

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

The Michaelmas 1993 Newsletter for North America

Volume 1 Number 2

THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON

Entering the Festival Time of Michael, during the service, The Christian Community reads the parable of the marriage of the king's son (Matthew 22:1-14).

This parable speaks to our souls in a grave way, showing warningly how people in various ways can fail to meet the divine invitation.

There are those who think little of the invitation. They have other things to do. They do not want to enter into the sacred inner space. They "stay outside." Out there, though, devoted to outer pursuits, they are overtaken by the "death of matter", and their city burns down to ashes.

There is also that dubious guest without a wedding garment. In those days, it was the custom for those who had been invited, upon entering, to receive a festive garment from their host. This person obviously had not thought it worth the effort to dress himself in a festive manner to meet the occasion. "Take me as I am, I am good enough." To be sure, he did not stay "outside", but God cannot be delighted about his entering. Just as he was in his everyday manner, not cleansed at all, he had wanted to force his way into the sacred inner space which therefore cannot house him.

Amongst aberrations, the right way has to be found.

Rudolf Frieling

ROSEMARIE BERGMANN NOW LIVES IN HANNOVER, GERMANY

I really can't quite believe that; but it is so!

There seem to be quite a few who think that Rosemarie Bergmann was the first priest of The Christian Community here in Chicago. She wasn't. But over the forty-one years he was here, she certainly became something like the foremost priest. It was like this:

It was in May of 1950 that we first set up camp in the broken-down house at 1409 North Dearborn Parkway, Chicago. "We" consisted of myself, my wife, Natalie and our eight month old, John Michael. It was intended that within a few months there would be another priest here. I was to have been joined here by one of the founders of The Christian Community, Dr. Rudolf Koehler. By that time I was to have created a chapel in the building and proclaimed the opening of the Chicago Center of The Christian Community. But Dr. Koehler, for reasons too complicated to go into here, didn't make it. We did open the second Sunday after Michaelmas. Dr. Alfred Heidenreich, also one of the founders of The Christian Community, was here for the event. But he went back to England soon after. And there was only just "we."

Early in March of 1951 "we" were joined by another co-worker, Susan Ellen, (8 pounds, 6 ounces). It was about that time that a Mrs. Ulrich, who lived next door to Grant Hospital (Susan's

port of entry), and who had connections with Chicago's German-speaking friends, heard that one Rosemarie Bergmann, a priest, was coming to "assist" me in Chicago. I remember exclaiming to the lady: "Rosemarie Bergmann is not even a priest!" We had known Rosemarie slightly at the Seminar in Stuttgart, and to be honest, we hadn't particularly liked her. Within a few weeks I was enlightened of facts that not even Mrs. Ulrich knew (she knew a lot). Again, for reasons too complicated to detail, Rosemarie had been awarded an immigration visa to enter the United States. And the same month she was being ordained. And she was indeed being sent to Chicago! This set of facts did not particularly please me. So I wrote a rather sharp letter to Emil Bock. The tone of Bock's reply was, in view of the tone of mine to him, remarkably calm and kind. In effect he said: "Calm yourself, if you can't get on with her, send her back." (At the same time Bock was telling her something like: "If you can't stand it over there, come back. We'll find a place for you.") Of course, by the time she was on the Atlantic, some rumors of my earlier disapprobation had reached her ears, which did nothing to raise her expectations. By then, however, I was not only resigned; but even somewhat enthusiastic that *someone* was coming.

But by the time Rosemarie arrived, Brewers (all four of them) had fled the scene. After five long years alone, struggling with the old house, trying to build up something of a congregation (it was really only two years and a little bit; but it seemed like forever!) we had boarded the New York Central New England States Express, and went for a month to visit our ancestors.

So Rosemarie's welcome to Chicago was a note from me: "Welcome to Chicago. Verner Hegg, on his way to and from Minneapolis, will hold The Act of Consecration of Man here on the 9th and 23rd. If you feel you can do it in English, please hold The Act of Consecration of Man on the 16th and the 30th. We will be back on September 1."

