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## John Paul II's Letter to Priests

Excerpt from A letter of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II to Priests for Holy Thursday, 2004

Dear Priests!

I think of you first as you gather in the cathedrals of your different Dioceses around your respective Ordinaries for the renewal of your priestly promises. This eloquent rite (which) takes place before the blessing of the Holy Oils, especially the Chrism, and is a most fitting part of the Chrism Mass, which highlights the image of the Church as a priestly people made holy by the sacraments and sent forth to spread throughout the world the good odour of Christ the Saviour (2Cor 2:14-16).

At dusk I see you entering the Upper Room for the beginning of the Easter Triduum. It is precisely to the "large room upstairs" (Lk 22:12) that Jesus invites us to return each Holy Thursday, and it is there above all that I most cherish meeting you, my dear brothers in the priesthood. At the Last Supper, we were born as priests: for this reason it is both a pleasure and a duty to gather once again in the Upper Room and to remind one another with heartfelt gratitude of the lofty mission which we share.

We were born from the Eucharist. If we can truly say that the whole Church lives from the Eucharist ("Ecclesia de Eucharistia vivit"), as I reaffirmed in my recent

Encyclical, we can say the same thing about the ministerial priesthood: it is born, lives, works and bears fruit "de Eucharistia" (cf. Council of Trent, Sess. XXII, canon 2: DS 1752). "There can be no Eucharist without the priesthood, just as there can be no priesthood without the Eucharist" (cf. Gift and Mystery. On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination, New York, 1996, pp77-78).

The ordained ministry, which may never be reduced to its merely functional aspect since it belongs on the level of "being", enables the priest to act in persona Christi and culminates in the moment when he consecrates the bread and wine, repeating the actions and words of Jesus during the Last Supper.

Here we touch on what I have called the "apostolicity of the Eucharist" (cf. Encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 26-33). The sacrament of the Eucharist—like the sacrament of Reconciliation—was entrusted by Christ to the Apostles and has been passed down by them and their successors in every generation. At the beginning of his public life, the Messiah called the Twelve, appointed them "to be with him" and sent them out on mission (cf. Mk 3:14-15). At the Last Supper, this "being with" Jesus on

the part of the Apostles reached its culmination. By celebrating the Passover meal and instituting the Eucharist, the divine Master brought their vocation to its fulfillment. By saying "Do this in memory of me", he put a Eucharistic seal on their mission and, by uniting them to himself in sacramental communion, he charged them to perpetuate that most holy act in his memory.

Quite rightly, then, the Christian people gives thanks to God for the gift of the Eucharist and the priesthood, while praying unceasingly that priests will never be lacking in the Church. The number of priests is never sufficient to meet the constantly increasing demands of evangelization and the pastoral care of the faithful. In some places of the world the shortage of priests is all the more urgently felt since today the number of priests is dwindling without sufficient replacements from the younger generation. In other places, thank God, we see a promising spring-time of vocations. There is also a growing awareness among the People of God of the need to pray and work actively to promote vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life.

Let us pause in the Upper Room and contemplate the Redeemer who instituted the Eucharist and the priesthood at the Last Supper. On that holy night he called by name

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# Dear Friends of the Priesthood

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## Editor's Box:

Please send all articles, comments and photos to the editor, Msgr. Cuthbert Alexander, [cuffy1@yahoo.com](mailto:cuffy1@yahoo.com) or fax to 868-633-0836.

The co-editor of the newsletter, Fr. Bill Cosgrove, can also be reached via e-mail at [frbill@optonline.com](mailto:frbill@optonline.com) or fax to 845-227-3951.

Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted!

As I write these words to you on Easter Monday morning I know that you will not be reading them until the midst of the Easter season but I pray that the joy and peace of this season will still be with you. Easter is not simply a day but a whole liturgical season. In these 50 days, the Lord invites us to experience the new life that He died and rose for us to receive.

I want to take some time to share with you signs of new life that we see in our own life. In my area of America, Easter coincides with the beginning of Spring. It is a time when we see new life in nature. As flowers bloom and the memories of a long and cold winter fade, we are reminded that God's creation is always made new as a sign of God's love and care for us.

Here in my parish, we were privileged to baptize 5 young people and have 4 adults confirmed at our Easter Vigil. What joy filled the air as we celebrated their baptisms and confirmations. The laughter of one of the 8 year old boys as he arose from the water of the font was infectious and soon the entire church was filled with the joy of the moment. It was a time of God's visitation for us as we saw new life arise out of our young community of faith.

By the time you read this Frs. Brendan Murray and Joseph Meagher from the New Jersey Fraternity will have completed their mission to Ukraine. At the invitation of Fr. Piotr Hewlett they traveled to conduct a Fraternity Conference and begin the formation of local Fraternities there. Fr. Moe Larochelle from the Boston Fraternity will be traveling to give a Conference in Uganda in July and then join me in Tanzania as we support our friends in Renewal Ministries with FIRE rallies there and some priest retreats.

