

The Dove

The Sisters of Saint Gregory ~ Winter 2021
Quarterly Newsletter

A canonically recognized Christian Community of the Episcopal Church, and its Partners in the worldwide Anglican Communion. We are women of prayer; lovers of God; servants of the holy, catholic and apostolic Church. We bear witness in the church and in the world that the universal call to holiness may still be experienced as a vocation of uncommon attentiveness to the things of God.



Message from our Community Leader Sr. Connie Jo



Offerings of Sacrifice and Praise

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

We are entering the season of Lent. Last year this time, we would never have dreamed we would still be sheltering, quarantining, and zooming as a result of Covid. I had planned my normal Lenten discipline which included denial of chocolate and other things. I also had planned more Lenten meditation and prayer time. Along with that, I would give money saved from my denial of delicacies to a charity. I did those things, and through that began the Covid pandemic. I have been pondering what disciplines I would follow this Lenten season. I then thought about the last 12 months and thought I have sacrificed a lot, as well knowing you too have suffered and made sacrifices. But what did I do with those sacrifices? I thought, wow these were more than chocolate and alcohol. I gave up community at church, family gatherings, and YMCA workouts. The same for you, I know. I lost friends to Covid. My family so far has been spared. We did have Covid at our house, but thank GOD we survived. As I pondered this, I wondered if I took the time to hallow the things that were taken away. Did I make them sacred and offer them to GOD to sanctify them as precious? I believe I will use this time of Lenten Season as a time of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the gifts that I have taken for granted, my family, you, my church, my freedom, my friends, and those who died this last year. I ask too for forgiveness for not being thankful and appreciating the gifts we so often take for granted.

Oh, and yes, I think I will still give up chocolate. It is a tradition.

May your Lenten Journey bring you to the cross, but don't stop there. The Tomb is empty.

Love Sr. Connie Jo



Carol Joy Walkingstick Theobald Gallagher is an American author and bishop in The Episcopal Church

Appointed: September 5, 2018

Diocese: [Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts](#)

Ordination: 1990

Consecration: April 6, 2002; by [Robert D. Rowley](#)

Education: [Princeton Theological Seminary](#), [University of Delaware](#), [Episcopal Divinity School](#), [Antioch College](#)

A Message of Hope

Rt. Rev. Dr. Carol J. Gallagher ~ Bishop Visitor

I write realizing too much time has gone by, seemingly in a flash. We are approaching a year under COVID restrictions and the horrors and losses this past year has seen. Not one of us has been unaffected. It is as if we have been in a tunnel, with little light and little way forward. As you know, my husband Mark was diagnosed with lymphoma last March. That diagnosis made our tunnel somewhat darker and even more confusing. And yet, throughout, we felt lifted by your prayers, surrounded with the sweet sense of hope, because God is with us always. Last week, after a round of tests and scan, we got the wonderful news that Mark was cancer free. After grueling months of treatments, it seems we have emerged into the light once again.

“But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because God has dealt bountifully with me.” The closing stanza of Psalm 13 has been on my heart and mind these days. We have all been, as a nation and a world, suffering with a pandemic that has simultaneously bound us and separated us. Yet even in our worst moments, we can pray with David and all of the ancestors, knowing God is with us, even in our darkest hours. Thank you all for your patience and prayers as we continue to put our lives back together, and reemerge slowly in to the light of a new beginning. Please know my thoughts, prayers and love remain with you all. +Carol



The Dove is published quarterly by The Sisters of Saint Gregory, a Religious Community of the Episcopal Church, its Communion Partners, and the worldwide Anglican Communion. We follow a common rule, and serve the church on parochial, diocesan, and national levels.

All inquiries concerning this publication should be addressed to the Editor: The Rev. Deacon Sr. MaryCatherine Robertson – ssgsister@gmail.com