So in order to earn some money and learn some English, Rosemarie took a job in one of the

wealthier suburbs, and came to 1409 on weekends. It wasn't long before Richard and Tamara Lewis joined up, and they also went to work.

So we had a strange, but miraculous, situation: Three young priests, very different personalities, who yet could teach each other; learn from each other. Motivated by what seems now an unbelievable confidence and hope for the future of the work for which we had dedicated ourselves, anything seemed possible. In the next four years we conducted our own "post-ordination Seminar." We read lectures; we held discussions; we criticized each other's sermons. Now and then differences of opinion led even to shouting matches. We sometimes did wild things like going swimming in the dark in Lake Michigan after an evening program. (I can remember what the Moon looked like from under water; and shouting to Rosemarie not to swim out so far.) By the time that we had gained a deep respect for each other, I might even say, that we loved each other; we could part. In 1956, Brewers went to New York. And a few years later the Lewises went to California.

Rosemarie Bergmann was then alone in Chicago. There were interludes when there was a second priest in Chicago for significant periods of time - Philip Nusbaum - Daniel Adcock - even Dr. Rudolf Koehler (He finally made it). But from 1960 until 1985, Chicago was her Congregation. Everything bore the stamp of her personality. And she did it all with a characteristic energy, good humor, generosity and love. While she could be very understanding and forgiving, Rosemarie could at the same time be quite caustic in her remarks about things of which she did not approve. Above all she was extremely undemanding in her personal needs.

During these years Rosemarie also moved out into the surroundings. She was able to keep things "covered" in Chicago by the faithful presence of her aunt, Evelyn Struck. I remember often getting her answer on the telephone. "Rosemarie is not here; she is in... She will be back tomorrow night." Rosemarie made regular visits to Detroit, Michigan and to East Troy in Southern Wisconsin. Her visits to Detroit covered the time that the Waldorf

Institute was active there. She was very much appreciated by the students there, with whom she did a great deal of work. In 1986 Detroit became an independent congregation with a resident priest.

Things became different in 1985. In the spring, Robert Patterson, who was not Lenker, removed to Chicago. In the fall, the original "we", but just two of us now, returned. Now there were three priests in Chicago again! But how different! It is simply a fact that at the beginning of one's career, the World opens before you. As you come to the end, it closes behind you. As the years went on Rosemarie felt increasingly out of place. (She used to say that she was *always* out of place in America.) Some months ago she must have decided that she "couldn't stand it any more" here, and remembering Emil Bock's promise made forty years before, she asked to return to Germany.

At the end of February we had a "farewell party in Chicago. (Rosemarie didn't actually leave until nearly the end of March.) The musical presentation almost didn't happen. Enough of the musicians turned up sick, so the original plan had to be abandoned. But there couldn't be *no* music! So a group of children improvised a small program which by far made up for the lack of skill and practice with the enthusiasm and joy of presentation, and joy and enthusiasm in the reception of it. The children put on a play adapted from a fairy tale. Then there were, as one would expect, a few speeches, followed by the presentation of 100 roses from the priest circle of North America.

Like the music, Rosemarie Bergmann's coming to Chicago was an improvisation; it had not been part of the original plan. She came here because somebody else couldn't come. Her years here, like most things in life, were not perfection in harmony and melody, but the overall effect has been, like with the music, one of joy and enthusiasm and gratitude. The play, of course, fits into this general picture, reflecting the countless plays which Rosemarie, over the years, produced with the children. As for the speeches, they reflected the warmth and joy of those present at having spent those year together, and the sorrow at parting. And at the end: the one hundred roses. Roses: the

image of thankfulness for the past, for what has been, hope for the future, for what is yet to be, and love for everything which now is.

Gregg Brewer

CELEBRATING THE 21ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN VANCOUVER

Friday, October 30 to Sunday, November 1, 1992

We all had been living with much warmth in our hearts towards the celebration of this very special event - three times seven cycles and at last, there it was, Friday evening, October 30.

