



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

THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

December 2015						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Rev. 1 Peter Donzing Ghana	Rev. 2 Michael Shea Grand Rapids	For the souls of our deceased FOP members	Prayer Requests Received	Pope Francis
Rev. 6 Donald Lomasiewicz Grand Rapids	Rev. 7 Thomas Hack Grand Rapids	Rev. 8 Mark Mitchell Grand Rapids	Rev. 9 Ayub Nassar Grand Rapids	Rev. 10 James Bozung Grand Rapids	Rev. 11 George Fekete Grand Rapids	Rev. 12 Charles Antekeier Grand Rapids
Rev. 13 Robert Hilz, TOR Greensburg, PA	Msgr. 14 Cyril Lamontange VG Grenada	Rev. 15 Robert Rousseau Hartford	Rev. 16 Zacharias Pushpanathan Hartford	Rev. 17 Paul Halovatch Hartford	Rev. 18 Joseph Looney Hartford	Rev. 19 Christopher Gaffrey OFM Hartford
Rev. 20 Will-Roger Malave Hartford	Rev. 21 Robert Grant Hartford	Rev. 22 Francis Dabre India	Dcn. 23 Bernabe Romo Indianapolis	Rev. 24 Paul Landwerlen Indianapolis	Rt. Rev. 25 Bryan Eyman Indianapolis	Rev. 26 George Nangachiveetill Indianapolis
Rev. 27 Harold Knueven Indianapolis	Rev. 28 Thomas Cawley, CM Indianapolis	Rev. 29 Roderic Giller OSB Indianapolis	Rev. 30 Earl Dekat Indianapolis	Rev. 31 Rheal Forest Manitoba		

The Holy Spirit and Fraternity in Seminary Formation

By Fr. Ryan Ford, Upper Peninsula of Michigan

One year ago, I was unexpectedly asked by my Bishop if I would be willing to serve for three years on the formation faculty at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, my *alma mater*. The Rector had requested my Bishop to release me for this service, during which I could also study for an STL degree in the New Evangelization. I said yes, I would be willing, and so I began the new work of priestly formation in August. I'm pleased to be serving as a seminary spiritual director among a faculty that includes twelve resident priests, some of whom serve as external formators and some of whom serve like me in the internal forum. To accompany seminarians in their growth in the spiritual life is a privilege, and I hope that through this work I can impact many thousands of people whom I'll never meet in this life, but who will be influenced by the ministry of the men I'm serving here.

The Program for Priestly Formation describes spiritual formation as the core which unifies the being and the acting of a priest (nn. 1, 132). Seminarians meet every other week with their spiritual director, who assists them in both listening and responding to the movements of the Holy Spirit in their life. To be "spiritual" is to be always under the influence of

the Holy Spirit. Thus, the focus of spiritual direction is developing that personal relationship with each Person of the Holy Trinity, learning to hear the voice of the Spirit calling us to deeper union with Christ, who always leads us into the intimacy of a relationship with our "Abba," Father. Seminarians are taught how to recognize the various internal movements in their life and to discern them according to the Rules of St. Ignatius Loyola. This is so that they can accept and follow the movements that are from the Holy Spirit and reject the movements which are not.

We speak often here of bringing *your real presence* into the RealPresence of God. To begin prayer, I have to acknowledge what's going on in my life physically, psychologically, and spiritually – how am I feeling, what's going on in my soul, how am I perceiving life? Frightening as it can be, seminarians (and we too!) have to learn to begin prayer with their own real presence, and then relate all that's within their soul to God, who is our Father, who is Christ who died for us, who is the Spirit who pours through us. We have to talk *to* God and not just *in front of* God and then allow God to respond, waiting lovingly to receive that response which He may want to give us in a perceptible way. This daily honest conversation with God

in prayer, along with *Lectio Divina*, is the foundation of the spiritual life which we teach the seminarians, and is the fountain from which the nourishment comes to persevere in any vocation until death.

