



"To gather priests to Christ and to one another to proclaim..."

THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

January 2012						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Rev. Ernest Kamath Winnipeg, Canada	Rev. Stan Jaworski Winnipeg, Canada	Rev. Francois Paradis OMI Winnipeg, Canada	Rev. Rheel Forest Winnipeg, Canada	Rev. Maurice Jeanneau Winnipeg, Canada	Rev. Michael Nault Winnipeg, Canada	Pope Benedict XVI
Rev. Stephen Johnson Worcester, MA	Rev. Michael Roy Worcester, MA	Rev. George Dunkley Worcester, MA	Rev. Jean-Paul Gagnon Worcester, MA	Rev. Harold Imamshah Alexandria, LA	Rev. Ron Matthews Alexandria, LA	Rev. Ferre D'cruz Alexandria, LA
Dcn. Norman Gremillion Alexandria, LA	Rev. John Pardue Alexandria, LA	Rev. Larry Hess Allentown, PA	Rev. Paul Gilbert Boston, MA	Rev. Patrick Gilbert Boston, MA	Rev. Gerry Fraser Boston, MA	Rev. Maurice laRochelle Boston, MA
Rev. Paul McManus Boston, MA	Rev. Donald Clinton Boston, MA	Rev. John Kiley Boston, MA	Rev. Volney DeRosio Boston, MA	Rev. Paul Gousse Boston, MA	Rev. Richard Kelley Boston, MA	Rev. Matthew Jones Cardiff, UK
Rev. John Fahy Cardiff, UK	Rev. Donal Gillespie Cardiff, UK	Rev. Barry English Cardiff, UK				

O Come Let Us Adore Him!

By Fr. John Kiley

It was mid-December and one of our Junior High religious education leaders brought up the idea with his group that they gather on a particular evening and go through the neighborhood singing Christmas carols. This took place several years ago in a parish where I was a member of a Team Ministry. This group of young people became very enthusiastic which greatly delighted their leader. The awaited cool and crisp December evening finally arrived and the teens come together to rehearse the music they would sing. When the teacher decided to begin the rehearsal with "Silent Night" he was met with blank stares. Not one student knew it. He moved on to "O Come, All Ye Faithfull" and again observed the puzzled looks on the faces of the young people. He suggested "Joy to the World" and the kids shook their heads. Finally he asked them what Christmas carols they knew. With renewed interest they responded "Jingle Bells", "Frosty the Snowman", "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer". Once they were able to get their act together the evening was a moderate success. It was also a wake-up call for this particular teacher and for me as a priest. Most of the traditional Christmas Carols revered and

loved by former generations are unknown today. We all recognize that our society has become more and more secularized. One unfortunate aspect of this is that it is now commonplace for many people to see Christmas simply as the "Holiday Season" with the result that not only our youth, but many of our adult Catholics are no longer familiar with the true religious meaning of the season and the theological richness of our Christmas carols. For those Catholic families (in places the minority) that participate at Mass only once or twice a year, exposure to the Liturgy and to the religious music of Christmas is minimal.

The late Father Raymond Brown S.S., one of our outstanding Catholic scripture scholars, wrote a book on the Infancy Narratives that these narratives of the Birth of Christ are really the "gospel in miniature". I believe that the same can be said of many of our traditional carols. Many of them present to us aspects of the basic message of the gospel wrapped up beautifully in poetry and song.

In recent years during Advent I have been encouraging families to have some quality recordings of traditional Christmas carols in their homes. Many of these carols are profound expressions of Christian

faith, composed by people of faith. I have urged families and individuals to listen to some of these carols and then to reflect on the texts. This can be followed by a sharing of what the texts teach about Jesus and the meaning of the redemption He has accomplished. I have also at times woven the texts of carols into the Christmas homily. Two great resources to have on your bookshelf are: *The Penguin Book of Carols* edited by Ian Bradley and published by Penguin Books and *Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas* by Ace Collins and published by Zondervan. These books present not only the texts but also the history of many of the best loved carols throughout the world. Let's consider some examples.

