

Fraternity Founded in Slovenia

By Fr. Bob Franco

Fr. Bryan Eyman and I met at Hopkins International Airport in Cleveland on Sunday, March 31, to begin our trip to Slovenia. It was Easter. Both of us had had full Holy Week and Easter day duties. Yet, we looked forward with eagerness to the task that lay ahead of us – presenting a Fraternity Conference for the priests of Slovenia.

We hit the ground running. Having arrived at the airport in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, at 11:00 a.m. on Easter Monday, we were whisked away to St. Joseph's retreat house in Celje. We gathered for lunch shortly after our arrival and began our conference at 1:30 p.m.

Many of the priests of Slovenia teach in schools. The week after Easter was chosen to have this conference to accommodate their schedules. I wondered how many would attend this retreat. At our initial luncheon, my doubts seemed to have been confirmed. There were only about 6 priests. However, true to a priestly sense of timing that spans international boundaries, others began to trickle in. In fact, before the conference was complete, 19 priests had been part of this event.

All the talks that Fr. Bryan and I presented had to be simultaneously translated. Both of us were learning as we went. We tried to communicate succinctly and accurately the philosophy and practices of the

Fraternity. The Holy Spirit was faithful in assisting all involved: The presenters, translators, and the hearers. After three full days of talks, prayer, Eucharist, wonderful meals, and good fellowship, twelve priests formed a local fraternity. Fr. Bryan and I rejoiced in the goodness of the Lord.

The next day we had the privilege of meeting briefly with the bishop of



Fr. Bob Franco (front row, second from left) and Fr. Bryan Eyman (standing on Fr. Franco's left) of the Cleveland Fraternity with the members of the newly formed Fraternity in Slovenia. The group met

Maribor, Franc Kramberger, and to present to a larger group of priests from the diocese of Maribor the pillars of our Fraternity way of life: Holiness, brotherhood, and ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit to renew the church. Some of the priests came up to us afterward and expressed interest in the Fraternity. Fr. Vlado Bizjak, the organizer of the Fraternity conference, would follow up with them.

Later that day, Fr. Bryan and I were taken to Zidini Most, a small town

where the Sovina and Sava Rivers meet. Here we stayed with Fr. Toni Kmet. He showed us a wonderful hospitality in the midst of caring for his two churches. He had a great knack for incorporating Fr. Bryan and myself into the life of his parish. I was able to address his youth as they were preparing for confirmation and assist with a nursing home mass. Fr. Bryan was kept especially busy; celebrating the Divine Liturgy of the Byzantine rite for Fr. Kmet's flock and leading prayer at the nation Divine Mercy Sunday gathering.

Fr. Damian, one of the new Fraternity members, took us on a one-day sight seeing tour of the Lake Bled region of Slovenia. We visited a convent of joyful sisters who worked with youth, rowed a boat out to the island in the middle of Lake Bled, and celebrated mass at their National Shrine dedicated to our Lady at Brezje.

Jesus said, "Give and it shall be given to you..." (Luke 6:38). Fr. Bryan and I experienced the reality of that promise. As we gave Fraternity to our brothers in Slovenia, we experienced a deepening of our own understanding of and commitment to Fraternity of Priests.

(Postscript): I led a pilgrimage to Medjugorje and Rome at the end of September. Providentially, Fr. Toni Kmet brought a group from Slovenia overland eight hours to Medjugorje at the same time. Our paths crossed, and we were able to catch up with each other. The twelve members of their Fraternity continue to meet faithfully and strengthen their priestly vocations.

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The co-editor of the newsletter, Fr. Bill Cosgrove, can also be reached via e-mail at frbilpstr@aol.com or fax to 845-227-3951.

Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted!

Happy and Holy New Year! Another year, another start and beginning, another challenge to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus! At a time of resolutions, how about trying anew to be a disciple, the best disciple one can be? O.K., let's get practical. I was reflecting on Mt. 7.24-27 where Jesus describes the person who hears His words and acts on them is like the man who builds a house upon a rock. The winds blew and the waters crashed against the house, and it continued to stand because it had been built on rock. Jesus then calls the man who builds on sand "foolish" (he's the one who hears the Lord's words and does not act on them), because his house falls when the storms come. What a neat resolution: To evaluate the state of my house's foundation. Am I solidly rooted in Christ? Have I allowed my foundation to crumble a bit? Is it in disrepair due to lukewarmness, routine, and sin? Do I hear God's word to me daily, and do I act on it? Do I read Scripture regularly, enabling me to strengthen and even reform my foundation? Do I continue to seek to anchor my life in Christ, or have the sands of sin and time begun to replace the Rock? In a world where the storms seem to be picking up in intensity and are more frequent than ever, am I in shape to withstand the lashing winds?

In one of my parishes (I'm pastor of two) we are celebrating our Fiftieth Anniversary this year. It is a time to look back at one half of a century of lived faith, and to remember those who brought us to where we are in the present. The foundation laid fifty years ago was strong, anchored in Christ. As we remember, we are challenged to continue to build and strengthen our roots to move our portion of the Kingdom into the future. As a pastor, I feel compelled to challenge myself to be truly anchored in Christ and to bring my flock to that same place. In a world where everything is being shaken, it is imperative that we be strong. Only in Christ is that strength. I love Psalm 18.1-2 where the psalmist captures it all (for me, anyway):

"I love you, Lord, my strength,
my rock, my fortress, my savior.
My God is the rock where I take refuge;
My shield, my mighty help, my stronghold."

