

## Ready for the Harvest

By Fr John Dreher

The Fraternity of Priests has long given a central place to the visitation message. As expressed by the Charismatic Renewal this message states that today God is “visiting his people in a unique outpouring of the Holy Spirit, ‘as of a new Pentecost’, calling his people to conversion in order to establish his kingdom.” In September’s *The Visitation*, Fr John Dreher, second leader of the Fraternity, from 1984 to 1988, began a reflection of the message ‘then and now’. In this issue Fr John leads us in a discernment of what God is doing today.

Does “visitation” describe what God is doing today? While acknowledging that other terms could be used, I think visitation is still appropriate. Whatever word we use, the important thing is that we try to discern what God is doing. What I propose is that we do that together in prayer. I will propose a framework and some issues for you to ponder and discuss. But first we need to understand what happened to the Charismatic Renewal in the U.S. and Europe. Let me begin with that.

### Was the Fraternity wrong about the outpouring of the Spirit?

In the mid-Eighties, precisely when the Fraternity was teaching that baptism in the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit were key elements of God’s visitation, the Renewal, which had propagated them, began a steep decline in the U.S. and Europe. A critic and a wag might well say, “If the Renewal was a visitation from God, it was a short visit.” I think however that the Fraternity was and is right.

**Failure to integrate:** The key problem with the Renewal was that from the beginning it existed alongside the Catholic Church. In the U.S., the place of its origin, leaders and Church leaders were on friendly terms, but they were never able to integrate the elements of the Renewal that were valid and lasting into Catholic theology, spirituality and worship. A few parishes have had some success at integration. The best example that I know of a full and well-ordered integration is the Emmanuel Community in France.

I have been working on the theological problem for a long time. I have come to the conclusion that integration is to be found in a proper understanding of the role of “anointing graces” in relationship to sanctifying graces. By anointing graces, I mean actual, prevenient

and charismatic graces. Sanctifying graces bring about our salvation; they alone impart the Life of Christ to us.

Anointing graces however are needed in evangelization, conversion and in living the Life of Christ. That is essentially what sanctifying grace is, the Life of Christ in us. For historic reasons, anointing graces have been sadly neglected. So, as I see it, God is indeed visiting his people by the outpouring of the anointing graces of the Spirit.

I believe the Church cannot be renewed and fulfill its mission in the modern world without them. For these reasons, I believe the Fraternity is right in making responsiveness to anointing graces, especially baptism in the Spirit and use of the gifts, a major charism. The role of anointing graces in the Catholic Church, however, is too big a topic to address more fully at this time.

**“By its fruits you will know it.”**

In any case, it is clear that the Renewal is from God. In addition to the historic evidence, which I have already mentioned, we can point to the Scriptural bases and the ongoing presence of charisms in the lives of the saints. Catholics expect to find charismatic gifts in the saints, and the Church requires two certified miracles for canonization. To show that the Renewal is an authentic and sovereign act of God, we can point also to its characteristics: no founding fathers, its origin among “little

...continued on page 3

# Dear Friends of the Priesthood

## EPISCOPAL ADVISORS

Bishop Sam Jacobs  
*Alexandria, LA*

Bishop Paul Bemile  
*Wa, Ghana*

Bishop Gilbert Sheldon  
*Steubenville, OH*

Bishop Donald Wuerl  
*Pittsburgh, PA*

Bishop John Myers  
*Newark, NY*

## DIRECTORS

Msgr. John Allard  
*Chairman*

Rev. Tim Graff  
*Newark, New Jersey*

Rev. Ray Ratzenberger  
*Tucson, AZ*

Rev. Cuthbert Alexander  
*Port of Spain, Trinidad*

Rev. Bob Giardina  
*Providence, Rhode Island*

## Editor's Box:

Please send all articles, comments and photos to the editor, Fr. Cuthbert Alexander, can be emailed at [cuttya1@tstt.net.tt](mailto:cuttya1@tstt.net.tt).

Would you like to support the Fraternity of Priests?

It is now possible to make a donation online. Click the "Make a Donation" link at our website:

[fraternityofpriests.org](http://fraternityofpriests.org)

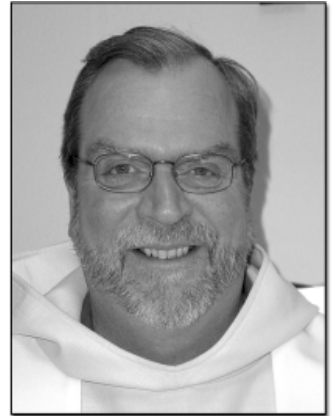
The other day I was reflecting on Lk.5.1-11. Jesus is preaching to the crowds. Nearby Peter and his friends are cleaning their nets after a fruitless night of fishing. The crowd is growing so much that Jesus borrows Peter's boat to teach the people from a few feet into the lake. Once finished Jesus says to Peter: "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." They've just cleaned their nets and gotten them in order for the next night's fish. Peter's every instinct is to say "no": they were tired, they've caught nothing, their nets were clean, the time of day was wrong for fishing—besides, what does this carpenter know about fishing? But there must have been something about Jesus' glance, His manner, that caused Peter to obey. He tells Jesus, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." We all know what happened: they caught so many fish that the nets were about to break and their boats nearly sank.

