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## God's Providence

by Fr. Richard Champigny, O. Carm

Baruch hashem!

I've always believed in God's providence. I've often preached about the wonders of God's providence. I've seen His providence at work in the lives of many people and, to be honest, I've seen it, in a small way, in my own life on occasion. But, I want to proclaim to you God's unexpected providence in a recent event in my life. My daily prayer has become "Praise God, Baruch hashem"!

I don't have a very good history of going to doctors. Nothing against the medical profession, but I was brought up with the mentality to avoid doctors unless it was absolutely necessary! My mother, at 91, never had a family physician until recently. That is only because the "assisted living facility", where she now resides, provides one! Of course, there is something to be said for the fact, that at 91 she has rarely ever been sick! But, be that as it may...

Several months ago, my Carmelite Province changed insurance carriers. I had recently moved to a new location: Tarrytown, NY. When I lived in Middletown, NY, I had a doctor that I went to at least three times in the over five years I was there! (Some of you may recall that in 2001 I did have a bout with Lyme disease, which was one of the "providence"

times that I had experienced.) Anyway, we were required to secure a "primary-care" physician for the new insurance plan of the Province. I dutifully approached a local doctor who agreed to fulfill that roll. The first step, of course, was to take a blood sample. When the doctor discovered anemia, he suggested a colonoscopy that was not due for another year or two. My father, by the way, died of colon cancer thirty-three years ago. The colonoscopy was fine, no polyps. But the anemia persisted. Then the doctor recommended the endoscopy. This left the doctor uncertain and a CAT scan was recommended. The CAT scan showed a growth in the small intestine and a gallstone that had also formed. After talking through the options, it was decided that surgery would be required to remove the growth, and at the same time the gall bladder. I've never had any kind of operation, except having my tonsils removed at age seven! I was reluctant, to say the least. However, the wisdom and experience of the doctors involved convinced me that surgery was the best option. When we finally scheduled it, I knew everything would be all right. It was to take place on the morning of October 15, the feast of St. Teresa of Avila, the great Carmelite mystic! However,

the surgeon quite honestly told me they would not know if the "growth" was malignant or not until after the operation when they would do a biopsy. Yes, I had in mind the cancerous growths that my father had some thirty years ago. But, I was quite resigned to this procedure and knew that whatever the outcome that it would all fit in God's plan for me. Yes, I wish I had known a little more about that plan before the operation!

One of the things I decided, as I was praying just before the operation, while lying on the bed in the operating room, was that whatever suffering and pain I would endure, I would offer it up for my brother priests and all the suffering the priesthood is undergoing at this time. I'm expecting great blessing for my brother priests!

Mercifully, I never felt a thing during the surgery. It lasted over three hours. The growth was "encrypted", somehow attached to the wall of the small intestine. But, the surgeon had no trouble removing it, along with the gall bladder! I awoke, back in my room, unaware of all that had happened and yet aware that something was very different. I could feel a thick bandage on my stomach, where the incision had been. As I slowly regained consciousness, I remembered what the pre-op nurse had told me: "Don't be brave about

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# Dear Friends of the Priesthood

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Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted!

Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal 1:11-12)

Paul, in writing to the Christian community in Galatia was trying to show that the gospel he was proclaiming was a gift, a revelation, from God. It was nothing that he thought up but rather the power of God being shown to all people. By accepting the gospel they were accepting God's plan for their lives and the life changing love that could mold them into a new creation.

As I was praying about what to share with you, our friends and benefactors, this month I was guided to this reading from Galatians. First of all, I believe that it is meant to be an encouragement to all of us. This new life that God constantly invites us to accept is His gift to us. It is a freely given gift that we are free to accept or reject. In his great love for us God has given us freedom. We are always free to follow Him and to accept His love for us. May we always accept this gift that God gives to us.

Second, just as the Lord spoke to Paul, the Lord also desires to speak to us. What Paul proclaimed was not of his own ideas, but God's revelation. Paul was confident enough in his relationship with the Lord that he could say that this was not his message but God speaking through him. God loves us enough that He wants to speak to us. He will speak to us through our times of prayer, through our celebration of the Sacraments, through our sharing with our brothers and sisters in the Lord and through many other ways each day. May our hearts always be open to the message that God wants to speak to us.

Third, we hear Paul say the gospel was not of human origin. We believe that the same is true of the Fraternity of Priests. It was not just a good idea that a group of very talented and holy priests had 20 years

ago. It was and is a movement of God at this particular time of the Church. It is a gift of God for the priesthood in our time. If you were able to talk to any member of the Fraternity you would see the truth of this statement. Lives and ministries have been changed dramatically by priests being members of the Fraternity of Priests.

We thank you again for your generosity. Without your help we could not support priests as we are called to serve them. I will be traveling to India next month and plans are underway for other missions to Ukraine, Tanzania and Uganda. Interest has also been expressed in the US and in other areas around the world.

