DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

From The Senior

I want to begin by offering thanks to God and to the members of the Society for giving me the opportunity to serve as the senior for the next three years, and I offer the gifts I have been given to the service of this Society and its members. I hope you know that I love this Society. I love it for what it is - a unique ministerium in the life of the Church. I love it for what it does – support and sustain so many of us day in and day out in our lives of ministry. And I love it for what it represents – a model of how the Church, even with its various positions and divisions, can come together in prayer and reflection and the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren. Above all though, I love it for that which it is at its heart – a community of brothers and sisters gathered together under one Rule and seeking to live a life together which reflects both Christ and His Church. So with deep and heartfelt thanks I look forward to the next three years of service and our common life together.

That being said, there are a number of pressing issues facing the future of our beloved Society. For the first time in quite a while, we will have two new officers – Vicar and Bursar. Pastor Jay Denne, STS was elected by the members gathered in General Chapter to serve as bursar for the next three years. Pastor Denne comes to us serving not only a parish in Iowa but also as one who has served as treasurer for his own synod and as a lawyer who continues to practice part time. I want to take the opportunity to thank Pastor David Aanonson, STS for his many years of faithful service as our bursar. He did a fine job keeping us on the straight and narrow fiscal path and we all owe him a debt of gratitude.

Our new vicar will be Pastor Brian Evans, STS. Pastor Evans serves as the Senior Pastor of First English Lutheran in downtown Pittsburgh and is currently dean of the Passavant chapter of the Society – a role from which he will step down when the chapter next meets in December. I am grateful to Pastor Evans for his willingness to undertake this role in our common life and I am confident that he will serve us all well over the next three years. I must also add a word of deep thanks and appreciation to Pastor Nathan Yoder, STS who has served us as vicar so faithfully for the past three years. His insights and perspectives on our common life have been invaluable and I am grateful to him for all his work. I pray God's continued blessings on him as he continues to serve the Church and this ministerium in new and creative ways.

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Meanwhile, Pastor Pari Bailey, STS will continue to serve as our secretary. I have often said that this position (and here I speak from experience as well) is the hardest in the life of the Society. Pr. Bailey has carried out her duties in a manner which is beyond compare and for that we are all very grateful. But, as she and others have said, we can all make her life a little easier by reading the materials and instructions she sends out, responding to such in a timely manner, and paying our dues on time!! This should not be hard, so please do what you can to assist her in every way.

Clearly, the dynamic of having two new leaders means that the officers need to form a new type of working relationship and we are planning on doing that with a 24-hour gathering in mid-November to examine goals and plan for the future. All of that will be in preparation for the Leadership Council which will meet in February in South Carolina.

One of the most troubling things to come out of the recently completed General Chapter retreat was the statement by our

bursar, Pastor Aanonson, that we ran a $10,000 deficit last year. Clearly this is not sustainable over the long run and will be a major topic for discussion at Leadership Council.

Attached to that issue was the brief presentation on the Annual Planned Giving Program. This will again go to Leadership Council in the new year but we clearly need to have a well-planned and organized Annual Giving program and, in the long term, to resuscitate our Endowment program. There will be more on this to come.

We currently have 23 chapters throughout the United States and Canada. Chapters grow and wane depending upon members coming and going through new calls or retirements. We need to continue looking at where our members are located so that chapters can be started or ended to best meet the needs of our members.

You also heard Pastor Bailey speak about our actual membership which is listed at over 250 but realistically is probably somewhat lower. We have a number of members who have not paid dues or participated in the life of the Society for a number of years. This is not unlike the membership rolls in each of our congregations where we are carrying folks that no longer attend. We will need to address this matter and get a truer and more accurate picture of our membership so that we can plan accordingly.

Over the past three years I have spoken to chapters about how we are seeking to delineate more clearly what we, as a Society, have to offer those who would join us. This is not a to say that the benefits are not obvious to many of us already part of it, but we know that in what is now our 22nd year of existence, we need to finally move away from what we are against to what we offer positively in our life together. I hope that together we can state that yet more clearly. One way to do that will be to go back to the discussion of our charism, presented in a paper now some years ago, and see how and where it could be updated.

