



FRATERNITY OF PRIESTS

"... to gather priests to Christ
and to one another to proclaim ..."



Meet a Brother

Fr. Herb Nichols

A Testimony from Providence

My relationship with the Fraternity, strangely enough, began in September 1984 upon returning from a pilgrimage to Rome. A parishioner phoned me to welcome me home and asked if he might come to the rectory to speak with me for a few moments.

Getting one foot in the door he said: "I'm going to introduce you to Jesus Christ." When I said: "Don't you think I already know him?" He replied: "Do you know Pope John-Paul." I told him that I shook his hand in Rome. He responded, "Good, call him up." I had to admit I didn't have his phone number. My friend continued, "Ah! You know a lot about him, but you don't know him, and what about Jesus? Knowing about a person is a far cry from knowing that person." I was flabbergasted. He had made a very real and serious point. A few weeks later he persuaded me to attend a Fire Rally in Providence.

In March I was ready to sign myself into a substance abuse facility. After reading my letter my friend begged me to hold off on going and said, "This is not the program for you. I don't know really why I'm saying this, except I know it's from God. In six weeks you will receive a letter which will be the answer you are looking for." It was a letter from Fr. John Allard.

He saw my name on the Fire list and sent invitations to all the priests of the area that might be interested in joining or forming fraternities. I went to the information day and knew immediately that this was a long awaited answer to prayer. Yet I still felt a little uncomfortable being the only priest from a neighboring diocese. Fr. Wil Gregoire immediately put me at rest when he asked me,

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History of the Fraternity of Priests

The Providence Fraternity

The Charismatic Movement was still vibrant in Providence during the later part of the 1970's. Priest were being "filled with the Spirit" and there was great excitement about what the Lord was doing in the Church.

When the word got out that Fr. Michael Scanlan was offering a weeklong conference for bishops and priests at was then called, the College of Steubenville, about a dozen priests and a couple deacons piled into a rented van and took off for Ohio. The experience of seeing over one thousand priests and deacons being touched by the Holy Spirit was so uplifting for them. The Steubenville conference became a highly anticipated yearly pilgrimage.

As Fr. Bob Giardina says, "We were full of excitement to go to those holy grounds. We wanted to follow the Spirit's lead...to be where the action (Holy Spirit) was."

During the conference of June of 1980 Frs. John Dreher, Joe Heaney, Wil Gregoire, Bob Giardina, and Jake Randall were pondering the haunting question: "who shepherds the shepherds". Who ministers to the ministers of the Gospel? The crying need for such ministry to priests is what drew hundreds to the Steubenville conferences.

The twelve brothers then gathered in the "upper room" (Keelan Lounge) which was in the J.C. Williams Center. At that time the "tent" where the conference was held was situated between Williams Center and St. Francis' Men's Dorm. They prayed for discernment there. The Word that was received came from *Acts 2:32-34*; "The community of believers were of one heart and one mind..."

They then agreed to continue to meet as a

group when they return to Providence, and to invite others. They wanted to live the gospel literally and to support their brother priests with unconditional love as Jesus states, "I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you" (*John 13:34*).

They decided to call themselves, the Priests Community. In September 1980 *Acts 2:32-34*, and *John 13:34* were highlighted in a three-paged leaflet describing their outreach. Without any real clear vision of where this would all lead, they elected John Dreher as overall leader, assisted by Joseph Heaney and John Allard.

The Priest's Community was unique. It was not just a support group, and it was not just a prayer group, but it encompassed these elements and more. They were a group of dozen or more men of varied ages who were bound together by their love for the Lord and each other. They spent time together praising God, sharing their lives, listening to God's Word and following His direction. They were committed to common unity, desiring to live as Christ's disciples as disciplined learners.

Catholic tradition shows us that community has always been an essential mark of the Church. The earliest communities were vibrant, alive and powerful. These qualities are also needed in today's age. The Priest's Community thus bound themselves together in the Lord by a series of commitments. They also decided not to judge brother priests who were not of the same mind, but to support them with unconditional love. They were committed to the restoration of the Church.

In 1983 Bethany House, George Kosicki's ministry to priests, left the Providence area. A number of priests came together to see how they could continue this valuable ministry. Eighteen priests attended the first meeting. On the Monday after Pentecost they were led by the Spirit to make a commitment to support each other as brothers. This commitment was renewed a year later.

