upsetting to me to see the separation being experienced between, in, and by the church. Sunday morning is still the most segregated time in our country. People are still being sorted by color — with shades of white, as on employment and similar documents using the phrase “white non-Hispanic.”

The current culture has caused us, even in places intended for fun and enjoyment, to be filled with fear and dismay. I pray that this will change — that more people will step up and say, “No!” It was difficult for me to step up and to choose to retire as Minister General, but I knew it was time, and I was ready to do it for the good of my community and its future.

“We are the world; we are the people.” This verse from the song sums it up. Let us be strong and ready to help ease all the division around us. I pray that this happens and begins with us.

RTB

Perfect love casts out fear

A friend recently commented on a post that I made on social media celebrating the success of something called DoxyPEP—the use of the antibiotic doxycycline to limit sexually transmitted infections when taken after unprotected sex (post-exposure prophylaxis)—in San Francisco. The evidence for the effectiveness of this approach is overwhelming.

My friend's comment, in a nutshell, asked whether it is appropriate to encourage the wide-spread use of antibiotics to prevent infections among people (predominately gay men in this case) who are engaging in sexual behavior that could be considered self-detrimental and, by implication, morally and theologically questionable. His reasoning was that such use could lead to the emergence of organisms that are dangerously resistant to this antibiotic and whether using it in this way was unwise.

My first reaction to his comment was a sense of dread, since asking such complex questions on social media generally results in a landslide of poorly thought-out comments and shoot-from-the-hip reactions. Or worse, at least for me, having to waste too much time trying to rationally argue someone out of a position that they did not get into rationally.

However, it was clear that his comment landed squarely at the crossroads of scientific evidence, medical ethics, theology, sociology, and politics, and that not responding in the current political climate was not something I could do. Sadly, after I posted my response, he deleted his comment and along with it my response. But I believe what I wrote was important and needs to be heard, not to defend my original post, but because of why I wrote it. This is what I wrote:

I am an engineer, a scientist, a teacher, and a physician. I am also a devout Christian, an Episcopalian, and a Gregorian friar. I fully claim these roles with all the rights and responsibilities they confer. As a scientist, I acknowledged that, except for some specific examples, there is always the possibility that any use of an antibiotic can lead to antibiotic resistance. As a scientist and a physician, I am responsible for understanding how the prevalence of an organism in a population affects the statistical likelihood of a particular treatment or intervention helping the greatest number of people

(what we call the Number Needed to Treat or NNT) versus the likelihood of causing harm (what we call the Number Needed to Harm or NNH) and whether the relative risk of the treatment or intervention favors its use. As a physician, I practice evidence-based medicine, and right now the bulk of the evidence clearly points towards encouraging the use of DoxyPEP when the chance of infection is significant.

However, and more importantly, my primary reason for responded to my friend's comment was not to defend the science behind the study, but to point out the questionable ethics of what he said. Intentional or not, he glossed over the pain and suffering of fellow human beings and made a judgmental statement based on his own moral and theological beliefs. I would like to believe that he deleted his comment because he came to the same realization. Nonetheless, what is more concerning is that doing this very thing has become commonplace and acceptable. This is in part, if not entirely, due to the reprehensible examples of our current political leaders who unethically believe they have the authority to impose their *beliefs* (I will not use the adjectives *moral* or *theological*, since I do not believe they are either) on whomever they choose.

As a physician, and more importantly as a devout Christian, an Episcopalian, and a Gregorian friar, I have a responsibility to live and act according to ethical principles, and specifically in my ministry as a physician, according to the principles of medical ethics. The four primary principles of medical ethics are *nonmaleficence* (do no harm), *beneficence* (do good), *autonomy* (individuals have the right to make their own decisions and choices), and *justice* (fair and balanced respect for the rights of all individuals).

Every day we see our political leaders working to impose their beliefs and values through the manipulation and the suppression of fundamental rights and freedoms. This is the antithesis of nonmaleficence, beneficence, autonomy, and justice; it is maleficence, control, and injustice. The intention is to create a climate of fear that will in turn reinforce control and make it harder to challenge injustice.

The oath I took as a physician opposes this and embraces the principles of medical ethics and aspires to driving out fear:

The eternal providence has appointed me to watch over the life and health of thy creatures. May the love for my art actuate me at all times; may neither avarice nor miserliness, nor thirst for glory or for a great reputation engage my mind; for the enemies of truth and philanthropy could easily

deceive me and make me forgetful of my lofty aim of doing good to thy children. May I never see in the patient anything but a fellow creature in pain. Grant me the strength, time, and opportunity always to correct what I have acquired, always to extend its domain; for knowledge is immense and the [human spirit] can extend indefinitely to enrich itself daily with new requirements. [Today I can discover my errors of yesterday and tomorrow I can obtain a new light on what I think myself sure of today.] O God, thou hast appointed me to watch over the life and death of thy creatures; here am I ready for my vocation and now I turn unto my calling. [*The Oath of Maimonides*]

These are words of perfect love and perfect compassion. One who abides by them may not impose their will or their beliefs on another human being. As is written in the First Letter of John 4:18, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.” Please keep these words close to your heart and follow the guidance attributed to Saint Gregory the Great: *Where love exists, it works great things, but when it ceases to act, it ceases to exist.* No matter what the question, the answer is always an abundance of love and compassion. It is only through love that we will conquer fear and restore beneficence, autonomy, and justice.