Finally, I want to say how wonderful it was to be gathered in General Chapter with so many sisters and brothers. Our worship was well planned by our chaplain, Pastor Robert Endruschat, STS and our teaching theologian, Dr. Mickey Mattox, was first rate. My thanks also to Pastors Richard Johnson, STS and Nathan Yoder, STS for serving as responders and stimulating some excellent discussion.

May God continue to bless our Society and all our members.

In our common service and life,

Paddy Rooney, STS
Senior

Reflections on the Rule

THOUGHTS ON CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

In preparing to share some thoughts about Confession and Absolution, I naturally studied once again Chapter V of the Rule. I was struck by this sentence: “Since Confession and Absolution has fallen into disuse among many of us, its restoration demands utmost care and concern for both penitent and confessor.” Those words acknowledge that many of us, when we signed the Rule, knew something of individual Confession and Absolution in theory but had little personal experience in practice, either as penitent or confessor. When I was contemplating signing the Rule back in 2002, I knew that this would be a challenge for me. I actually sought out a confessor before attending my first General Retreat, because I needed to know if this was a spiritual discipline to which I was truly willing to commit myself.

What a gift that turned out to be! In my own journey, one important aspect of the practice has been the opportunity regularly “[to examine my] personal life and relationship with God and others in the light of the Ten Commandments.” I have found it helpful to do this quite deliberately, with paper and pencil in hand, as I prepare to go to confession. It is not always a comfortable exercise—it seldom is, truth be told. But it is a wonderfully revealing discipline, one that almost always brings to my consciousness sins that I had not otherwise considered, and one that makes the words of absolution even sweeter.

But I wonder about one aspect of the Rule’s teaching, and how faithfully we may be observing it. The Rule says—twice, in fact!—that we will make use of this gift “regularly and frequently.” We will do this by “seeking out a trustworthy pastor” to serve as our confessor. My sense (and it is only that; I’ve not done a survey) is that many of us go to confession primarily at chapter or general retreats. That was the case with me for many years. It is, of course, a great blessing to have the “third sacrament” available at our retreats. But if that is the primary or only time that we come as penitents, are we fulfilling the intention to do so “regularly and frequently”? And I wonder: is this really what we mean by “seeking out a trustworthy pastor” when the confessor at a retreat is likely to be someone different each time?

I have the luxury, as a retired person, to have my own pastor who can fulfill this role for me. I have found, first, that this

enables and encourages me to confess more "regularly and frequently," and second, that this consistency helps me to go deeper, as I open my heart and soul to my pastor who has learned to know me and to know my struggles. For some, such regularity and consistency will be difficult because of geographical or professional location; still, it is a worthwhile goal—and perhaps another one of those areas where occasionally re-reading the Rule itself may help us to consider how we might more fully live into the vows we have made.