Rain had fallen heavily all day but not without its blessing. It had left us with a pleasant calmness. With joy we entered, through the stillness of the evening, the garden around the church, and then into the festive hall downstairs beautifully decorated with flowers everywhere. How good it felt to be there and see immediately the familiar friendly faces of many dear friends. I was pleased to meet our special guests, Rev. Erk Ludwig (New York) and Rev. Rachel Shepherd from Cape Town.

After our priest, Rev. Grimm, had given "a warm welcome" we listened to the far reaching wisdom in the festive lecture, 'Religious Renewal - A Challenge for our Time', words of love and devotion by Rev. Ludwig.

Next morning in the chapel of our church, The Act of Consecration of Man was celebrated by Rev. Ludwig. Rev. Shepherd addressed the congregation with touching words about "The Angel of our Community". Rita Constanzi played beautiful music on her harp, and the soft glow of the candles, the flowers and warm flowing colours around the altar were weaving a harmonious sphere. One had the feeling that the music and the singing of the sacred hymns helped lift the service into heavenly spheres.

Later on at our Festival Meeting downstairs, we could listen again to the wonderful sound of the harp and one wished that we could be there forever. Then Rita Krack warmed us by her voice, accompanied on the piano by husband, Peter. The words of Rev. Grimm carried us back to that

difficult, distant beginning. What inner soul forces had been necessary to open the way to bring to fulfillment the founding of our Vancouver Centre. Memories of dear friends like “the Rachels” brought up a whole series of pictures of events of 21 years ago in a very lively way. It was very special that we could share those moments, sometimes related with quite a touch of humour. Dean Rachel had brought a set of pictures of those days. How good it was to see a photo of Rev. Verner Hegg (who unfortunately could not be present at the meeting due to illness) and his devoted wife Alstan. Some were with us who had been present at the foundation 21 years ago and were very helpful in remembering the events of the beginning.

In the meantime, Rev. Shepherd, who had presented us before with a remarkable and beautiful story of the founding of The Christian Community in Cape Town, had to leave us in order to catch a plane to carry her further on her trip through North America. Finally, we shared a beautiful luncheon.

On Sunday morning the clouds had gone, the sun was shining again. After the Service for the Children, The Act of Consecration of Man was celebrated by Rev. Grimm. Then again, downstairs, Rev. Ludwig concluded the days with words on “Where do we go from here?”

Going home one felt peace and could not be but grateful. Experiences like these give new strength. To all those who had made it possible for us to be there, I can only very humbly say: Thank you so very much. What a blessing that our destiny brought us together here in Vancouver in such a special way.

Teddy Alleyne, Vancouver

(From the Canada Newsletter, Spring 1993)

CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH IN FOREST ROW, GREAT BRITAIN

In our “Zero Number” we already referred to various church building activities in Great Britain.

After Aberdeen, a second church soon will be taken into use. The new church in Forest Row will be consecrated Saturday, September 11, 1993, in the course of a festive meeting from September 10 through 12.

BOOK REVIEW

Living with The Act of Consecration of Man by Hans-Werner Schroeder

This pamphlet is the first English translation of a tract written by the head of The Christian Community Seminary in 1981. As the title states, the pamphlet deals with some of the changes of consciousness that can occur when one builds a living relationship with The Act of Consecration of Man. Rather than going through those parts from the outside, as can be found in other books, Hans-Werner Schroeder attempts to pilot the reader through an inner journey that binds the Service into daily life.

The translation is somewhat stiff. Even so, Schroeder’s insights and the fact that this pamphlet was written by the person primarily responsible for changing the consciousness of those people who became priests make it a valuable addition to Christian Community literature. Who should read this pamphlet? Anyone who has become acquainted with The Act of Consecration of Man and wishes to deepen and enliven that experience.

Carter Redding
Sacramento

POEM

Accidents are not accidental

(at the death of a 10 year old child)

Accidents are not accidental,
they “befall” us,
fall on us;
they are: what falls to

belongs to
 catches up with us.
 We may recognize ourselves in them,
 like in a mirror;
 maybe less in smaller accidents,
 more clearly in the bigger ones,
 entirely in fatal ones.
 Then we are able to see clearly
 what a life long was only in dim outlines;
 Then we are able to do
 what we always longed for:
 to grasp ourselves in our very being
 where I feel "I"
 strongly "I".
 But this is not my "I" only
 it is also the "I" of the Greater One
 the One who speaks the "I" in me.