CAD

Here and there with the Brotherhood

Community Notes

Spring Council and Strategic Planning Meetings, 2025

Council met at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum, Maryland, including a meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee, on April 25-27. Considerable time was devoted to beginning to build a process for electing a new Episcopal Visitor. Our current Visitor, Bishop Rodney Michel, has been a blessing to the Brotherhood, as Visitor for 27 years — almost half the lifetime of the community! Council established a committee chaired by Richard Edward Helmer (California), and including James Teets (Maryland), Tobias Stanislas Haller (Maryland), Thomas Bushnell (New York) and Scott Michael Pomerenk (Colorado), charged to draw up a more detailed list of expectations for the office of Visitor than exist in our current documents, to be shared with potential candidates for the office.

Minister Provincial David Benedict Hedges (Arizona) moved that postulant Shawn Harold Anderson (California) be approved for entrance into the novitiate at the Annual Convocation in July. This gathering will take place at the Roslyn Retreat and Conference Center in Richmond.

Council approved outreach grants for ministries with which our brothers are familiar in their parishes, dioceses, or regions, in some of which they are themselves serving. This year's recipients include:

- ✠ The Chattanooga Outreach Fund, managed and overseen by Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, Chattanooga;
- ✠ The Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Manhattan;
- ✠ Christ Episcopal Church, Shrewsbury NJ;
- ✠ Saint John's Episcopal Church, Monticello NY; and
- ✠ Lazarus Gate (Rocky Mountain Refuge) in Denver, a program providing shelter to homeless people with terminal illnesses.

These grants allow the Brotherhood to support our brothers' ministries in tangible ways, and we thank God that our tithes and income from investments can respond to local needs. Though the Brotherhood is not primarily a charity — rather it is a religious community focused on support for each member's ministry — it is a joy to be able to support such ministries in such a practical way.

The business of Council having been completed on Friday, the following morning after Morning Prayer the Minister General convened the first meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee, consisting of members of Council *ex officio* with the addition of Tobias Stanislas, Richard Edward, Scott Michael and Angel Gabriel Roque (Rio Grande). Much of the work of this session included a close examination of the governing documents and standing resolutions of the Brotherhood, including the Rule, Constitution, Customary, and miscellaneous actions; the committee took note of outdated or unclear language, and will look towards excisions and amendments in the near future.

In addition to the Daily Office throughout the day, the brothers shared in the Holy Eucharist on Saturday evening; David Benedict was

celebrant, Thomas Bushnell (New York), homilist and Angel Gabriel lector and intercessor.

NÆCC 2025



Leaders from the communities constituting the National Association of Episcopal Religious Communities gathered at the Pallottine Center near Saint Louis in mid-May. Sister Monica Clare CSJB, Superior of the Community of Saint John Baptist (Mendham, New Jersey) gave three talks about using social media to tell the stories of our communities' charisms and ministries. She shared personal experiences and insights, drawing on details from her newly published book: *A Change of Habit: Leaving Behind My Husband, Career, and Everything I Owned to Become a Nun*.



Sister Monica Clare at the lectern, with Ronald Augustine in the background



Ronald Augustine, Vincent Schwahn, and Diana Wheeler

The NÆCC members continued the round of prayer and meditation with *lectio divina*, Eucharist and the Daily Office. At the business session, Dr Martha Colville CRC of The Rivendell Community, was elected Vice-President. Our own Ronald Augustine Fox (Chicago) serves as Secretary of NÆCC. Sister Thea Joy SSG represented The Sisters of Saint Gregory.

Province 1



Minister General Ciarán Anthony took part in this year's Gay Pride Parade in Boston. He is seen in the photo at left with Bishop of Massachusetts Julia Whitworth.

Province 3

On May 30th Minister Provincial Eric Shelley (Southwestern Virginia), headed a contingent of Gregorians to attend the memorial service of Betty Budde, wife of our own Peter Budde (Southwestern Virginia), which included James Teets, Tobias Stanislas Haller (both of Maryland), and Jason Peter Seta (Pennsylvania). Our prayers continue for Peter and his

family, and for the repose of the soul of dear Betty; may she rest in God's eternal peace.

Province 4

Richard John Lorino (Central Florida) was keynote speaker at a prayer breakfast hosted by the Order of Saint Luke at Church of Our Savior, Palm Bay, Florida, on May 3rd. The theme of the morning was: "We Are One in the Spirit," and members of the Order of Saint Luke were joined by parishioners. The congregation provided warm hospitality and good food for the body; and by all accounts, Richard John (at right) provided good food for the soul!



✠ On June 15, Richard John lead Morning Prayer on Trinity Sunday at Saint John's Monticello, New York. He commented: "Nobody likes to preach on Trinity Sunday, so over the years, I always get asked by one place or another."

