

Port of Spain Fraternity Hosts First Annual Meeting

'Historic' is one word for it. For the first time, the annual Fraternity of Priests meeting will take place in Port of Spain, Trinidad. It will run from Sunday July 29 to Friday, August 3. For the eleven brothers of the Port of Spain Fraternity it is a 'word' hastening to fulfillment. When the group first put forward this idea three years ago some thought it a little far-fetched. It is all happening sooner than everyone imagined.

The Port of Spain Fraternity grew out of the efforts of a 1987 Fire Rally. The group has met continuously over the years. Fr. John Theodore served as leader from 1987 to 1993 and Fr. Cuthbert Alexander from 1993 to 2000. Fr Dwight Merrick is its present leader.

Please pray God's special blessing on the Annual Meeting!



Annually, the Port of Spain Fraternity hosts a retreat to which it invites all priests working in Trinidad and Tobago and many from other Caribbean territories. Picture shows some participants of the most recent retreat with Bishop Sam Jacobs, third from left.

Welcome to Trinidad and Tobago

By Fr. Dwight Merrick, Leader of the Port of Spain Fraternity

Trinidad and Tobago: Where is this twin-island state? Just seven miles off the coast of Venezuela, South America, and the most southern of the Caribbean isles. Rich in oil and natural gas like Venezuela but blessed with sun, sea, and sand all year round complimenting the lush green hills, the majestic ocean and the refreshing sea-breeze like all our sister isles.

Internationally, we might be better known as the home of: the steel pan, calypso music, Carnival, Ato Boldon (winner of four individual Olympic sprint medals) and Dwight Yorke (of Manchester United soccer fame).

What do our people look like? A

rainbow people, where East meets West; Africans (40%), East Indian (40%), Mixed (18%) along with thriving groups of Chinese, Lebanese, Syrians and Portuguese. The population stands at 1.3 million.

How strong is the Catholic Faith in Trinidad? Very strong! We represent the largest religious group with 29% of the population, followed by Hindu (24%), Islam (6%), Anglicans (11%) and smaller but rapidly growing Pentecostal, Adventist, and other Protestant groups. Recent times have also seen the influx of some Oriental and Christian based Cults and Sects.

How did the Gospel reach our shores? Colonized and first governed by Spain for some three hundred years (1498-

1797) and then Britain from 1797-1962, Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism have been the official religions up to recent times. Despite this however, the East Indians (from India) have fought stoically to reserve their culture as well as their Hindu and Islamic beliefs. Likewise have many African traditions and even religious beliefs survived to the present time.

Welcome to Trinidad and Tobago and, for those who arrive early or stay on afterwards, we are arranging a little treat; beach-houses on the edge of the ocean with nearby waterfalls and nature trails for your leisure and enjoyment.

Dear Friends of the Priesthood

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Dear Friends of the Priesthood,
Happy Summer!!!

The Gershwin song, "Summertime," has been rolling through my brain: "Summertime, and the living is easy..." is the opening line. I'd like to suggest a brief change in the phrase for Christians. Hopefully life is a little easier for you this Summer, but how about: "Summertime, and the living is holy..."? I've always reacted to some Christian churches that shut down for vacation during the Summer. Thank God our God NEVER takes a vacation from us!!!

How is your Summer going? In this "easy" time, what a great opportunity we have to evaluate our quest for holiness, to take steps to rectify what is awry, and to move forward in Christ. What a great time: "...to do the right, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6.8),

...this incredible God continues to love me and call me to holiness. He wants me to be just like Him, a reflection of Him—Holy!

while hiking, or sitting on the beach, fishing, or whatever your favorite Summer pastime might be. I am forced to admit that when the "rat race" can be put on hold for a while, and I am able to get away and rest a bit, the "living" is often "lazy" and not "holy". And yet, this incredible God continues to love me and call me to holiness. He just wants me to be like Him, a reflection of Him—holy!! Isn't that awesome?