Blessed be God for His faithfulness to this great gift of the Fraternity of Priests.

In Christ,

Fr. Timothy Graff



## Fraternity Financial Report

One of the objectives for the Fraternity of Priests is to inform our donors about the ongoing financial health and details of the organization. We're providing this information to help communicate our specific need and to thank those many faithful benefactors who help make our service possible. Thank you!

Monthly Donation Budget: **\$7,467.00**

Actual Donations: **\$6,319.92**

Budget Surplus (shortage) **(\$1,156.72)**

*Current as of November 30, 2003.*

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the pain...let us know at the first sign so we can treat it. Otherwise, it becomes not only more painful, but harder to deal with." I decided to be a "good" patient. The nurses were wonderful. The hardest thing was to swallow, or to try to clear my throat. That was the most painful. Then at one point, I had these spasms where I couldn't control the pain in the abdominal and stomach area! I thought of my prayer for my brother priests and said to myself, "this is for you guys"! I had to hold a pillow over my stomach (at the nurse's suggestion) for the next few days. I won't go into any more detail about the recovery!

On the first day, the surgeon came back to see me and said they were pleased with the operation, but it would take a couple of days to determine whether the growth was malignant or not. I noticed he was very careful not to use terms like "tumor"! I was thankful for that. On the fourth day, as the nurse was about to remove the bandages on my incision, the surgeon came in. I was a little surprised to look down and see the bright silver "staples" in a line from my chest down to my abdomen! The surgeon told her there was no need to replace the bandages, to let it heal as it was. I remember the nurse was at the head of my bed listening to the surgeon as he said, "...and I want you to know that we did the biopsy and the growth is absolutely not malignant." He smiled when I said "thank you" and then left. The nurse just gently took my hand and said, "Baruch hashem! Praise God, for that wonderful news"! I was deeply touched by her reaction and realized how important that bit of news was for me, as I shed a tear of relief and joy. I hadn't known that my nurse was Jewish, but she told me that in her language, when something wonderful happens, like what just had, that she praises God with those simple words; "Baruch hashem"!

I know clearly that all of this is God's plan, his providence, his mercy. A simple

Dear Brothers in Priesthood,

The Slovene Fraternity of priests has eight members. From five to eight priests gather once a month. Our meetings take place every second Wednesday each month.

The aim of our meeting is to grow in holiness and real spirituality. Because of this reason we discuss the themes which are connected with this. The meetings are of great importance for our personal growth, as well as the growth of a community. The following ecclesiastical documents are a great help to us: *The Directory for Priests' Service and Life* by John Paul II, *I Will Give You Shepherds* by John Paul II, and *Novo Millennio Ineunte*.

The book *Light in the Lord* by the late cardinal Basil Hume has been presented recently by one of the brothers. The priest's role in psychotherapeutic process of healing has been presented at one of our latest meetings. Four Slovene exorcists were guests at our last meeting. Two exorcists were from the Ljubljana archdiocese, one from the Maribor diocese and one from the Koper diocese. They presented the importance of exorcists, their role and service in the Catholic church.

Our meetings consist of the following parts:

1. Prayers in front of the Holy of Holies (one hour): prayers and worship of God (breviary), adoration in silence, rosary, spontaneous prayers (thanksgiving and intercession).

2. Themes.

3. Sharing personal experiences in connection with the discussed theme.

4. Social part (lunch and friendly talk).

I think that the most important aim of our meetings is to renew the sense of the official priesthood. These meetings help me to make priorities (1. God, 2. brothers, 3. our service) clear. They help me to strengthen my faith, to revive my hope, and to blaze up my love for God. I am very glad to have found again the importance of self-sacrifice to God, the sense of celibacy – eschatological vocation, celibacy and intimacy. This leads me finally to the real inner freedom, joy and peace. The items concerning our obligations as members of the Fraternity of Priests will be discussed this year.

God be with you, brothers

Peter Marcun, Slovenja

thing like changing insurance carriers may not have been so dramatic as saving my life, but certainly at least saved me from an unexpected operation or even an emergency operation which could have been life-threatening! I don't "do" pain very well! I don't like hospitals, or doctors, or any of that kind of stuff! But, I certainly have not only gained a great respect for all the medical people with whom I have dealt over this last month or so, but praise God for the wonders he does for us; for me! I am healing rapidly and feeling stronger every day! I am ready to return

full time to my ministry, knowing God still has a lot of work for me to do. Even though I just celebrated my 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, when most people retire, I know God's plan is for me to carry on for many more years to come. Baruch hashem!!!

### Mark your Calendars!

The annual Priests, Deacons, and Seminarians Conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville is scheduled for June 7-11, 2004! For more details, visit [www.franciscanconferences.com](http://www.franciscanconferences.com)!

Please send us your prayer intentions: \_\_\_\_\_

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# THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

## A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

*O 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.*

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

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