

SPRING 1977



No. 51

Mount Saviour Pine City, N.Y. 14871

Chronicle



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If any abbot wish to have a priest ordained for his monastery, let him choose out one of his subjects who is worthy to exercise the priestly office.

Rule: ch. 62

On the feast of St. Benedict, March 21, Br. Ansgar received the sacrament of holy orders at the hands of our bishop, Joseph L. Hogan.

Roots, a recent historical novel, has inspired and thrilled millions of Americans. It is the story of one man's search for his roots, which he finds through a black slave who was crippled by the loss of a foot. Research libraries, graveyards, and offices of vital statistics are now being flooded by countless numbers of people who are tracing out their origins. How strong and how mysterious is this desire to be in contact with our source, our origin, our beginning!

We Christians celebrate in a special way from Holy Thursday until Pentecost the "feast of roots." Our roots are also in a slave or servant, one who was wounded or crippled, not in one foot but in both, and in his hands and side as well. "By his wounds you were healed (and) you who were no people have become the People of God" (1 Peter 2.24,10). But our roots go deeper still. They don't cling or attach themselves to a mere man, no matter how extraordinary. When Jesus returned to his homeland, he brought humankind to our origin and roots in God. Himself rooted and grounded in God's love, in the one he called "my Father and your Father, my God and your God" (John 20.17), who dwells in inaccessible light, Jesus roots us anew in God's love. Although this surpasses our understanding, it is the focal point of our lives.

We have other roots, roots of sin and slavery, which are sunk into us to a level at which we cannot act because our conscious activity doesn't go that deep. To have these roots removed, God does not expect us to be passive under the action of divine grace, nor does God expect of us more initiative. It is rather acquiescence in an act of God in the person of Jesus that is required of us. This is the same acquiescence Jesus made to God in fully accepting his sonship, from Bethlehem to the sending of the Spirit conjointly with the Father. It is this acceptance that enables us to be adopted children of God. At one place in his book Alex Haley writes: "I just felt like I was weeping for all history's incredible atrocities against fellowmen, which seems to be mankind's greatest flaw . . ." The passion, death, resurrection and ascension, and pentecost, are the healing of those poisoned and bitter roots! We are healed by the power of a voluntarily accepted servitude, by the suffering and death of the historical Jesus, and by the forgiveness and gift of the Spirit of the same historical person, now the gloriously risen Christ.

What I'd like to write now is not something in the modern historical mode of Roots, nor is it theological in the ordinary sense of the term. But in pondering the mystery of our roots as the story is written down for us, these thoughts came to me. Eve's decision, and her self-centered separation from her human partner, broke the relationship of fidelity and trust between human persons. The relationship between humans, established by God, was broken. We don't often consider original sin from the standpoint of the broken human relationship. We take the role of judges instead of learners, and concern ourselves with who was to blame. Unity is broken whenever either men or women refuse to suffer the demands of human love. It is the personal choice of one party not to share life that is pointed out to us in Genesis: whether it is man and woman with Adam and Eve, or man and man with Cain and Abel, or woman and woman with Sarah and Hagar. We misread the Adam and Eve story and think the separation of persons was consequent upon the separation from God; whereas in Genesis the break in both relationships was simultaneous. This is the root of our lack of trust and fidelity toward one another. In our days no one can trust another human person one hundred per cent. And no one should try it either. We are becoming more trustworthy through faith in Jesus and through our life in his Spirit, but no one of us is yet risen or glorified. So anyone who would put one hundred per cent trust in another human person is at least mistaken and may be crazy. This lack of trust represents a profound wound in our personhood. It is not just a deficiency in external relationships, or a consequence of the break in our relationship with God.

As human persons we are a center of uniqueness that remains uncommunicated even when we make a gift of ourselves. We don't fuse with another person or thing--not even with God. We will eternally be our distinct selves. At the same time, as persons we are centers of communication or relationship. This relationship is with other created things, with persons, and with God. Our wholeness and maturity are incumbent upon freely accepting our uniqueness, living from that uniqueness, and at the same time freely and fully relating to creation, to persons, and to God. It is only with the incarnation of Jesus that for the first time since the dawn of history a human appears who is one hundred per cent worthy of trust. Someone now lives who is willing to suffer the demands of the human relationship. Our first parents had the opportunity, but they lost it for us all. It is in Jesus' life and in his passion and death on the cross that we as human persons find a human whom we can trust one hundred per cent with full faith in the relationship.

Our uniqueness as persons depends on the love of God who loved us first. But our ability to fully relate to another human has been wounded and crippled since that first human relationship was destroyed by the voluntary separation of one party, by a wrong-headed autonomy, individualism, or refusal to share the person-relational dimension of the self. The relational dimension was healed or recreated when Jesus, by the action of forgiving his executioners, maintained his relation to them as brothers. And at the same time he maintained his relation with the Father through the agony of what was experienced as abandonment. That is why Jesus can say: "Believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14.1). We are fully free human persons because our roots and our trust are in Jesus. This is the freedom wherein Christ has set us free. We must use this freedom to love one another as Christ has loved us--it is more than the old commandment to love one another as you love yourself. A new trust is now possible between humans, and so too a new truth of human relationship, and a new commitment to one another through Christ Jesus.