One of the most theologically rich carols is *O Come, All Ye Faithful*. The short version which is in most of our Missalettes proclaims that the One born in Bethlehem is *Lord and is to be adored* – a clear and concise statement of the divinity of Christ. Continuing on in the carol we acclaim that Jesus is the *Word of the Father now in flesh appearing* – the mystery of the Incarnation. If we are fortunate enough to have the complete text we sing that Jesus is *God of God, Light of Light, Lo! He abhors not the Virgin's womb; Very God, Begotten, not created*. What a

...continued on page 3

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.

Please cut and return this form with your donation.

1234-5678
Rev. John W. Smith
ABC Company
1234 Any Street
Apt. 567
Anytown, US 12345-6789

Name _____
Street _____
City, State and Zip _____

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

Dear Father Bob Franco, This donation is to help the Fraternity of Priests in continuing their work of ministering to priests. 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.

\$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____

Dear Father Bob Franco,

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



Dear Friends of the Priesthood

EPISCOPAL ADVISORS

Donald Cardinal Wuerl
Washington, DC

Archbishop
Franc Kromberger
Maribor, Slovenia

Archbishop John Myers
Newark, NJ

Bishop Sam Jacobs
Houma-Thibodaux, LA

Bishop Paul Bemile
Wa, Ghana

DIRECTORS

Fr. Bob Franco
Cleveland, OH
Chairman

Fr. John Kiley
Boston, MA

Fr. Bill Cosgrove
New York, NY

Fr. Francis Dabre
India

Fr. John Sweeney
Pittsburgh, PA

Fr. George Montague wrote a commentary on the gospel of Matthew entitled Companion God.

His title highlights one of the recurring themes in the gospel of Matthew: **God is with us**. In the very first chapter St. Matthew quotes Isaiah the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means 'God is with us.' (Matthew 1:23)

This is accented again in the gospel when Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, **there am I in the midst of them.**" (Matthew 18:20) Finally, the very last words of the gospel, Jesus addressed his apostles, "And behold, **I am with you always**, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) In Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, God is with us.

The apostle John also proclaims the truth that God is with us. However, he underscores the environment that makes the invisible presence of the Lord palpable. It is our mutual love that provides the tenting for God to pitch his dwelling among us.

"No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love each other, God remains in us, and, his love is brought to perfection in us." (1 John 4:12)

We can discern this presence of Lord with us if we take the spiritual pulse of our social environments. Some work environments may be characterized by competitiveness, gossip and fear. Though we try to be an influence for Christ by bringing love and truth into these social networks, we might be hard pressed to recognize the presence of Christ in those environments.

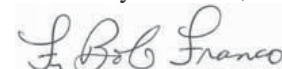
On the other hand, in environments where people intentionally, publically and unashamedly acknowledge Jesus Christ and try to love each other, the Lord is present and more easily sensed. These types of social settings hopefully include families, parish staff/groups and local fraternities.

The motto of the Fraternity of Priests is so simple but so profound: *to gather priests to Christ and to one another*. However, when we live this motto Christ becomes present to us in a way that brings healing. Our priestly vocation is strengthened. It is when we seek the Lord in prayer and open our hearts to each other in truth and love that Jesus Christ becomes present to us. He becomes the "air we breathe".

As we celebrate Christ among us this Christmas season and ready ourselves for a new year, let us pray to become Christian community builders. As Fraternity members we need to commit ourselves to attend meetings and open our hearts to each other when we get there. Thus we will discover ever more deeply, Jesus Christ is with us.

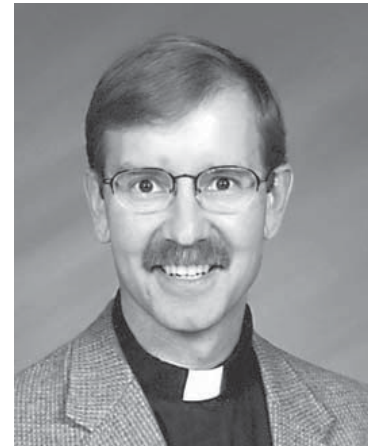
I sincerely wish each of you a joy-filled Merry Christmas and Happy New Year in the Lord. Your prayers and donations equip the Fraternity of Priests to "gather priests to Christ and to one another". May the Lord reward your generosity.