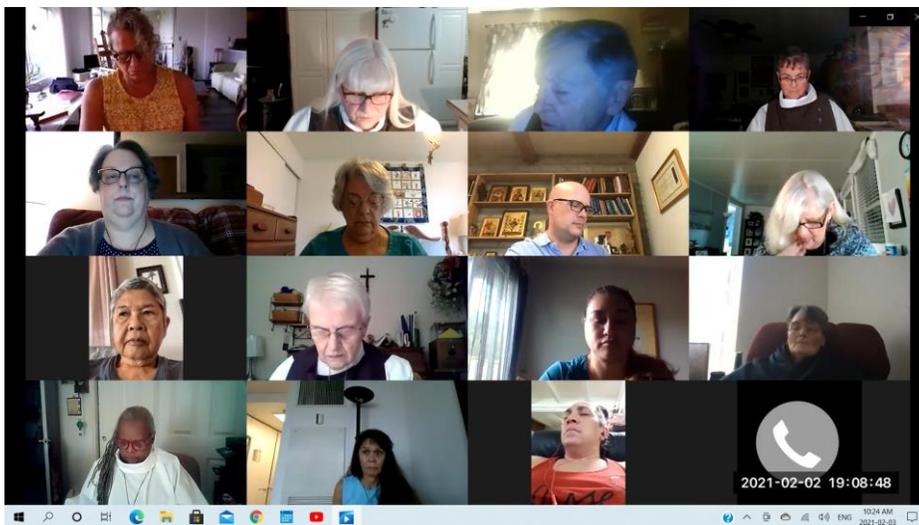
Visit the SSG website at www.sistersofsaintgregory.org. for more information regarding our Community, Vocations, and Prayer Requests. You may also contact us via surface mail at Box 251, Tillsonburg, Ontario, Canada N4G 4H5

The Dove is posted online via our Facebook page. Should you wish to have it sent directly to your email address, please contact the Editor.

A new way of Community!

It seems we are becoming quite skilled at online technology as we gather regularly via Zoom. From our weekly Sunday Compline prayers, our bi-monthly business meetings, to a service of Evening Prayer in February during which we admitted a new postulant, we have managed to maintain a genuine sense of community in these uncertain times.

For so long, our only time of 'seeing' one another was at our Annual Convocation. Apart from then, any contact was reliant on snail mail, email, or phone communication. We were actually quite pleased with ourselves when we began bi-monthly conference calls a few year ago! But this pandemic has forced us out of our comfort zone, prodding us to use new and innovative ways to stay in touch! Apps like Zoom, Skype, Webex, and Facebook Messenger allow multiple users to partake in video encounters. As we each struggled in our own way to become more computer literate, and navigate these uncharted waters, we helped one another, and celebrated each small achievement, as we became more familiar with these apps. As a result of our perseverance, we now can feel more closely connected to one another through an enriched conversational experience where we can actually see each other's facial expressions as we enjoy being together in a virtual world. Would we have explored this new technology if it were not for Covid? God alone knows.



On February 2, 2021, during a service of Evening Prayer celebrating the Presentation of Our Lord, Jesus Christ in the Temple, the Community welcomed with great joy, a new postulant, Charlie Sinclair via Zoom! *Serva Servorum Dei - Soli Deo Gloria*

We Being Manyare One Body

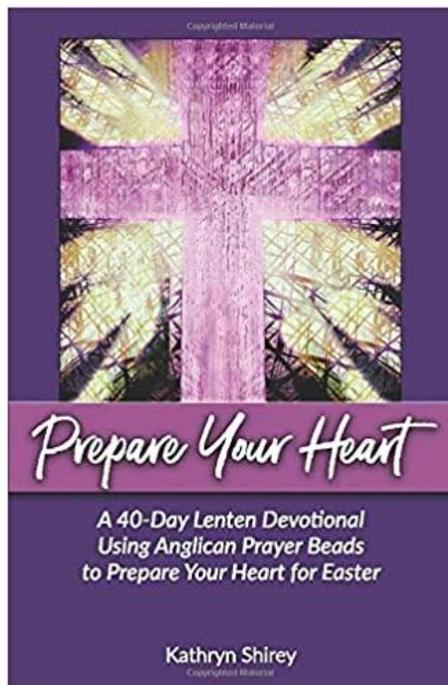


Lent 2021

Sacrifice reminds us of our commitment to God, and the desire to make Him first in our lives.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” *(Mark 12: 30)*

“Grant, O Lord, that my heart may neither desire nor seek anything but what is necessary for the fulfillment of Your Holy Will. May health or sickness, riches or poverty, honors or humiliations, leave my soul in that state of perfect detachment to which I desire to attain for Your greater glory.” *Saint Ignatius Loyola*



Lent is a season of drawing nearer to God, and recommitting your heart to follow in His way. As you step into this season of Lent, go deeper. Explore praying with Anglican prayer beads to slow down your prayers and dwell more deeply with God. Prepare Your Heart is a daily Lenten devotional based on daily Lectionary readings. Read and reflect on each day's readings, then pray through those same scriptures using Anglican prayer beads. Explore a deeper, more tangible prayer time this Lent. Prepare your heart for Easter by dwelling in God's Word and opening your heart to more closely follow in His way.



