



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

# THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

December 2014						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Rev. 1 Tony Gargotta Pittsburgh	Rev. 2 Thomas Galvin Pittsburgh	Rev. 3 Stan Gregorek Pittsburgh	Rev. 4 Robert Boyle Pittsburgh	Rev. 5 Daniel Mahoney Pittsburgh	Rev. 6 Pope Francis
Rev. 7 Thomas Federline Pittsburgh	Rev. 8 Kenneth Oldenski Pittsburgh	Rev. Msgr. 9 Cuthbert Alexander Port-of-Spain	Rev. 10 Donie McMahon Port-of-Spain	Rev. 11 Dwight Merrick Port-of-Spain	Rev. 12 George Lewis Port-of-Spain	Rev. 13 John Theodore Port-of-Spain
Rev. 14 Clifford Graham Port-of-Spain	Rev. 15 Ian Taylor Port-of-Spain	Rev. 16 Robert Shaldone Providence	Rev. 17 Gerard Caron Providence	Rev. 18 Robert Giardina Providence	Rev. Msgr. 19 John Allard Providence	Rev. 20 John Dreher Providence
Rev. 21 Wilfrid Gregoire Providence	Rev. 22 Michael Kelley Providence	Rev. 23 Francis Guidice Providence	Rev. 24 Robert Bush San Angelo	Rev. 25 Terry Brenon San Angelo	Rev. 26 Bernard Gully San Angelo	Rev. 27 Santiago Udayar San Angelo
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## 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.

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

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 care-fully and wisely, and not to ask for money that is not needed.

## The Image of God and the Image of Fraternity

Fr. Vlado Bizjak, Slovenia Fraternity

From the beginning of his existence, the human being asked himself about God. Not only, does He exist and what He looks like, but even more including the most pressing issue for him: the relationship of God towards His people—us. What does God think about us? How does He perceive us? Who are we for him? What emotions has He for us when He observes our life?

All religions are about seeking answers to these questions or this tension that occupies humans lives. Jesus knew this, so He spoke about it many times. He could not speak about it directly because God himself is not directly reachable to our senses and minds, as we all know this. That is why Jesus used images or parables to describe how God relates to us. He uses, for example, the image of the shepherd and the sheep. He is as a Good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (John 10). The other well-known image He uses is the image of the vine and the branches. He is the vine and we are as its branches (John 15).

But before we start to dive into this image, we need to think about ourselves or of the people we serve. Let us stop for a moment and think about it. If we forget the Bible images for a moment, what rests? The truth is that many times the

Bible images are not well rooted in our hearts. We have them in our heads, we read the Bible, but are these images already sunken anchored in our hearts? Do we really feel the same as the Bible proposes?

So let's imagine that each of us gets a blank sheet of paper. Our task is to draw, spontaneously, a picture of God and of us, a picture of our relationship. The only rule is not to use Bible images. What would come out of it, what would we draw?

Let us think about some options. Some images will be maybe too distorted. But are we really so sure that they don't live at least in a part deep in our hearts? First, some of us or of our Christian brothers would maybe draw God as an ocean and himself as a drop of water. That is a common picture, largely used in a new age setting or in other modern religious views. Others would draw God as a wolf and himself as a rabbit. They, more or less consciously, run away from God and hide from Him as if His threatening image is chasing them. Maybe that is why they are trying so hard to convince themselves that there is no God and no afterlife to meet such monster.

Next this may seem to be a joke, but it is true; in our country some group of people registered a silly religious community which claims that there is an almighty bell as a god and we have to worship him with

banging on the holy pot. It is obvious that is a provocation or a parody, but anyway, human imagination has no limits. Many people would – I think – draw God as a sadist and himself as a helpless victim. If we are sincere, we all maybe asked ourselves before great suffering, natural catastrophes, wars, sickness and death: "Where is God?" or better: "What is God like that He allows all this to happen?" Is He a bit sadistic, does He enjoy in human suffering, or why does He not stop it?

Some others would maybe draw God as a police officer and themselves as constantly supervised persons. This is in accordance with the truth that God sees everything. So it is better to behave as God wants, because, He sees everything and I don't want to get embarrassed in front of Him. Finally God punishes the good and rewards the evil. There will be a final judgment, so you better behave yourself!

Some other people would imagine God as a mysterious machine that returns the value you enter. A kind of market relationship, you should give to receive. We say some prayers or do some good deeds and God will reward us in some way. Other people would draw God as a hotelier concierge in a heavenly four star hotel. If I ask, He is there to fulfill all my wishes and provides for all my needs. And if He

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# Dear Fraternity Brothers and Friends of the Priesthood

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Please send articles, comments, and photos to the FOP Newsletter editor, Fr. Bob Carr, via e-mail to [editor@fraternityofpriests.org](mailto:editor@fraternityofpriests.org)

Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted. Any submissions will help make each issue better!

November is a serious but important month for Catholics. We begin on November 1st with the Feast of All Saints. We honor those who are not among the canonized saints but are now in heaven enjoying the Beatific Vision, the vision of God which renders them eternally happy. This feast challenges us to keep heaven before us as our final goal. It helps us to acknowledge and embrace the call to personal holiness. Each of us is called to become a saint.