Sincerely in Christ,



Fr. Bob Franco

PS: Dates for next year's Annual Fraternity Meeting are: July 22-27, 2012 in Marquette, Michigan.



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: **\$4,750.00**

Actual Donations: **\$3,852.00**

Budget Surplus (shortage): **(\$ 898.00)**

Current as of October 31, 2011.

...continued from page 1

magnificent echo of the Nicene Creed that we pray each Sunday and Holyday!

There is a wonderful story about the origin of the carol *O Little Town of Bethlehem*. Outside Trinity Church in Boston's Copley Square is a statue of Philip Brooks. He was born in Boston and at one time was rector of Trinity. Later while ministering in Philadelphia he had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land. Traveling on horseback from Jerusalem to Bethlehem on one Christmas Eve and then attending a service at the Church of the Nativity he had a profound religious experience. Later back in Philadelphia he reflected on this experience and penned this beautiful hymn *O Little Town of Bethlehem*. If our Catholic congregations can persevere to the final stanza we will sing *O Holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us we pray; Cast out our sins, and enter in, Be born in us today*. Here we have the beautiful gospel themes of Jesus taking away our sin and the importance of inviting Jesus Christ into our lives.

There are several themes for reflection and preaching that can be found in the *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*. In the very first stanza we find the theme of Jesus coming to reconcile the human race to God: *God and sinners reconciled*. In the third stanza we have the theme of Christ coming to overcome death and the theme of our new birth in Christ Jesus: *Mild he lays his glory by, Born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth*. A careful study of the entire hymn will reveal other significant themes.

Perhaps the best known and loved Christmas song is *Silent Night*. Originally composed and sung in German it has found its way into all the major languages of the Christian world. The basic theme of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior can be found throughout this carol. At the end of the second stanza we have the words: *Christ the Savior is Born, at thy birth*. In this carol we can find the earliest creed of the Church: *Jesus Christ is Lord*. These simple, but significant words can be a wonderful source for prayerful reflection and preaching at Christmas.

The Twelve Days of Christmas is not a carol that would be sung at Mass. However its history and message can be brought into a homily. Even though there is no space to go into these details, a study of the background can be profitable. There is some evidence that the words were composed in 16th century England when Catholics were being prosecuted and had to practice their faith clandestinely. The meaning of the song is not so much in the twelve days but in the symbolic meaning of each of the gifts. This was a way of teaching Catholic children about their faith. For instance "my true love" who gives the gifts is not the singer's human lover, but God Himself who gives the twelve gifts which symbolize aspects of the Catholic faith. This carol in a sense is like the Book of Revelation which was written in a "code" that the persecuting authorities would not recognize. I leave it to each of you to research the rest of the carol and the hidden meaning of each of the gifts.

In many parishes it is customary to end Christmas Masses with the

hymn *Joy to the World* and so I will end with this carol. The phrase *Let every heart prepare Him room* certainly has significance for us today. Whereas Luke's Christmas gospel reminds us that *there was no room in the inn* this carol urges us to make room in our hearts and in our lives. In a culture that keeps us so busy and can fill our lives with so much clutter, the theme of *preparing or making room* for the Lord has a particular relevance. This carol also challenges us to be people of joy because God has come among us in Christ. Certainly the people who come to Christmas Masses looking heavily burdened and stressed need to know they are loved. We need to help them know the joy of the Lord.

These are just a few examples of the way our traditional Christmas music can provide food for our own personal meditation and also enrich our preaching during the Christmas season. At the same time we can help our people to become familiar with these Christmas treasures. The carols take us beyond the manger scene of Bethlehem to the truth of Who this child is and why He came into our world.

While these thoughts apply primarily to our Fraternity Brothers and supporters in parts of the English speaking world my hope is that they will assist all of us as we prepare to celebrate the Christmas Season. I wish each of you, your parishioners, and families all the joys of this season. Be sure to join with your people to "Sing to the Lord" with the carols of Christmas.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____