✠ On Saturday, March 22nd, five of the Province 4 brothers and the Minister General gathered for a day of retreat at Church of the Advent, Palm City, Florida. They received a warm welcome from the clergy and parishioners, and their parish campus provided a beautiful setting for a day of reflection and renewal.



Following Morning Prayer, Richard John began the retreat with a meditation on “The Words that Jesus Gave Us: Understanding the Lord’s Prayer.” The second Meditation was a group reflection on the brief video, “The Rabbi’s Gift,” which prompted a lively discussion. Minister General Ciarán Anthony DellaFera then presented an update on the challenges confronting the Brotherhood and then received questions and feedback from the brothers. The schedule concluded with a creative and timely liturgy titled: “Service of Prayer in a Time of Hope.” All present later convened for a wonderful meal and fellowship at nearby Menero’s Restaurant.

The weekend concluded on Sunday, March 23rd, with four of the brothers gathering to worship at Church of the Advent. They enjoyed a fine sermon delivered by Richard John and the gracious hospitality of the parish family. It was a joyful and uplifting time for all involved.

Province 5

Province 5 brothers gathered for a retreat May 9–10 at All Saints Episcopal Church in Indianapolis. After Evening Prayer on May 9th, the brothers had a great meal at a local restaurant, along with Francis Jonathan Bullock’s husband, the Rev Derek Parker.

On Saturday, the brothers participated in a “hands-on” retreat with April Vanlonden, Joint Seminaries Registrar of Earlham School of Religion and Bethany Seminary in Richmond, Indiana. She guided those present in a series of talks on self-examination and self-compassion, stressing that there are things we “can’t fix” and aren’t our fault. (Francis Jonathan is an MDiv graduate of Earlham.)



*(l to r) Ronald Augustine, Francis Jonathan, Joseph Basil,
April Vanlonden, Nathanael Deward, and Peter Kyle*

Peter Kyle, now a postulant-prospective, joined the brothers for the retreat. All Saints' Rector Andrea T Arsene celebrated the Holy Eucharist for the group on Saturday.

Province West

Members of Province West gathered in Denver, Colorado March 14–16 for a retreat and quiet day in honor of the feast of Saint Gregory the Great. Every member of the province was able to attend, as was the Minister General. Hosts for the weekend were James Patrick Hall and Scott Michael Pomerenk, both of whom live, worship, and serve in the Denver area. The brothers were also joined by a guest, Dane Barnes. Friday evening included dinner together, followed by a tour at the Church of the Holy Redeemer, a historical African-American congregation and home to the Pauli Murray Social Justice Coalition Center. On Saturday, the group gathered at Saint Thomas Church for a morning of discussion and reflection led by Fr Joseph Wolyniak, who



presented an encouraging look at Saint Gregory's *On Pastoral Care* and what it has to say about spiritual stability in difficult times such as these. The afternoon provided time for a visit to the Cathedral of Saint John in the Wilderness, and an excellent tour of its history, architecture, and art by Cathedral Archivist Michael Corrigan Lavallée. This was followed by a brief visit to Rocky Mountain Refuge, the residential hospice care facility for homeless people, in the founding of which James Patrick played a fundamental role, and served by him as well as Scott Michael. Sunday morning saw a return to Saint Thomas to join the congregation for Holy Eucharist. Throughout the weekend, all enjoyed hearty prayer and hearty meals together. Special thanks go to James Patrick and Scott Michael for organizing such a wonderful time together.

⌕ Postulant Shawn Anderson has just returned from a mission trip to Tecate, Mexico, on the summer solstice! The trip was arranged through Corazon (<https://www.corazon.org>), and organized by The Southern Alameda Deanery of the Diocese of California. The participants traveled to Tecate, working with Corazon to build a house (free of charge) for a wonderful family of three who have been volunteering with them for over four years. The deanery has participated in these



mission trips every year since about 2002, but this was Shawn's first trip. The group drove to San Diego on Friday, June 20th, hosted by All Souls Episcopal Church in Point Loma, with some participants camped out in their parish hall! On Saturday they met a bus at 6:00 AM which took them and a convoy of pickup trucks across the border into Mexico. An hour-long bus ride took them to the build site in Tecate.

The group included nine members of Shawn's parish, including the rector, and about 45 others from the deanery and diocese (including Bishop Rios). They arrived in the mountains of Tecate at about 8:00 AM. Work began, and by lunch time the four walls were up, and by 6:00 PM the house was complete. Blessings were bestowed on the house and the family, along with housewarming gifts, and the family cried as they expressed their love and gratitude. The father made a point to say that with everything going on in the world and the USA right now, it was especially meaningful that a group of Americans would come to show them love and open hearts. The group finished and left the building site at just after 6:00 PM and were expedited across the border back into the US, and in only 45 minutes they were back at All Souls Church for dinner. Shawn felt he was carrying the whole Brotherhood with him in the form of his Postulant Cross, kept under his shirt most of the day to avoid paint splatter, though it emerged for the photo! 🙏