But the "I" itself is an "accident" (not accidental
 though)

 which befell us,
 fell to us - as our part...

...and - it can be fatal...,
 if it does not open tot he Greater One;
 - it can be poisonous
 can be indigestible
 unless we ask for the help
 of Him - who Himself went through
 THE fatal accident:
 The accident of Golgotha.
 Accident?
 Accidental?
 Yes - fallen to humanity
 as its destiny;
 and yet - to be conquered still,
 to be made our own,
 to be made "I".

But He took it on entirely,
 assimilated it,
 made it a deed,
 THE Deed
 where "I" and "I"
 from inside and outside

would act together.
 This was, this IS The Deed of Golgotha
 that Death Deed,
 which did not remain death.

Death did not remain an open question,
 which our human deaths still have to be,
 Death had become the fulfillment.

...and we hear from the Gospel,
 from the Good Spell of Him:
 "He who has trust in the Power of the I
 will be able to do the works which the I does,
 and greater ones of these will he do
 because the I goes to my Father..."
 The I widens,
 eventually encompasses all
 and thus sends the light for all,
 wherever they may be.

Then in this light of trust and faith,
 in this light,
 we will find the diagnosis of "accidents",
 of our destinies;
 we will be able to "look through"
 recognize them -
 not only as belonging to us
 but as those moments of grace
 when we can get a rare glimpse
 at who we are,
 when we can grasp ourselves in His Light,
 knowing:
 Accidents are not accidental
 but our Christ-willed destiny,
 blessings, we longed for and needed,
 to walk our further ways.

Werner Grimm

FOCUS ON A CONGREGATION

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN NEW YORK CITY

The streets of New York clench their granite

core like a fist. They stretch along the steep sides of tall buildings that cradle pedestrians in corridors which magnify the seasons of the year. A heavy winter blizzard mounts thick dikes of snow that will linger through the town for days, greying with soot along the curbsides until a rainstorm melts them into the gutters. Summer heat trapped in the squared canyons rides the shoulders of pedestrians like a pitiless, invisible monster oppressing the spirits of a tomb. By the time of their longed-for arrivals, the sweet unfurling of the budding trees in April and the shower of leaves in October easily rule our moods in relief from these extremes.

Day and night along the sleepless avenues press intrepid travelers, scuttling, shuffling, slipping by on foot, skateboard, bicycle (beware the messengers who work on commission!); the ubiquitous automobiles, the lurching, hissing buses; the fashionable rollerblades and resiliently unfashionable subways. Each hectic party continually dodges the stream of others, perceived only as obstacles to progress along the private mental tunnel carved through a serpentine labyrinth of crisscrossing paths.

Now the predictable result of all this compression upon sentient creatures is that they will squirm. And squirm they do, sometimes with exhilaration, often visibly with desperation, but ever threading their varied ways between other hurrying creatures, suspected antagonists, the disoriented, hovering homeless - all amidst the ceaseless clatter of traffic and claps of thunder from enormous radios that ride through the city as voluble cargo.

On the day created for renewal, those who can do so escape to the countryside, leaving the city "empty", especially on summer weekends. A sizable remainder streams into parks, museums, open department stores and flea-markets, or throng the sometimes miles-long street bazaars in a pulsing human surf.

Into this undifferentiated rush, the newsletter of The Christian Community in New York introduces its own calendar of events by a brief essay, usually a seasonal contemplation, written by one of the priests. A recent contribution poetically

described the effect on human memory that ancient monuments, built to preserve a record of spiritual deeds on earth, once called up in those who moved into "the 'aura' of such stones." It showed how this sensitive faculty has metamorphosed in our day into receptivity for language, and closed by recognizing the need for modern man to generate the inner word that can serve anew the purpose of the ancient stelae, to bridge earth and heaven.