One of the clear moments of conversion for each seminarian, and for us as priests, is the time when they (and we, over and over again!) realize that without Jesus and His Spirit, they can do nothing. We sometimes enter the seminary thinking that we are God's gift to the Church, and while each man brings unique gifts and talents that will serve him well in ministry, the good Lord has to teach us that everything is a gift, and every success that we have in chastity, in preaching, in bringing people to conversion, in conquering sin and selfishness and living for God and neighbor, is impossible on our own power. If Jesus is calling a man to be a priest, He has to clearly reveal to that man how dependent he is on God for every good thing and how much he needs the Holy Spirit to come to his assistance in everything! For a man to be able to preach with conviction the power of God's grace, he has to know that power and his dependence on it in his very bones.

During the time of priestly formation, and over and over again in our lives as priests, we come face to face with the reality of failure, of trials, of

...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.

Fraternity of Priests, Inc.
PO Box 442
Steubenville, OH 43952-5442
Phone: (740) 283-4400
Fax: (740) 283-3622
Email: contact@fraternityofpriests.org
http://www.fraternityofpriests.org

Please cut and return this form with your donation.

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

Name _____

Street _____

City, State and Zip _____

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

\$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.

Dear Fraternity Brothers and Friends of the Priesthood

EPISCOPAL ADVISORS

Donald Cardinal Wuerl
Washington, DC

Archbishop John Myers
Newark, NJ

Bishop Sam Jacobs
Houma-Thibodaux, LA

Bishop Paul Bemile
Wa, Ghana

DIRECTORS

Fr. Bob Franco
Cleveland, Ohio
Chairman

Fr. Jim Hobert
Tucson, Arizona

Fr. Larry Van Damme
Marquette, Michigan

Fr. Vlado Bizjak
Maribor, Slovenia

Fr. Joe Looney
Hartford, Connecticut

Fr. Dwight Merrick
Trinidad

Fr. Bob Hilz, TOR
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Editor's Box:

Please send articles, comments, and photos to the FOP Newsletter editor, Fr. Bob Carr, via e-mail to editor@fraternityofpriests.org

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

On Saturday September 26, I attended the last session of the World Meeting of Families (WMOF) in Philadelphia. This session was added to the end of the WMOF for those involved in the charismatic renewal. The five hour session included five different languages (English, Spanish, Haitian, Creole and Italian) and three different music groups. CBS News covered this event and used the occasion to put together a three minute video describing Pope Francis' relationship with the Catholic charismatic renewal. You may watch this video at www.FraternityofPriests.org.

On Sunday I had the privilege of concelebrating the Papal Mass. Among the hundreds of priests who concelebrated, I spent some time with two members of the Fraternity, Fr. Mike Kelly from Providence and Fr. John Sweeney from Pittsburgh.

In some ways, this gathering was a slice of heaven. Amid the 800,000 people who participated in the Mass were many of the participants in the WMOF, representing over 100 different countries. As the Apostle John described in the Book of Revelation:

"I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race people and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the lamb..." (Revelation 7:9b)

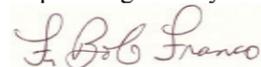
Both the conference and the Mass highlighted for me just how large and diverse the Church is. And yet, within this vast number of people, who came from various places with differing languages and cultures, there was a great unity brought about by the Holy Spirit. And such is the work of the Spirit!

Ever since Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out on "devout Jews from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5), the Holy Spirit has been trying to undo the effects of man's pride at Babel (Genesis 9). The events in Philadelphia told me that the person of Jesus Christ has been proclaimed throughout the world in the power of the Holy Spirit. Certainly there is much work to be done locally and globally. Certainly the message

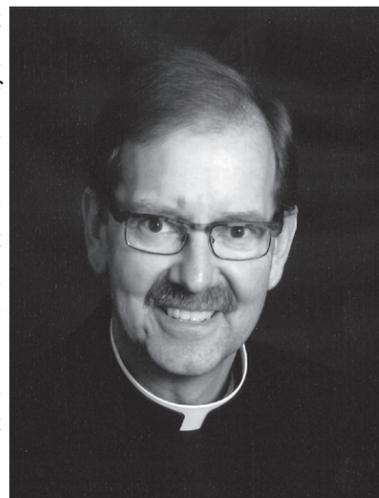
of Jesus Christ is opposed in many parts of the world. And certainly, there are threats to the work of Christ from within and outside the Church. Yet, it was such an encouragement to see the fruits of the Spirit amid the Church gathered for Pope Francis' visit to the United States.