Have you ever seen such a collection of "strength" images in two short sentences? How do we begin to appropriate this, to own it for our lives? Again, Jesus tells us in Mt. 7 where we began. The Lord speaks of hearing His work and acting on it. I need to spend that time in prayer

and the reading of Scripture to hear His loving voice speaking to me. Then, I need that awesome virtue of obedience to bravely act on what I hear. Imagine if all God's people lived their lives in this manner instead of building in sand! This is some of my food for thought at this time of resolutions and new beginnings.

On behalf of all my brother priests in the Fraternity of Priests, I wish you and your loved ones a happy, healthy, and holy new year. Thank you again for your prayer support and generosity over the years. You continue to assist us in a mighty way in our ministry to priests. Be assured of our prayers. Again, there are new intercessors and donors who have joined our ranks – Welcome, God bless you, and thanks!! Let us continue to pray for each other in these times that our foundations be strongly rooted in Christ. Pray for your parish priest (and his foundation). Blessed 2003 to all of you.



In Christ,

Fr. John

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Prophecies Received by the St. Cloud Fraternity of Priests

FR. PETER KIRCHNE:

Dear Brothers: Know of My great love for you. If you know how I cared for you, your heart would melt for joy. These are challenging times for the priesthood. Always come to Me with your burdens. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Remember, I told St. Paul “My grace works through your weakness.” Stay close to Me in prayer, stay close to Me in the Sacrament, and I will guide you in your parishes. Love, your brother priest, Jesus

FR. JERRY MISCHKE:

My Brothers, do not be surprised that you and your brother priests are experiencing trials and hardships. I am purifying My church. I am purifying My priests. Welcome the trials that come your way as means to increase your love and dedication to Me. Accept the suffering that draws you and My people closer to Me. When you are persecuted for the sake of My name, rejoice. I am with you in these trials to heal you, to purify you, to draw you more deeply into My infinite love and holiness. I love you, My brothers.

FR. MARK STANG:

My brothers, please always remember I realize how challenging the vocation of priesthood that I called you to can be. Always know that I have not called you to minister alone. I am always with you until the end of time.

FR. ALQUADE:

“Here I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears Me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house and have supper with him and he with Me.” (Rev. 3:20) You have opened that door for Me and invited Me to have intimacy with you. I have appreciated your openness. Now go deeper. Duc in altum. I desire that you would share your heart with Me in a still fuller way. Give your all to Me. Allow Me to transform you into My very own image. Allow Me to mould, shape, and purify you to reflect My image ever more perfectly. Let My ways be your ways. Let My Fathers’ will be your will in all things, too. Deeply draw drafts of My eternal life. Do not let the world seduce you. Turn away from the worldly spirit of this age to praise and worship Me, and you will find rest and peace. You are My priest. There is much more love and service that you can give Me and My people. Just roll with the punches and I will work My plan through you. May My kingdom come through your ministry and all of your Fraternity Priest brothers. What I ask of you, I ask of them also. Trust in Me and My providence for you.

--Deacon’s Lodge, August 25, 2002.

Dear Brothers,

Greetings from the South African Dundee! Thank you very much for sending on The Visitation regularly since 1990 – the year I left Visitation House to return to my missionary work here in South Africa after two wonderful years, first with Bob Rousseau and then with Richard Champigny and all the other Fraternity priests who came and went. Some details of my work are in The Visitation vol. 4 no. 5.

I write on behalf of my Bishop, Michael Rowland, OFM, who is close to retirement – another three years – and does not have the energy to scour the world for “fide donum” priests to help in the Diocese until his own young seminarians are equipped to take over.

We have three vacant parishes at the moment, Evander, Piet Retief, and Volksrust, which are sited just south of Johannesburg, where there are a lot of parishes and priests involved in the charismatic renewal. I wonder if any of the Fraternity Priests would like to come work here for a year or two in this wonderful country and gain some missionary experience. Perhaps, too, they could set up a branch of the Fraternity of Priests. I was not able to do so, as I have been working in Zulu speaking areas in Natal, far from any other priests working in the Renewal, as well as working in Israel for three years. Fr. Eugene Bettinger O.Carm., of the New Jersey Fraternity, visited me whilst I worked in the Holy Land.

Many thanks again for sending on The Visitation regularly. And, be assured of my prayers for the Fraternity.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Finbarr Flanagan, OFM

To obtain information about working in the Diocese of Dundee, South Africa, please write to Fr. Flanagan at: PO Box 141, Dundee, Natal 3000, South Africa.

Save This Date!!

The annual Priests, Deacons, and Seminarians Conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville will be held **June 9-13, 2003**. Come join Bishop Robert Conlon (the newly appointed bishop of Steubenville), Fr. Michael Scanlan, TOR, Fr. Benedict Groeschel, CFR and Fr. Tom Valenti! For more details call 800-437-8368 or visit www.franciscanconferences.com

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THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

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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