Very often we get waylaid by the weariness of life, by disappointments, by lack of interior growth, by unanswered prayer, etc., when we have the sensation of total failure, and have lots of reasons for wanting to give up. Can we hear the Lord's voice saying to us, "put out into the deep"? He says, "begin once more, start off all over again in my name." The secret of all progress and of all victory is, in fact, to know how to begin again, to learn from a failure and to try once more. This is the power of obedience, after a night of vain labor and no fish, Peter lowers the nets anew and catches a huge number of fish. God always rewards obedience bountifully. Even though Peter had years of fishing experience, he obeys the Carpenter—he trusts in the words of Jesus. Obedience is important because Jesus was obedient—to death. In His obedience we have redemption. This grace causes us to want to identify our will in everything with the will of God.

The Lord calls us to try and try again. It doesn't matter how often we fail, begin anew, start again. Even if we feel like giving up and things seem dire and hopeless, let

down those nets one more time. When Peter sees all this he falls on his knees before the Lord and says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."

Jesus says, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." When we find ourselves overwhelmed or super frustrated, or tempted to give up, can we hear the Lord saying, "Do not be afraid!?"



Just imagine, Jesus began by asking Peter for the loan of his boat and ended up with his life. The Lord invites us to "put out into the deep." There is a world out there to be caught up in the nets of his kingdom. The Lord needs us, we are all He has (even if it doesn't seem like a prize!)

As priests the Lord calls us in a special way to "launch out into the deep." Even when those waters seem so stormy and fish-less. We of the Fraternity of Priests are called to encourage each other to keep fishing, to hear the Lord's call and to obey.

Once again we give thanks to and for you, our generous intercessors and benefactors. In days when it is tempting to hang up the nets and go home, your prayers and concern keep us going. Never underestimate your role in this venture called the Fraternity of Priests. I'd like to give a special welcome to a number of new recipients of our newsletter who have joined these important ranks of intercessors and donors. Please pray for priests and pray for your parish priest. Know that our prayers are with you and your intentions. Thank you for who you are.

In Christ,

Fr. John

continued from page 1...

people,” spontaneous emergence in several places, an ecumenical occurrence and so forth.

The most significant fruits are the hundreds of thousands of renewed Catholic lay people who presently are the life and workforce of Catholic parishes, institutions, charitable endeavors and movements. Many, perhaps most, vocations to the priesthood and religious life first found Christ and discovered their vocation in the Renewal.

**Christ to the Church and to modern men**

As to God’s visitation, I think it will be helpful for us to recognize what he is doing by making a distinction between “the everlasting framework of grace” and how we receive the grace in a given historic situation.

**The everlasting framework:** Current faith and pastoral issues exist in the framework of the Father’s sending the Word and the Spirit to save sinners and to

bring the baptized along a path of sanctification in an ever deeper communion of life with himself and other members of the Church. God’s plan in Christ is eternal. For those who continue to respond, its fruit is eternal life. The Chosen People of the Old Covenant responded to God by preparing for the sending of the Messiah. The Jews in Jesus’ day responded by obedience of faith in

him as Messiah and by continuing that response in the establishing of the Church; or they refused faith and sorted themselves out. God’s work is not different in the modern world. In and through current issues, we are responding or failing to respond to the Father’s sending of the Word and the Spirit.

What determines priorities for faith and for pastoral care today is what God is doing. The real issue is Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?” The framework is everlasting. What changes is the faith level within the Church and the readiness factors in the world. I will use the three elements of



Fraternity priests gather in Saint Gerard’s Chapel, at Picture Rocks Retreat Center, Tucson, Arizona, during this year’s annual conference.

Mark 1:15 to talk about the visitation today.

**The time is fulfilled**

**Globalization:** There is a “physical” readiness for the transmission of the Gospel. Transportation and communications technology have reduced the size of the earth. Above all, the economy now involves all nations to a greater or lesser extent. There

is a certain *pax Americana* brought about by the fall of Communism and the increasing friendliness between Russia and the West and by the reluctant acceptance of the “world police” role of the U.S. Religiously and culturally there is still great diversity, but there is a veneer of the worst of Western culture being laid on all peoples everywhere by the entertainment industry. This means for one thing that even the peoples not integrated into the global economy have been infected with desire for a materialistic and hedonistic lifestyle. This is a cause not only for action but reaction.

**The modern experiment has**

**failed:** For three centuries, the nations of Europe and America have attempted to build a life apart from God. The dynamic of modern, Western culture has been an ever-deeper turning to man and to the world and a turning from God and eternal life. In the twentieth Century, this attempt reached the end of the road – in totalitarianism, empty hedonism, deconstruction and a veritable bloodbath. The experiment has failed. Deep down

people know that it has failed. This is especially true of the rising younger generation. The fields are ripening for the harvest. What people in the post-modern era need are the witness of faith on the part of Christians and the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. The preaching of Christ needs to be aimed like an arrow at the deceptive heart of modern culture.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# 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.*

Please cut and return this form with your donation

**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>



Do you know anyone who would like to receive our Newsletter?  
(Please print legibly)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State and Zip \_\_\_\_\_

The Fraternity of Priests pledge of financial accountability: We take very seriously the trust you put in us when you send a gift. We stand accountable before God and you to honor that trust. We pledge: **To use your gift carefully and wisely, and not to ask for money that is not needed.**

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