They met every Monday Afternoon at 2:00pm. The first hour was a Charismatic Prayer meeting open to any priest who wanted to attend. The second session was for the committed brothers and followed the coffee break that ended the

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Dear Friends of the Priesthood,
Freedom!

It is the central work of Jesus in the gospel readings for Sunday masses during the month of February.

On February 6 Jesus frees the townsfolk of disease and demonic oppression.

On February 13 Jesus frees a leper of disease and isolation.

On February 20 Jesus frees a boy of sin and paralysis.

On February 27 Jesus proclaims freedom in the presence of the bridegroom.

Freedom is the hallmark of the Catholic Christian. It is part of our heritage. In this year of Great Jubilee, the power and message of Christian freedom is amplified. From the Old Testament teaching about the Jubilee, when debts were forgiven and slaves were freed, to the words of Jesus in the New Testament (Luke 4:18): He has come to set the captive free.

We live in a time in need of authentic Christian freedom. Although the words "freedom and liberty" are bantered about with great gusto, many individuals have substituted license for true freedom. License is freedom without responsibility, discipline and truth. Individuals serve their own desires and whims. Indulged frequently enough, license leads to vice. What looked like freedom in the beginning becomes a dominating, compulsive force in one's life. People become gripped by what they indulged in. When one "freely" overindulges in drinking, pornography, promiscuity, eating, gambling, smoking, et cetera, they become slaves to these things.

Christian freedom flows from Christ Himself. "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:30). It is knit to the truth. "If you continue in my word, then you are truly my disciples. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31,32) Christian freedom serves, not its self, but oth-

ers. St. Paul puts it this way:

For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm... For you were called to freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. (Galatians 5:1,13)

We are not simply freed from something. We are freed for something: to serve one another with love.

The year 2000 is to be a special year of freedom for Christians. First and foremost, it is to be a freedom from the debt of sin. Jesus Christ, by his sacrifice, has paid that debt. We are to glory in and relish the freedom Jesus has won for us.

We are also to pray and labor for authentic freedom to flourish on every level. On the personal level, Christ wants to free us from the fears, doubts, even compulsions that inhibit us from freely serving him. On the social and family level, Christ wants to liberate our relationships of bitterness and suspicion.

Even on the political level, Christ desires authentic freedom. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of this sort of freedom when he sought civil rights of African-Americans. He looked forward to the day when he could cry out, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, I'm free at last!" In places like Indonesia and the Sudan, where there is political and religious oppression, many seek a freedom from violence and just peace.

As priests who proclaim the gospel of authentic freedom, we want to thank you who support Fraternity of Priests with your prayers and offerings. Be assured of our prayers. In this Jubilee year, may we all grow into the freedom of the children of God.

In the heart of Jesus our Great Jubilee,



Fr. Robert J. Franco, board chair
Cleveland

New Look for the Fraternity Website

If you log onto "fraternityofpriests.org" the next time you are surfing the web you'll see a new look for the Fraternity of Priests website. Building up on the good foundation of our old website that had been set up several years ago, it is hoped that our new site will continue to spread the message of the Fraternity as well as serve the needs of both our members and friends.

To someone who is not familiar with the Fraternity it serves as a good introduction. It gives an overview of the mission and lifestyle of the Fraternity. It also shows where local fraternities are located and how to be in contact with us. People are able to sign up to receive the monthly newsletter and ask any questions they may have about the Fraternity.

In a greater desire to serve the needs of the members of individual Fraternities there is a new special member's section. In this area there are teachings made available to individual members as well as sections that would serve as a directory of other members, places to post prayer requests and share words of encouragement with one another about the life of members throughout the world.

To serve the needs of priests who are not in an area where a Fraternity may not be located we are looking into the possibility of chat rooms and bulletin boards where priests can share with one another about their own concerns and areas of interest. Please check out the new website when you get a chance and let us know what you think about it or any other ideas you may have. —Fr. Timothy Gaff



"How do you think St. Paul felt when he first met with the Twelve?"

I have never forgotten those words. Perhaps there is another metaphor that is important to me, the women at the well. Like her I have often had feelings of great rejection and little respect. However, the Fraternity, like Christ at the well, has taught me to recognize both Jesus and myself.

Not many months after joining the Fraternity, we were involved in a small group discussion. I had to release a secret that had been festering inside of me for 30 years. And again it was John Allard who responded, "Nick, I don't think any less of you for that." Like the Samaritan women (at the well) I wanted to run and tell everyone about this treasure that I found. Unfortunately most of the priests I told this to were simply too busy or just not interested enough to care.