In our common service and life,

Richard O. Johnson, STS

Chapter Updates

The **California Chapter** will host an Advent retreat at the Mercy Center in Auburn, California, December 3-5. Please contact chapter dean Richard Johnson roj@nccn.net for more information. The **Columbia River** chapter's next retreat will be November 6-7 at the Benedictine Sisters Retreat Center in Mount Angel, Oregon. Teaching theologians are the Rev'd John Eggert of Concordia University – Portland and the Rev'd Mark Knutson of Augustana Lutheran Church, Portland, Oregon. For more information, please contact chapter dean the Rev'd Dr. Joseph W. Hughes at j_w_hughes@hotmail.com or (217) 898-9063. On November 5-6 the **Florida** chapter will host a retreat featuring the Rev'd Dr. Mark Mattes discussing his book *Martin Luther's Theology Of Beauty: A Reappraisal.* The retreat will be held at San Pedro Center in Winter Park, Florida. For more information, contact chapter dean the Rev'd Lawrence Recla, STS at larryrecla@comcast.net or (352) 430-1114. The fall retreat for the **Metro New York** chapter will take place November 5-6 at Mariandale. Pastor Ken Schnepp will lead a discussion on pastoral care for those in hospice and their families. Retreatants are asked to bring books or other resources they have found helpful. Please contact chapter dean Terrence Weber at tweber1978@aol.com for more information. The **Minnesota** chapter's annual Advent Hymn Sing will take place during their Advent retreat December 3-4 at Christ the King Retreat Center in Buffalo, Minnesota. Formal teaching sessions will be replaced by "quiet time" for personal renewal and mutual consolation of the brethren. Please see the chapter Facebook page, "Society of the Holy Trinity – Minnesota Chapter" or email chapter dean Trevor Bailey at tbail65@gmail.com for more information or to register. The fall retreat of the **New England** chapter will take place November 5-6 at the St. Joseph Retreat House, Milton, Mass., studying "The Kinship of Jesus, led by the author, Dr. Kathleen Mills. Please contact chapter dean Ryan Mills at tlnhpastor@yahoo.com for more information. The **Passavant** chapter will meet in retreat on December 10-11, 2019, at Villa Maria Education and Spirituality Center, Villa Maria, Pennsylvania. The Rev'd. Cathy Ammlung, STS, will teach on the Prayers of the Church and Musical Settings of the Liturgy. Please contact chapter dean Brian Evans at bae@flcpittsburgh.org for more information. The **Susquehanna** chapter will elect a dean during their Advent retreat December 3-4, to be held at SS Cyril and Methodius in Danville, Pennsylvania. They will be discussing Genesis 12-50, as well as the Infancy Narratives. For more information, please email chapter dean the Rev'd Kenneth Elkin, STS at kennethelkin@gmail.com. The **Wisconsin** chapter will meet in retreat November 5-6 at St. Norbert's Abbey in De Pere, Wisconsin. The Rev'd. Carl Voges, STS, will present a paper entitled "Re-Gripped by the Holy Trinity's Life for the Church's Ministry". For more information contact chapter dean the Rev'd Tim Duesenberg, STS at stmaximos@aol.com.

New Signatories

At the General Retreat this year, the following persons subscribed to the Rule—we welcome them into our common life in the Society!

Pr. Keith Lankford, STS — Minnesota Chapter

Pr. Tony Ede, STS — Iowa Chapter

Pr. Steve Dygert, STS — Florida Chapter

Pr. Cheryl Hoffman, STS — New England Chapter

Pr. Brad Haugen, STS — Northern Illinois Chapter

Pr. Scott Aaron Smith, STS — Passavant Chapter

Pr. Matthew Vatalare, STS — Passavant Chapter

Pr. Hans Tolpingrud, STS — Wisconsin Chapter

From The Secretary

Dear brothers and sisters,

Thank you for your continued prayers and support as I serve as secretary of the Society. It is a true privilege, and God shapes me through this work. I am humbled and grateful. Here are the updated numbers, most of which I provided in my oral report to the General Chapter.

1. Membership report

- We have 286 subscribed members in 22 chapters in two countries.
- 8 pastors subscribed to the Rule this year.
- 179 members paid their dues in full this year.
- 4 members asked to waive a portion of their dues.
- 6 members asked to waive their 2018 dues entirely.
- 12 people took advantage of online option to pay their dues, several more paid for their early arrival that way, too.
- A significant number of our members did not pay their dues in 2018.

2. Credentials report:

- For the 2018 General Chapter Retreat, there were 169 total attendees.
- For a comparison: in 2017, 186 people attended.
- 143 members in attendance this year.
- There were 26 guests, including eight seminarians and vicars from five seminaries.
- 77 people arrived early, either on Sunday or Monday.

A continued reminder to read everything you receive carefully, and respond in a timely fashion. I appreciate your assistance in this way! I would also note that if you wish to make arrangements to pay your dues early, or if you wish to send a portion of your dues now, and a portion later, you may certainly do so. Just contact me to let me know what your plan is.

Finally, 2019 STS Lutheran Liturgical Calendars, published by Ashby Co., are still available. If you wish to purchase any, the cost is $7.00 per calendar, or $30.00 for five. This includes USPS shipping fees. Please send a check payable to Society of the Holy Trinity to Pr. Keith Forni, STS, 1316 Plainfield Road, Joliet IL 60435. All proceeds benefit the STS general fund.

In our common service and life,

Pari Bailey, STS
Secretary

In Memoriam

De Trinitate prints notice of members who have recently entered the Church Triumphant. If you are aware of a Society member's death, please contact our Secretary, Pari Bailey, at revsbailey@redred.com with name, date of death, and chapter affiliation.

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