After our work with Renewal Ministries in Uganda last summer, a prayer group was started among the professors at the Seminary in Kampala and, one of the priests was selected as chair of the Fraternity of Priests there. They wrote us to let us know that over 70 seminarians had signed up for a Life in

the Spirit seminar to be held this July.

As Pope John Paul II has been saying for years, this is a new springtime for the Church. God is truly alive and working in

so many different areas of the world as we, at the Fraternity of Priests, are so pleased just to be a part of what God is doing.

All this can happen only with your help. Your prayers are touching priests around the world. As we see the power of God working in new ways in the life and ministry of priests, we can only imagine the impact this is having in the people that they are able to serve.

We continue to depend on your financial support as well. It allows us to accept invitations from around the world to support priests and help them in their life and ministry. Just Friday we were invited into 3 dioceses in Ethiopia.

Jesus is risen! Alleluia! May your life be made new by the resurrection of our Lord.

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: **\$5,131.00**

Budget Surplus (shortage) ( **\$2,336.00**)

*Current as of March 31, 2004.*

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each and every priest in every time. He looked at each one of them with the same look of loving encouragement with which he looked at Simon and Andrew, at James and John, at Nathanael beneath the fig tree, and at Matthew sitting at the tax office. Jesus has called us and, along a variety of paths, he continues to call many others to be his ministers.

From the Upper Room Christ tirelessly seeks and calls. Here we find the origin and the perennial source of an authentic pastoral promotion of priestly vocations. Let us consider ourselves, my brothers, the first ones responsible in this area, ready to help all those whom Christ wishes to associate to his priesthood to respond generously to his call.

## Prophecies Received

St. Cloud Fraternity of Priests, February 22, 2004

**Fr. Todd Schneider:** My Brothers, continue to gather together as a Fraternity of Priests. When you share a meal together I am with you. When you share the joys and troubles of the priestly ministry I am with you. Your time together is so important for the life of my priesthood. Together we stand before the Father's throne in prayer, in adoration, in the Eucharistic sacrifice. Your Fraternity is not only a blessing for your priesthood; it is also a grace that blesses the worldwide fraternity of Priests. Your Fraternity enables you to accomplish my will in a way that you could never accomplish alone. Remember the proverb: "A cord of three strands is not easily broken". Your fraternity is a central part of what I want to accomplish not only in your personal priesthood but also what I want for the good of the worldwide Fraternity of Priests. Thank you for coming together after a long weekend of serving my people and me. Come now and rest awhile. I love you—Jesus, your High Priest.

**Fr. Al Quade:** "I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me bears much fruit. Without me you can do nothing. Stay in my embrace & you will do well. My grace is sufficient for your perseverance. I am the source of all supernatural life. Seek this life and desire to grow in it always. Allow my life to nourish you, brother priests, in the aridity of this pagan world. Let me be your strength. Let me free you from human respect as you minister as priest and preach the gospel to a spiritually hungry and thirsty world. This is a world confused and lost when it comes to spiritual values. Your wholesome, dedicated, priestly example is needed to show them the way to me, the true life. I want to engraft them into myself, the true vine. Then abiding in me, they can find shelter and true life. You priests, absorbing my life as you are attached to me, will bring many to the oasis of my life and love, so that they can minister to others. I will bless them with vocations also to the priesthood and religious life. Through your cooperation I want many women and men to answer the call to the religious life. Lord, thank you for giving us life because you are the vine.

Join with other members of the Fraternity at the  
**Priests, Deacons, and Seminarians Conference**  
at Franciscan University of Steubenville  
**June 7-11, 2004.**

This year's conference theme is "Why not be Fire?" and will welcome Bishop Sam Jacobs, Bishop R. Daniel Conlon, Fr. Michael Scanlan, TOR, Fr. Larry Richards, Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR, the 2004 Shepherd's Award Recipient Fr. Bob Bedard, and much more!

Come and experience the brotherhood of the priesthood with your fellow Fraternity members and other clergy from throughout the world! For more details visit:  
<http://www.franciscanconferences.com>

**The Fraternity of Priests Annual Conference**  
will be hosted by the St. Louis Fraternity and will be held from **August 1-6, 2004.**

Brothers are invited to come early or stay late so as to enjoy the city. St. Louis has so much to offer including the Gateway Arch, Basilica of St. Louis, King of France (the first Catholic Church built west of the Mississippi River), and the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis with its amazing architecture.

More information will be posted in future issues of the Fraternity Newsletter! Mark your calendars now!

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.*

**Fraternity of Priests, Inc.**  
Franciscan University  
Steubenville, OH 43952-9671  
Phone: (740) 283-4400  
Fax: (740) 283-3622  
Email: [contact@fraternityofpriests.org](mailto:contact@fraternityofpriests.org)  
<http://www.fraternityofpriests.org>



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Dear Father/Tim/Graff,  
This donation is to help the Fraternity of Priests in continuing their work of ministering to priests.  
 \$10  \$25  \$50  \$100  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_