Kathryn Shirey is a writer, a mom, and a fellow traveler on this journey of faith. Kathryn had something awesome happen when she asked God for guidance on where He wanted her to serve. He didn't answer as she expected, but that sent her on a journey of discovery. Kathryn writes about prayer, growing closer to God, and God's vision for our lives on her blog, Prayer & Possibilities (www.kathrynshirey.com).



Reflections on Lent

Each year, Ash Wednesday heralds a time of somber introspection and self-reflection. The perennial question looms, “What are you giving up for Lent?” As children, my sister and I received our Lenten coin box to fill with nickels and dimes, tokens of our small sacrifices. When we grew older, more thought was required. First there were the usual vices....chocolate, coffee, television, later followed by choices of ‘giving’ instead of ‘giving up’. Everything changed in 1992. After enjoying the traditional Shrove Tuesday dinner – pancakes, my mum settled in front of the tv to watch the Happy Days Reunion Special. It was not long before she began to feel uncomfortable...indigestion? My sister got her to the hospital, and by midnight, mum was undergoing emergency surgery a dissecting aorta. Her last words to us....“Tell everyone I love them”, still echo in my memory. She died in the early hours of the morning. That year, we gave up our beloved mum for Lent...and every day after. “What am I giving up for Lent this year?” That question was answered on an Ash Wednesday long ago. “We love you, mum. God bless.”

MaryCatherine, SSG

I was new to my parish when we had an adult study session on the liturgical calendar. Our priest was asking what our favorite “season” is. Most chimed in that they loved Epiphany... and I ask you... what is NOT to love about Epiphany? I said “Lent”. This surprised everyone. Apparently, it is not the most “exciting” of liturgical seasons... so I expounded as to my reasons:

- Lent is a season of preparation. We are all preparing for our most Holy Day. It is both thrilling and humbling that God loves us so much as to give His Son to be sacrificed for us.
- Lent is purple. Not just purple, but PURPLE. The good one!
- Lent is a time to purge old grudges, hurt feelings, resentments, and anger. You have to make a choice to let go of these emotions. Otherwise, they will just sit on your heart and fester. Releasing them is liberating. Your heart feels better. That tension in your gut relaxes. You feel closer to God and are again grateful for the reminder that All things in God’s time.
- There are Jelly Beans!

I like to think that Jesus would like this. He would be pleased that I feel a sense of joy in His love for me.

Cindy p/SSG

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Books recommended by those who found them enlightening, inspiring, or uplifting.

Meditations of the Heart

is a collection of fifty-four meditations and prayers by Howard Thurman—writer, spiritualist, and mystic—who also was an academic and spiritual mentor to Martin Luther King. Thurman’s writings are widely known for the quiet beauty of his reflections on humanity and our relationship with God. These meditations feature his thoughts on prayer, community, and the joys and rituals of life. (Beacon Press, 2014)

Just a Sister Away: Understanding the Timeless Connection Between Women of Today and Women in the Bible (2007)

Is the work of Renita Weems, African-American womanist writer and scholar of the Hebrew Bible. She brings biblical scholarship “down to earth” as she shows us connections between today’s women and their biblical sisters—and helps us to see how those connections enable us to live more grounded, faithful, and fruitful lives. (Walk Worthy Press, 2007)

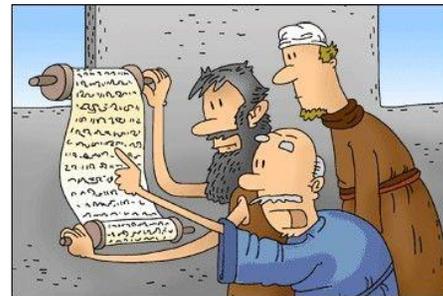
Thea Joy n/SSG

HOLY HUMOR

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin 5, and Ryan 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.' Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!"



One day 2020 will be the one-word Catchphrase for everything messed up. "Hows your day?", "A total 2020.", "Say no more."



CAN YOU SCROLL BACK UP?

BIBLE RIDDLES

Isaiah's Horse: Q: What was the name of Isaiah's horse?

A: Isme, because he said: "Whoa Isme!" (Isa. 6:5).

Scriptural Tennis: Q: What book of the Bible first mentions Tennis?

A: Genesis, which says that Joseph served on the Pharaoh's court.

Financial Planning: Q: Who was the wisest financial investor in the Bible?