As our mainstream culture schedules holidays increasingly for recreation rather than commemoration, fewer public celebrations offer us such lasting signposts to give qualitative meaning to the flow of time. If the initiative to celebrate religious festivals - even the weekly festival of resurrection - survives, it will be carried by voluntary rather than civic communities. Since 1948, when it began its work on this continent in New York, The Christian Community has provided consensus, guidance and a stage, proceeding subtly through the yearly cycle of colors at the altar, in which to orient our daily concerns through the substance of a liturgical calendar arising from modern spiritual insight. In the big city, its sacramental life restores a meaning to existence that is easily lost to haste.

The concentration of performing arts in New York has brought our community a disproportionate number of actors pursuing careers here through the years. This has lent succession of shifting styles both to traditional plays, such as those from Oberufer at Christmas, and freshly composed performances, including professional productions that occasionally debut for us prior to a successful run on the public stage. This culture may also help account for the report of one widely-traveled priest who finds the singing that makes up part of the service exceptionally enthusiastic here. Another factor may be our great good fortune to have highly accomplished pianists who accompany us. They tactfully follow the amateur leads in the Shepherds' Play, the servers' steps at the altar and the shape of the silence that follows each service. The musical impulse that enters the particular mood of each celebrated eucharist, funeral, wedding and christening arises from a preparation achieved

beyond traditional artistic training. So too, do the compositions for the services, and which, like the rotation of old master reproductions hanging on the several floors of our building, pass unhurriedly through the seasons.

Our location on the European edge of the continent affords us, though irregularly, a stream of visitors; new faces as well as old friends returning to other parts of the country, sometimes bearing news from congregations across the world, and sometimes from priests whom we have not seen here since their pre-seminary days.

Our own two priests bring us in full measure the versatility that is the special demand of their vocation: to accompany the human being through each of life's stages. We are often insufficiently aware of what our neighbors are experiencing, especially those of us here who have no children of our own, or have left behind or are yet to approach the passage which other members are living. But we are offered periodic glimpses of what these friends receive from the sacramental life: directly, in the dramatic manner that a priest addresses confirmees at their reception; indirectly when one chances to overhear a famously diffident older teenager in an unguarded moment, softly singing a folk song learned years before at the annual three-week summer camp. Now past its 20th season, the camp draws a hundred children and a score of young co-workers from Washington D.C. to Canada, and sometimes from across the ocean. The enlivening reverberations of religious education are evident in the children's festival celebrations, performances and in the caravan that promenades merrily from our building to the nearby park after the children's service, or in inclement weather, from the exuberant rustling that once in a great while rises from below the chapel toward the end of the child care hour to challenge the concentration of their parents at prayer.

Summers also provide wilderness youth conferences that bring together some seventy teenagers from the Northeast, who work intensively through theses of their own devising, and throughout the year adults are offered study groups, festivals and conferences that prompt insight grounded in scrip-

tural understanding.

A St. John's Tide workshop this year approached the themes of spiral and arrow in nature: through eurythmy we explored the alternating sense of environment encountered while leading centrifugal and centripetal herald angels. Form-drawing presented the complementary challenges of tracing varied spirals in and out, and lines along vertical, horizontal and diagonal currents. In conversation, older and younger exchanged contrasting accounts that revealed an archetypal, critical gap before the change of direction - at the noon hour of an individual life's maturing as well as in the cycle of the natural year. We discerned the same design in the architectures of leaf and sea shell, in the pattern of Hebridean Mystery dances, in the rustic image of John the Baptist as the Old Adam succeeded by the cosmopolitan Apostle Paul as the Adam of the New Jerusalem. Slides of Renaissance painting revealed profuse and varied figures pointing with their fingers to the dawn of the modern age, while at the turn of our own century, Paul Klee, lent his arrows more ambiguity and questioning. All these observations invited us to be more sensitive to such patterns in our daily lives.

