



## Ormonde Plater

I was born in New York City on 6 September 1933. My father Richard C. Plater Jr. was from Nashville, Tennessee, and my mother Eleanore Leake from Williamstown, Massachusetts. My parents, a marriage of old Southern and old Yankee families, had grown up in the Jazz Age and didn't take organized religion seriously. After the death of my mother in early August 1937, from typhoid fever, my maternal grandmother Bertha Leake, a staunch Anglo-Catholic, insisted that my younger brother David and I be baptized in the Episcopal Church. This happened on 29 August 1937 in St. John's Episcopal Church in Williamstown.

In 1939 my father brought my brother David, paternal grandparents Richard and Anna Plater, and me to Bayou Lafourche, Louisiana, where he managed and partly owned a sugarcane plantation, Acadia Plantation. My father remarried in 1941, to Pamela Robinson of New Orleans, who died in 1999. He died on Christmas Day 2004, age 96. As a child I learned to speak a few slang words of bayou French with my school buddies, and I attended historic St. John's Episcopal Church in Thibodaux, where the only exciting liturgical experience occurred one Sunday when my father stood up during the sermon and objected to the priest's remarks (as I recall, a sermon against the evils of skipping church to play golf).

I attended the local school, Thibodaux Elementary, through seventh grade. In 1946 I went to an Episcopal boarding school, Christ School, near Asheville, North Carolina, where I was immersed in the Anglo-Catholic experiences of incense, chanting, and kneeling. After high school I dropped out of the church but returned, years later, to familiar smells and sounds. I now

characterize myself as an Anglican Catholic who finds joy in the presence of Christ in word, bread and wine, and gathered people, and in the poor and oppressed.

I have graduated from the following universities:

Vanderbilt University, B.A. in English, 1955

Tulane University, M.A. in English, 1965

Tulane University, Ph.D. in English, 1969, "Narrative Folklore in the Works of George Washington Harris"

While working as a newspaper reporter for the evening Knickerbocker News in Albany, New York, in 1957, I married Kathleen (Kay) Treadway, and we have three children, Nancy, Elizabeth (Liz), and George. Nancy is an ophthalmic technician in Mobile married to Michael Aymond. Liz is an architect married to a contractor, Charles (Chuck) Cropp, in New Orleans, and they have two children, Isabelle (Ti-Belle and more recently Izzy, born 1993) and Piers (an old family name, born 1995). I spent two and a half delightful years taking care of Ti-Belle and then Piers while their parents worked. They call me Pèpère (Cajun slang for grandfather). George was director of physical therapy in a hospital in Encinitas, California, and now lives in Solvang, California, still working in the medical field; he is married to Lori Carlson, with a son, Lance (born 1997) and a daughter, Kayla (born 1999). These grandchildren are all bright and gifted, each in his or her own way.

Over the years, I have worked as a reporter, a columnist, a writer and editor, and a college English teacher, and I was a partner in the family business of land ownership and other real estate until the family sold out in 2003. (The new owner tore down the historic plantation house, originally three Creole cottages built by James Bowie, and replaced it with a house more typical of rich suburbia.) In 1964 we moved from upstate New York to New Orleans and have lived here ever since. Aside from church, I am retired.

In 1971 I was ordained a deacon at St Anna's Episcopal Church, New Orleans, and I have devoted much of the last thirty years to working in the church, including visiting in prisons and in hospitals and, more recently, diocesan administration. In January 1996 the bishop assigned me to Grace Church, New Orleans. In September 1998 my new bishop, Charles Jenkins, appointed me Archdeacon, with three areas of responsibility: director of the diaconate program, secretary of vocations, and secretary of liturgy. Seven years later, just after hurricane Katrina, I retired as Archdeacon, but I remained active as parish deacon of Grace Church, a flooded church in a flooded city. In January 2007, at my request, the bishop assigned me to Trinity, New Orleans, a large congregation with many active ministries.

Katrina changed the Gulf Coast, the city, and our life. Two days before the storm, we evacuated to Pensacola, where we eventually bought a small condo. Our home in New Orleans lost its roof and suffered water and mold in much of the upstairs. Our contractor son-in-law oversaw repairs, and we were able to return home just before Thanksgiving. Now we are survivors of the storm. I hope God spares this wacky, ruined city from further destruction.

My chief interests are liturgy, music, and social justice, and I read everything I pick up. I have written several books, *Many Servants* (Cowley, 1991, revised 2004), *Deacons in the Liturgy* (Church Publishing, 2009), *The Passion Gospels* (set to chant, Church Publishing Corp., 2007), *Cajun Dancing* (Pelican Publishing, 1992), and *Intercession* (Cowley Publications, 1995), and many articles, mainly about deacons and liturgy. After my father's death I took over his interest in genealogy and, using software and online research, have greatly extended the family tree into the past.

I took the photo (above, left) with my digital camera in 1999. The shelves in the background are actually a wooden coffin I put together some thirty years ago, with rope handles. It now serves as a case for books, records, and computer supplies. This expresses my view of life better than an "ecclesiastical" background. My wife has a similar coffin, containing clothing. The photo on the right is from 2007, and the coat of arms is for the Playters family in Suffolk in the fifteenth century (a bunch of social-climbing lawyers, as far as I can tell; I guess that's what the wavy lines mean).

6 November 2011