By the time you get this letter we will be very close to the start of our Annual Meeting in Trinidad. Priests from all over the world will be assembling to hear and share God's word, so as to sense where He is leading the Fraternity of Priests in the new millenium. Please pray for us and what God is doing and wants to do. As we reach out to more and more brother priests in more and more countries, how critical it is that prayer surrounds and motivates our outreach and ministry.

Once again, many thanks to you, our friends and benefactors. How important your role is in what the Fraternity does! We are indebted and we are grateful. Remember to pray for your parish priest. Send his name in to us so that we can pray for him too. If the Lord gives you the opportunity, tell him about the Fraternity. Think of the impact one renewed priest who is alive in the Lord can have on peoples' lives.

As this "easy" time of Summer continues, may it be "holy" and not "lazy" for you. Yes, by all means, take it easy, but do it in the Lord who loves you.



In Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Fr. John".

Fr. John

Keep Thy Priests Close to Thee, O Lord

Keep Thy priests close to Thee, O Lord!
Keep them, I pray Thee, dearest Lord,
Keep them, for they are Thine
Thy priests whose lives burn out before
Thy consecrated shrine.
Keep them from the world apart.
When earthly pleasures tempt, allure,
Shelter them in Thy heart.
Keep them, and comfort them in hours
of loneliness and pain
When all their life of sacrifice
for souls seems but in vain.
Keep them, and remember, O Lord
They have no one but Thee,
Yet, they have only human hearts,
With human frailty.
Keep them as spotless as the Host,
That daily they caress.
Their every thought and word and deed,
Deign, dearest Lord, to bless.

The Archdiocese of Port of Spain

From Columbus in 1498, up to the capitulation to the British in 1797, Roman Catholicism remained the religion of most of the inhabitants of Trinidad. The island remained part of the Diocese of Puerto Rico until 1790 when it came under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Guyana (South America). Even with the change over to British rule, the inhabitants were guaranteed freedom of religion.

New administrative needs then saw the creation of a Vicariate Apostolic in 1819 to govern the church in Trinidad as well as the other British and Danish colonies in the West Indies. The succession of vicars apostolic then had to endure the challenges of other Christian churches in the wake of the abolition of slavery and being replaced by the Anglican Church as the official religion in 1844 (when the Anglican Church became established).

Finally, on 30 April 1850, Pope Pius IX transformed the vicariate into the Archdiocese of Port of Spain with jurisdiction over St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada and Tobago and with Roseau, Dominica as its suffragan see. At that time, the Catholic population stood at 44,000 out of a population of 70,000. There were 16 parishes, with several schools, served by 20 resident priests.

In 1943 the local seminary was established and the first local seminarians ordained in 1953. Always regional in character, the seminary

officially became the Regional Seminary of St John Vianney and the Uganda Martyrs in 1970. Over the years the student body has comprised young men, not only from Trinidad and Tobago, but also from several Caribbean territories, including St Lucia, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and the Bahamas.

The archdiocese's first local

ordinary, Anthony Pantin, was appointed in 1968. Archbishop Edward J. Gilbert, C.Ss.R. was installed as the ninth Archbishop of Port of Spain in May this year, following the death of Archbishop Pantin in March 2000.

Today over 110 priests (60 of them in parishes) serve a total Catholic population of 390,000.

That's Fraternity



In picture: Fr Bob (center) makes a point about Fraternity to retreat participants.

Fr. Bob Franco of the Cleveland Fraternity journeyed to Slovenia-the most northern part of what was Yugoslavia-in May. Fr. Bob went there with Renewal Ministries to participate in an evangelization mission, which included rallies, street evangelization events and a priest

retreat. The retreat brought together priests from three dioceses of Slovenia-Ljubljana, Maribor and Koper.

The retreat had as its focus Pope John Paul's Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* in which the Holy Father urges the Church to "go forward in hope" to fulfill its missionary mandate. It gave Fr. Bob the opportunity to deliver the Fraternity message to the 23 priests, eager to learn how their priesthood and their ministry might benefit from Fraternity. It could well have prepared the way for a Fraternity of Priests Conference sometime soon.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

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(Please print legibly)

Name

Street

City, State and Zip


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


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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 \$ _____