

Brothers, Be Encouraged!

In the past two years, the Catholic priesthood has experienced a collective trial. At the August Fraternity Conference, Fr Ray Ratzemberger shared what he heard the Lord saying in the midst of the 'purification'. He noted the following:

1.) TRIALS ARE NEEDED FOR GROWTH. They break us down so we can be built up in God (Eccl. 7:1-25). Trials are beneficial. To seek a life free of trials is the pursuit of those who do not want to grow in virtue, "whose belly is their god" (Philippians 3:19). Trials do not mean we are not under the protection of God (Sirach 2:1-18), (1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13). He allows trials for our growth in faith (Hebrews 12:5-13).

2.) THE GOOD ARE TRIED MORE THAN THE WICKED (Eccl. 8:10-17). Why does it appear that the good seem to suffer more than the wicked? A rabbi wrote about this, his book became popular, but he didn't mention this Catholic perspective: The Lord knows the end of the wicked, and it is not a good one. I believe He loves all people. He wishes all to be saved. He gives the reprobate a long life of prosperity, because they will be in utter poverty in the next world. Recall Jesus'

parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). The Lord gives sinners time to repent.

In our present time, evil is portrayed as good, and good as evil. If one is pro-life, he or she is vilified. Special laws are enacted to abridge their right to protest. However, if one is for a women's right to kill her un-born child, they are heralded as a champion for women's rights. The world follows subjective morality. The expression of every type of immoral behavior is encouraged now. Sordid things that in the past were done in secret

are now paraded on T.V. One should give into their desires, no matter how depraved they are (2 Tim. 4:3-4). They proclaim this as good. However, if one lives a moral life—they are called 'repressed'.

We Christians are still "open season" for the world. We're in the midst of persecution now. It might even increase.

3.) THE WORLD HATES US (John 15:18-23). The world hates us, because we are its conscience. That's why they hated Jesus. Like Jesus, we disrupt their plans for sin. For years they have been looking for ways to attack our sterling reputation.

For example: Some 10 years ago, a poll sought the opinion of the American public on, "what profession do you hold in deepest respect?" The answer was the priesthood.

Since then those in control of the media have increased their efforts to discredit the Church. Our views conflicted with theirs. We were the voice for
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A group of Fraternity brothers at the Cardinal Spellman Retreat Centre, last August.

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 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 or fax to 845-227-3951.

Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted!

So often when we gather for prayer and liturgy in the month of November we remember the deceased. Whether we are praying for our deceased loved ones or having a care for those who have recently suffered a loss, we are always reminded that death is very real.

Yet we are also reminded of a great truth: "Hope never dies or will leave us disappointed". Often I need to be reminded of this truth. When I begin to get caught up with the many details that can fill my days, and get distracted from seeing the Lord, I need a gentle (or not so gentle) reminder that my hope is in the Lord.

I was once at a meeting at our chancery in Newark where we were being presented with a report about the number of priests we could expect over the next 20 years. It was a discouraging report at best. Even though we are much better off that) most areas the shrinking number of priests was somewhat alarming. Yet then a true moment of grace came to the meeting.

Instead of the usual moaning and groaning about our situation, a discussion ensued about the great challenge there was but how we saw the Lord moving in new areas. Lay people shared about how this had challenged them to be more supportive of their priests both personally and ministerially. Priests shared about how the situation was challenging them to rethink their own priorities and what was really important in their ministry. The Bishop shared how it was a great opportunity for the Church to truly look at her life and see what God was asking of her. It was truly a time of visitation where we experienced the Lord in our midst.

We live in a time that needs hope. When I was teaching at the Priests Conference at Franciscan University last summer the entire week was about hope. The priests needed to be encouraged to see the signs of hope around them, even in these difficult days. I saw priests leave with a deeper sense of peace and hope in

the Lord. Simply because they were reminded that hope never dies.

We at the Fraternity of Priests are full of hope as well. One of the reasons for our hope is you.

Your prayers and your financial support allow us to be hopeful that we are truly serving the Lord by serving our brother priests. Thank you for being instruments of the Lord's hope in our lives.

During this month of November I will be remembering all of our benefactors and their deceased loved ones in prayer and at Mass.

Hope never dies nor does it leave us disappointed. And neither do you.

In Christ,

Fr. Timothy Graff



Fraternity Financial Report

One of the objectives for the Fraternity of Priests is to inform our donors in 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: **\$6,175.00**

Budget Surplus (shortage) **(\$1,292.00)**

Current as of September 30, 2003.

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the un-born, the defenseless, the disenfranchised, those who suffered fearful diseases, the elderly, morality, etc. Their plan: If they can discredit us, they can diminish our influence, and go on sinning.

Like us today, the early church was persecuted by the world. They had bad press too. They were called atheists, because they didn't believe in the Roman gods. They were called despicable cannibals, because they ate someone's body and blood. Therefore Christians were, in the eyes of the Romans, a people to be despised. However, today we look back on these ancient times as the glorious period of Church history: the holy time, the momentous time of the great Church leaders—the Apostolic & Church fathers, the Martyrs.

We Christians are still "open season" for the world. We're in the midst of persecution now. It might even increase. Priests who are concerned about what the world thinks of them will still be fighting a general malaise. Morale will still be a problem for them. We have to remember that things are different now. In this present society we will not hold the place of honor we held in the past.

4.) TRIALS ALWAYS PRECEDE A TIME OF GLORY. Harsh slavery preceded Israel's glorious liberation from Egypt. The Diocletian persecutions preceded the Church's golden age in Rome. Christian historians will look back on our times as one of the greatest times in the history of the Church. It will be considered the prelude to

the glorious time. A time is coming when we will shine in the Lord. We are in the storm, but the storm often leaves a rainbow. In South Eastern AZ we are in the monsoon season. We have violent storms that whip up the dust, but when the rain hits, it purifies the air. After the storm, the air is fresh and clean, and there's usually a double rainbow. A bright day is coming.

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5.) TO GET THROUGH IT WE MUST FOCUS ON JESUS (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Peter walked on the water (Mt. 14:22-33). So can we. He did a miraculous thing, and was stable as long as his focus was on Jesus. When he took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the situation around him, he fell. "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

6.) "REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS!" I say it again. Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4-7). Praise is the supplement of faith. It enriches our faith as the study of scripture increases it (Romans 10:17). Praise is real important during times of trial. It places us in the right perspective—creatures totally dependent on God. He is above us. We worship his greatness, thus realizing he is in

control and is above our difficulties. He can lift us up.

Let's get back to putting praise in our lives. Praise lifts us up (Eph. 5:16-21). It helps us to focus on Jesus.

Use the spiritual gifts when you praise God. I talked with someone recently who was baptized in the Spirit in the early 70s and they said they no longer speak in tongues. If we do not need it why would God give us this gift? I use it daily (Eph. 6:18). I love to sing in tongues.

Use the posture of praise (1 Tim. 2:8). (When Moses lifted his hands in the desert—they were victorious. He needed help to lift them up. Encourage one another to praise God.

St. Hildegard (died 1179) prophesied: "Toward the end of the world, mankind will be purified through sufferings. This will be true especially of the clergy, who will be robbed of all property...when the clergy has adopted a simple manner of living, conditions will improve."

St. Catherine of Siena (died 1380) prophesied: "The bride (Church) now all deformed and clothed in rags, will then gleam with beauty and jewels and crowned with the diadem of all virtue. All believing nations will rejoice and have such excellent and holy shepherds, and the unbelieving world, attracted by the glory of the Church, will be converted to her."

**Please continue to pray
for each other and our
fellow priests!**

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

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
<http://www.fraternityofpriests.org>



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