A: Noah, who floated his stock while everyone else liquidated their assets.



A kindergarten teacher was walking around observing her classroom of children while they were drawing pictures. As she got to one girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was.

The girl replied, "I'm drawing God."

The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like."

Without looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."

The Rule of The Sisters of Saint Gregory

OF THE LIFE OF A SISTER

It shall be the objective of a Sister to be active and deliberate as she strives to be an example of our motto “Soli Deo Gloria” To God Alone the Glory”. Those who know her example may be brought the good news of the gospel of our Savior, Jesus Christ. A Sister must endeavor to witness to our Redeemer’s love with quietness, patience, humility, charity, courage and prayer. She shall seek to meet and serve our Lord in each person whom she encounters, always revering the Spirit dwelling in the other. A Sister will acknowledge God’s love for her by taking time to care for herself. She will be mindful that a life lived to the glory of God is one that is balanced. A Sister cares for body, mind and spirit and observes Sabbath rest.

OF COMMON LIFE

It is the obligation of the Sisters to empower every Sister in her own witness to the gospel. Every Sister is vital to the Community, and is an integral member of the body. Let none be lost through negligence, ignorance or pride; and let each be continually fortified and strengthened with Christ’s love toward one another, through daily prayer, and regular communication with the entire community.

OF COMMON WORK

It is the work of the Sisters to witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus, which has been freely bestowed upon us and upon all of creation. This witness grows and is nurtured by a life in conversation with God, and is nourished daily by active prayer and meditation while living fully in the secular world.

A Sister will acknowledge the gifts given to her by God for service in the work and worship of the Church. A Sister shall use these gifts to the best of her ability in the ministry to which she is called. The Sister will continue to discern her gifts throughout her life.

OF COMMON WORSHIP

It is the obligation of each Sister to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist at least once per week, and, when possible, daily. A Sister is obligated to pray the four daily offices. The Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church in America or other canonically approved Book of Common Prayer shall be used for this purpose.





The Words of Our Patron.....Wisdom for Today

St. Gregory the Great wore many hats; he has been described as “scholar-diplomat-pastor-writer-pope.” He was an intellectual who had a particular gift, for making the Gospel message available to common folk.

His *Forty Gospel Homilies* can make very dense reading if we take them as a single body of writing. But a quick study of the book’s composition gives us a helpful gateway into his thinking. Dividing the book in half gives us two different sets of sermons—and for a good reason. History tells us that Gregory dictated the first 20 sermons, for someone else to read to a congregation. By contrast, sermons 21-40 he wrote for himself to deliver, and this shift in relationship affects both his messages and the ways in which his congregations received them.

The Gospel is personal, not intellectual, and the Church bureaucrats who delivered those read sermons in Gregory’s time received a lukewarm response. This situation revealed the pastor in Gregory, who adjusted his own practice accordingly. In Homily 21, he writes, “Hence I want to depart from my usual custom and carry out myself this explanation of the lessons of the holy Gospel during the sacred solemnity of the mass, not dictating but addressing you in person.” His shift in practice has a lesson for all of us: the Gospel is not intellectual, it’s personal—if we want to spread its message, we have to enable people to connect with it. This was true in his time—and it’s especially true in our own. We live in societies that counsel us to “keep our distance”—physically, emotionally, and socially. But the Good News of the Gospel is a relationship with Our Savior that is “up close and personal.”

As portrayed in St. Gregory’s sermons, the Kingdom of GOD has no assessment value; yet, it is worth everything we have. Our patron teaches us to value things that do not count in the world, as we focus on what really matters to the Giver of Life. As St. Gregory taught, “Good will is our most precious offering.” GOD calls us to offer our souls, our hearts, or our lives themselves—not our “stuff.” We also are called to avoid the cheap trick of releasing hold on what we have, while craving what belongs to someone else. We relinquish our focus on the “bodied” life, as we constantly lift our minds and hearts to GOD.

As we enter the season of Lent, we consider St. Gregory’s concept of “cleansing afflictions.” He asks us to view our personal struggles as pathways to repentance and atonement. This serves as a corrective against focusing so hard on our defects that we make them more powerful than God’s mercy. St. Gregory reminds us that those who repent after sinning become inheritors of Heaven, because “GOD puts up with our sins and still preserves us for his rewards because of repentance.”

St. Gregory often prayed a “bullet prayer”: *My God, My Mercy*. May this become a mantra for us, as we “pray our way back Home” during the Season of Lent.

--Thea Joy, n/SSG