Jesus did not seek personal fulfilment apart from others, as did Eve, who in her autonomy and false self-sufficiency broke her relationship with the rest of humanity--even though it was only one man at that time. So now through one man we relate in a human way to creation, to persons, and to God. This bond of relationship has been further strengthened and perfected by the sending of the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

Sacred Scripture is the record of our roots in the creative love of God. It is the record that enables us to search out and be in contact with our roots. In this season the Church reads the Acts of the Apostles. Freed from their chains and prison, the apostles were given the mandate: "Go out now, take your place in the temple precincts, and preach to the people about this new life."

In a very literal way, that is the meaning of our monastic life. This new life, around the risen Christ, under the guidance of the Spirit, and rooted and grounded in the Father's love, is likewise the ordinary life of Christians. Throughout the centuries, as the Canon of the Mass relates it, this new life reaches us "from all who hold and teach the faith that comes to us from the apostles." We have heard from those who were overjoyed because they had "seen the Lord," who became believers, and who handed on that life to us who are now blessed, for, though we have not seen, we do believe.

Although our roots may grow through some villages, they don't end in one. Our roots do not terminate in the one-hundred-twenty acre Vatican village, nor in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, nor even in the earthly Jerusalem. Our homeland is in heaven and with a person who didn't get us into slavery but one who got us out! Our ancestry is not merely an earthly man, but one who in his risen glory is a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15.45). Through him, with him, and in him we are rooted in one another and in God.

J. Martin

If upon mature deliberation, he promises to observe all things and to obey all the commands that are given him, then let him be received into the community.

Rule: ch. 58

During the month of May, Joseph Bretz was clothed as a novice and received the name of Br. Isaiah. Br. Timothy Verdon and Br. Michael McDonnell became postulants.



Father Martin recommends for reading:

Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, by Jack Dean Kingsbury. Saint John, by John Marsh. These two small commentaries are most highly recommended. The Gospels were written for ordinary believers. We can be thankful to scholars and people of faith and prayer who help us contact the evangelists and their faith-inspired relationship to Jesus, and to understand the significance of his words and deeds.

There is a trilogy I'd like to suggest, but one of the three is hard to find. This is Hans Urs von Balthasar's Love Alone. They can all be read and reread. Josef Pieper's About Love has an awkward first chapter that can be skipped until later, but he gives an excellent perspective on human love and desire vis-a-vis the love of God for us. If you are not familiar with Pieper's writings you should start here and now! The third book is John H. McGoey's Dare I Love? If ever a book appeared that could not be judged by its cover, this is it. "The courage to love" would be a better title. In content it is hard to beat on love, sexuality, emotions. Several in the community have recommended it to others. To complete the trilogy, since Balthasar's book seem unavailable, I'd recommend Victor Paul Furnish's The Love Command in the New Testament. Those who are familiar with Spicq's three volumes on agape in the New Testament will welcome this counterpoint. Those of you who aren't should begin with this one. There is no reason the ordinary person shouldn't know more about scripture, and there is no one who will do it for you.

The Mount Saviour Cookbook is being assembled and published by a group of our Elmira oblates and friends, one of whom describes it just below. The recipes come from very near and very far. It is one book you can devour!



Jack Dean Kingsbury, <u>Matthew: Structure, Christology Kingdom</u>	\$10.95
John Marsh, <u>Pelican Gospel Commentaries, St. John</u>	4.95
Joseph Pieper, <u>About Love</u>	6.95
John H. McGoey, <u>Dare I Love</u>	2.75
Victor Paul Furnish, <u>The Love Command in the New Testament</u>	7.95
Fr. James C. Kelly, <u>Drink Freely of Love. A study of Christian life and prayer</u>	1.95
Damasus Winzen, <u>Pathways in Scripture</u>	3.95
<u>Mount Saviour Cookbook</u>	5.00
<u>Monastic Studies</u> , Vol. 8 In Memory of Father Damasus	5.00
Vol. 9 On the Experience of God...	5.00
Vol.10 On Hospitality.....	5.00
Vol.11 On Benedictine Monasticism.	7.00
Vol.12 On Education.....	7.00

Postage, please add .50c. Customers in N.Y. State, please add 7% sales tax.

Our cookbook is almost finished! We are delighted with the strong participation and interest from all directions. Over three hundred forty "friends" have sent favorite recipes. A former brother has made some beautiful vignette sketches of scenes at Mount Saviour which will adorn the cover and chapter divisions. It's going to be very special: an excellent recipe collection and a pleasant remembrance of the Mount Saviour community.

Will you please help by sending your order now? Your advance order will help us to meet printing bills. We will send you some of the first copies off the press, around the middle of July. Many thanks! The price is \$5.00 each; please add 50c for handling, and 7% sales tax in New York state.