As members of the Fraternity of Priest, we make a conscious effort to living in the power of the Holy Spirit and leading those we serve to live in the Spirit's power, ready to proclaim that Jesus is Lord. Please pray that we priests grow in our fidelity to Jesus Christ and the Church, living in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we approach Thanksgiving, a time thank the Lord from whom all blessings flow, I want to thank you who support Fraternity of Priests. Your prayers and donations are greatly appreciated. I pray God's blessings be with and your loved ones as we approach the upcoming holidays.



Fr. Bob



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: \$ 2,783.00

Budget Surplus (shortage): (\$ 1,967.00)

Current as of September 30, 2015.

...continued from page 1

temptations, when our helplessness is on full display. But the more helpless we experience ourselves to be, the more the Holy Spirit can fill us and use us in such a way that we'll know it's the Lord's work and not just our own talents which bring success! The seminarians are placed in pastoral situations which teach them this dependence on God. They are sent to minister to people at soup kitchens, nursing homes, campus ministry, street evangelization, food pantries, hospitals, and parishes. Through each experience of ministry, we hope they learn the human virtues of affability, making conversation, kindness, generosity, etc. But most of all, we help them through spiritual direction to learn to depend ever more completely on the assistance of the Holy Spirit to use them and work through them to touch people's hearts with the message of the Gospel and come into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Like the apostles who often came together to share their experiences of ministry, which brought them great joy (Acts 15), so it is also a joy to hear seminarians come back from ministry settings and share about how God used them to love someone and share the Gospel with them. They learn to listen to other people's stories with one ear open to the Holy Spirit who will inspire them with a word to speak – a word of comfort, of teaching, of encouragement, or of gentle rebuke, whatever the situation may be. At times, the only word that can be given is their presence, and when the problems are overwhelming and they realize they can't "fix" them, they learn to ask people if they can pray with them



Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, during his talk in Philadelphia at the World Meeting of Families on September 26, 2015. Photo by Father Bob Franco.

and by that prayer they help people unload all their cares on the Lord who cares for them (1 Peter 5:7).

During the time I've been here at the seminary, I've also been able to witness to the value of fraternity. I get together with the seminarians from my diocese of Marquette, MI once a week over breakfast to share a meal and one grace and one struggle from the previous week, much as we do during our Fraternity of Priests meetings. By the time you read this, I will also have spent the last weekend in October with the Second Philosophy men (19 in all) during their Days of Recollection at a local retreat center. During one of the sessions, I'm going to be teaching about the importance of relationships with other priests, giving examples and illustrations from Scripture and sharing about my own experience with the Fraternity – how encouraging it is to hear from other priests how God is working in their ministry and how their witness helps keep me faithful in this vocation. Most of us resident priests

also meet once a week in the evening for Night Prayer and sharing. Even in the somewhat insulated setting of the seminary, it's easy to just get caught up in your own work and to become isolated if we're not intentional about coming together for sharing and mutual encouragement.

Returning to the seminary has helped me renew my own commitment to personal spiritual formation and fraternity. I pray that this article finds you all well and that it can help you, too, rekindle the gift of God which has been given to you through the laying on of hands and make you ever more attentive to praying, walking, and ministering in the Holy Spirit. God bless!

Father Ryan Ford is a priest of the Diocese of Marquette in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. He is presently serving at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit as a seminarian spiritual director and is part of the formation team.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