My exuberation (for priesthood) led me after five years of prayerful discernment to divest myself of all my belongings and join a religious community. I know now that it was God's will to lead me through that experience, but not for me to remain in it.

Except for my year of Novitiate, when I was not permitted participation in any extra-Community spiritual directions, I stayed in contact and shared with a fraternity (New York Fraternity). They prudently refrained from involving themselves in the affairs of my religious community, but were able and willing to be most supportive to me as a brother priest. I am certainly as indebted to them, as I am to my brothers in Providence, for being able to remain faithful to my vocation.

It saddens my heart (to know) that after 15 years the numbers (in the Fraternity) are shrinking. Many of the elders have gone into retirement or eternity. And many of us

who were the youngest here in Providence (in the early days of the Fraternity) are for the most part still (the youngest).

Perhaps we have to renew emphasis on the triangles (of the order of commitment). That is, God first, Presbyterium second, and ministry third. It is all too easy to say I'm too busy (to attend meetings), busy doing the Lord's work. I can only speak for myself. If I had not this relationship with the presbyterium (Fraternity), I would have lost my heart and soul for ministry long ago.

Fraternity keeps me focused, not only on who I am with, but on who I am; a child of God, from whom comes my empowerment and strength through my brothers. God Bless you all.

Sincerely, Nick

Thanks to Fr. Don Evrard

Fr. Don Evrard has been acting guest master at Visitation House for the past year. During that time he has energetically worked with the newsletter, cared for the needs of the priests who have been on sabbatical, and made Visitation House a place of prayer and brotherhood.

Fr. Don has returned to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Indiana at the end of 1999. Fraternity of Priests is grateful for the service Fr. Don has rendered. His welcome made Visitation House a home for many priests. We pray that he continue to share the goodness of the Lord in all he does. Fr. Don's new address is: 4615 N. Michigan Road Indianapolis, IN 46228-2399. His e-mail address is donje@iquest.net



Fraternity Organizational Meeting at the Franciscan University of Steubenville in June 1982: Priests and Deacons Conference

History, cont . . .

prayer meeting. This second part was for ongoing teaching and personal ministry in small groups.

The Fraternity of Priests

The brothers in Providence were not comfortable with the term "community" to describe their relationship, so they changed their name from Priest's Community to the Fraternity of Priests. John Dreher went off to Steubenville to join with others from the Fraternity of Priests Team with the mission to spread renewal among the presbyterate. Wil Gregoire took John's place as leader of the Providence Fraternity.

Joe Heaney followed Wil as leader, and when he retired from active ministry Bob Giardina was made the leader.

Presently of all the priest support groups that started in Providence, only the Fraternity of Priests is still active. In the 18 years of existence four members have gone to the Lord: Frs. Marcel Dupont, Vincent Dobec, Ted McManus and Joe Cardoza. Two have left for personal reasons, and two have retired.

The number of committed members has remained a constant twelve. Added to this number are eleven others that join them for the first hour of praise. The editor wants to thank Fr. Bob Giardina for his major contribution to this article.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____



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Do you know anyone who would like to receive our Newsletter?

(Please print legibly)

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THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

February 2000						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			Rev. 1 Thomas Kredel <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 2 Joseph Luisi <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 3 Daniel Mahoney <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 4 Pope John Paul II
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Msgr. 26 John Allard <i>Providence</i>	Rev. 27 Gerard Caron <i>Providence</i>	Rev. 28 Lawrence Deery <i>Providence</i>	Rev. 29 Paul Desmarais <i>Providence</i>	Msgr. 30 Albert Cerrito <i>Providence</i>	Rev. 31 Tom Ferland <i>Providence</i>	

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

Jesus, Eternal High Priest, live in (name of priest), act in him, speak in and through him. Think your thoughts in his mind, love through his heart. Give him your own disposition and feelings. Teach, lead and guide him always. Correct, enlighten and expand his thoughts and behavior. Possess his soul, take over his entire personality and life. Replace him with yourself. Incline him to constant adoration and thanksgiving; pray in and through him. Let him live in you and keep him in this intimate union always.

Mary, Immaculate Conception, Mother of Jesus and Mother of priests, pray and intercede for (.....). Amen.



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