Monthly "community Sundays" also evoke the culinary talents of accomplished members not content to raise flowers for the altar from their gardens in the large anthroposophical enclave of a neighboring suburb, where the families among us tend to cluster (our congregation stretches over several counties). On these festive occasions, once we are sated by the repast and conviviality in a downstairs community room, newly refurbished by interior designers who are friends of the congregation, we re-ascend to hear a recital, a performance or a topical expression of the foundations of our religious movement.

Concerning these, I was once admonished for having innocently referred to such presentations as "lectures." For if you want lectures (so I was told) you can go to the Anthroposophical Society; here we are offering "little talks." Well, these are little neither in substance nor even always in dimension, but rather incisively sculpted intimations of how

the spiritual world enters the most varied expressions of our material circumstances; and with a precision that is rare among contemporary Christian theologies, how we in turn are responsible for shaping the heavenly city. An absorbed audience travels together from the emotional complexities of our (by definition) dislocated individual destinies up to the heights of historical and literary grandeur and back again, transformed. Or else we are invited along a path that broadens from the homely neighborhood of personal life toward the sublime mansions in the words of Christ in the gospels and the new liturgy. At these presentations and in the Sunday sermons one often senses a wave of bemusement in the congregation, perplexed at how the speaker's thoughts happened with such uncanny accuracy to light upon some urgent, and presumed inaccessible, difficulty carried by the listener.

For those who freely choose to pursue the resources, healing strength is granted by the counsel available to those in search of a resolution to individual concerns. Confidentially accompanied on our search for ways to encounter the conundrums of modern marriage, child-rearing, illness and aging, many in the New York congregation have received in consultation abundant, graceful comfort without the sacrifice of accurate cognition, and inspiring vision without reinforcement of guilt. Pictures of our circumstances are brought to our imagination out of insight disciplined in our priests' transformative study and ordination; the inner tranquility that The Christian Community offers to build into the lives of its members stands in sharp contrast to other kinds of wealth concentrated in our city.

The constellation of faces in our congregation shifts from week to week, but astonishingly to some of those whose lives it has changed, our approach never appears about to become a visibly popular movement. This path to the renewal of Christianity retains a quiet presence on a quiet street, not soliciting additional travelers, and beyond the unobtrusive sign that bids everyone welcome to the services it holds, only occasionally

capitulates to the modern urban thirst for public words: captions planted in the sidewalk flower beds and strung in the window of the community car, addressed "Dear Thief," and exhorting restraint, have been effective.

An Epiphany morning this year dawned over a network of streets rendered violently hazardous to traffic and nearly impassable by foot. Some malevolent elemental conspiracy had produced a coating that covered the floor of the city with a sheet of frozen rain. But at the end of a stubborn, thirty-minute slide through town to the church, one determined pedestrian found a lone passage freed of danger on the sidewalk before the row house that is home to our chapel. In a metropolis famous all over the world for rewarding self-interested ambition with unlimited opportunities for fulfillment, a single route had been broken into the ice, and with evident effort, made safe to tread. Animated by that consummate gentleness in which alone redemption can breathe, someone had gone before to prepare the way, and as through many other difficulties in this complicated city, invisibly cleared a path at a steady, silent, starry pace.

Michael Ronall
New York

FROM THE EDITORS

Our thanks to contributors and readers of this fledgling enterprise! After the experiences of the first newsletter were collected and shared it has been decided to publish 3 issues a year rather than 4. The next issue will be for Christmas 1993 and we would hope to have that out by November 20 for the Advent mailing. So, as before, please send any contributions by the beginning of November at the latest to Dale Brunsvold, 2740 S. Ogden, Englewood, CO 80110-1744.

MICHAEL AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF POWER

A Michaelmas Conference, October 8-10, 1993, Devon, PA. Please inquire and register before October 1 at 212 Old Lancaster Rd, Devon, PA 19333, or phone (215) 647-6869, Richard Dancey, or 688-3128, Franziska Steinrueck.

ADDED ADDRESS

Boulder, Colorado USA Inquire (303) 440-5310, Claudia McLaren. One Saturday a Month: S=10:00 AM; Ch=9:30 AM (Or inquire Denver)