This is followed on November 2nd by All Souls Day or as it is termed in the Roman Missal – the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. The focus of this day is prayer for the faithful departed who have left this life in God's friendship, but are in need of cleansing and purification in order to enter heaven. All Souls Day brings to the foreground the doctrine of purgatory which unfortunately has fallen into eclipse. The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of purgatory in Paragraph 1030: *All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.* In my own pastoral practice I usually wear violet vestments on November 2nd to distinguish it from the white of All Saints Day.

I believe we need November. In a culture that encourages us to focus solely on this world the example of the saints points the way to seeing heaven as our true homeland. Certainly we are to live out our love of God and neighbor and work to build a just and peaceful society in this world, but God's ultimate plan is union with Himself in eternal life.

We also need November to remind us of the importance of praying for the dead. In fact November is called the Month of the Holy Souls. In the churches of the west too many Catholics seem to neglect praying for the souls in purgatory.

There is a growing erroneous belief that when a person dies that person goes straight to heaven. This is often seen today in the bypassing of a Funeral Mass for a family member. At

times there is no prayer service at all. What is called a "celebration of life" is becoming more common. When there is a Funeral Mass the "Words of Remembrance" given by a family member and even at times the homily of the priest often put the deceased already in heaven. We would do well to remember the words of the dying Saint Monica to her son, Saint Augustine, as recorded in the Confessions of Saint Augustine: "Bury my body wherever you will; let not care of it cause you any concern. One thing only I ask you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be."

I pray that November is a month of grace for you.

Fraternally,



Fr. John



## 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: \$ **2,110.00**

Budget Surplus (shortage): (\$**2,640.00**)

Current as of September 30, 2014.

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fails, I won't worship Him anymore, He doesn't deserve it. So we could go on and on, human imagination has no limits, also about God.

We have some clever, more accurate and some more erroneous images of God that we are not so aware of and may also subconsciously use to guide our lives. Jesus new this, so He wanted to "implant" in our minds the real and accurate images of God and His relation towards us. Let us take only one of them.

It is the image of the vine and the branches. The people who listened to Jesus understood this image very well; they lived with vines and worked in vineyards. Hopefully we understand it also. But let us try to enter in this image and feel ourselves to be like branches: "Jesus, you are for me like a vine for the branch." Jesus gives us clear identity here. I know now who I am and who I am for Him. The vine and the branch are the same plant. So Jesus is not a stranger, someone totally different, somebody from outside. No! He is the source of my life, my foundation, I am growing out from Him, I am His. From Him I get the "liquid" of my life. The same Spirit that worked in Jesus and raised Him from the dead is in me and will raise me too. The fruits of my life come from His power. I don't live from myself. Detached from Him, alone, I am detached from the source of life and I die from the inside out. The image also explains the meaning of suffering in our lives. It is the Father who prunes us, sends us different trials not to crush us, but to help us to leave the unfruitful paths and bear more fruit. According to this, image the Church encourages us to live

from the sacraments. The Sacrament of Reconciliation binds us back to the vine if we detached ourselves by the sin and in the Eucharist we are feed and nourished by his Body and Spirit to live from His power, to have His life in us.

Our task is to ask Jesus to root this image of vine and the branches deep into our hearts. So that we would organize all our life around this image which is so inspiring and so real.

As we continue, let's try to deal also with the images we have about the community or about our Fraternity. The problem with our bad connection and cooperation with the community can have its roots in a dysfunctional image about it and we may not be aware of it.

Let's try to dig out some bad images first:

An orchestra out of tune. There are surely differences among us and in practice our Church communities or Fraternity can sometimes sound as a bad orchestra. We can blame the leaders – usually we do so – or the people who don't feel connected with the community, but the problem is if we lose hope and we start to explain the community negatively. The other image is the anonymous crowd. We can experience it in the malls, theaters, metros etc. A lot of people in the same place but no connection among them. One can be very lonely among many. Our Church communities can be like this and even Fraternity, if we consider that is enough just to come together to worship God each for himself. The sharing of life among us seems not important or too demanding to put effort in it.

Now let us also try to find some images that can help us to

make better our dealing with the community. We can start with the same images of John. He uses the image of the shepherd and the sheep which wants to emphasize the meaning of the leader. The other image of the vine and the branches helps us to understand that we are all connected through Jesus as we all live on the same vine. The image that surpasses this two is Paul's image of the body, the mystical body of Jesus (1 Kor 12; Ef 4:15-16). This image first shows us the supernatural unity of all with Christ and also among each other. There is nothing without head, but also the body parts are all important, even the smallest and the weakest one.

Everybody has his importance, everybody has his special gifts, and there is a living connection among all. Without sharing and communicating among the parts, the whole body suffers. This image also has to root deeper in our hearts and minds. So let's ask Jesus to help us to believe in it and live it ever more in our Fraternities and communities.

*Fr. Vlado Bizjak is a member of the Board for the Fraternity of Priests and is active in the Slovenia Fraternity.*

**"The principal mission of the Church is evangelization, bringing the Good News to everyone."**  
—Pope Francis  
via Twitter @pontifex

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