



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

THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

Be Your Best Self

By Fr. Bob Franco

A Fairy Tale?

Once there was a Queen who died giving birth to her last son. Her wicked and cruel sister snuck into the nursery of the child. Once there, this royal aunt cast a spell upon this youngest son, so that he would never really understand who he was. And so it would be. As the boy grew up, he could never quite grasp the responsibilities and privileges which were his by birth into the royal family.

One day he was walking with his brothers and sisters through the marketplace of the main city in their realm. The youngest son became separated from his brothers and sisters and was soon surrounded by a gang of thugs who sought to violently rob him. In an effort to save himself, the boy frantically took off his ring and said, "Here, take this..." The gang leader grabbed the ring, looked at it and fled with the rest of the gang, hastily dropping the ring.

The boy picked up the ring and eventually found his siblings. He described his frightful and puzzling incident to his siblings. The oldest brother, somewhat exasperated, explained, "Don't you understand?! When you handed that guy your ring, he saw our father's coat of arms and understood that you are the king's

son!" However, the boy's spell remained strong.

Just before her death, the cruel aunt revealed what she had done. However, the young man had already wandered far from the kingdom and had become a day laborer in a foreign land. (*This story is adapted from the book, The Self Image of a Christian by Mark Kinzer, Servant Books, 1980.*)

All of us were born under the spell of original sin. And though we are freed from sin's power, we still experience its lingering effects. One of those effects of original sin is a dim view of who we are in Christ. This article will highlight what our true identity is as Catholic Christians and the special role that we have been called to exercise through our vocation as ordained priests within the Body of Christ.

The Problem

We gain our identity in many ways. Parents and religious background are foundational keys to how we view ourselves. However, the air that all of us breathe, both parents and children, is our culture.

Our culture, in both subtle and overt ways, affects the way we view ourselves. Since much of our culture is shaped by a secular humanism, the implied message it sends is a dim view of humanity. Environmentalists often view humanity as the problem.

We pollute and encroach on animal rights. For astronomers who do not believe in God, humans are a speck of dust and a blip in time; hardly anything at all. For those who promote abortion or euthanasia, human beings are only valuable if they are wanted and productive. Otherwise they are a burden.

The Solution

We need to develop a counter-cultural way of thinking. St. Paul tells us, "...be transformed by the renewal of your mind..." (Romans 12:2). We need to think of ourselves in a more Christian manner, to actively promote a biblical worldview. We need to remind the environmentalist that the first command to the human race was to "fill the earth and subdue it." Our original vocation was to care for the earth, not misuse it. Humanity is the solution for the environment, not the problem.

We need to remind the atheistic astronomer this prayer of the psalmist:

When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and stars which you arranged, what is man that you should keep him in mind, mortal man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him little less than a god...gave him power over the works of your hand... (Psalm 8)

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Dear Friends of the Priesthood

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Please send articles, comments, and photos to the FOP Newsletter editor, Fr. Michael Roy via e-mail at

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508-943-2213.

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

Jason Evert, a Catholic layman, put together a DVD series for teens based on (soon to be *Blessed*) Pope John Paul's "Theology of the Body". The premise of this teaching is God's ways and his very Person can be seen through the human body.

My parish recently shared some of this material with our high school teens and parents. Part of the first video is an "on the street" survey of young adults. They were asked, "What is the purpose of your body?" Answers included: "That's a good question!", "I don't know" and "To have a good time!"

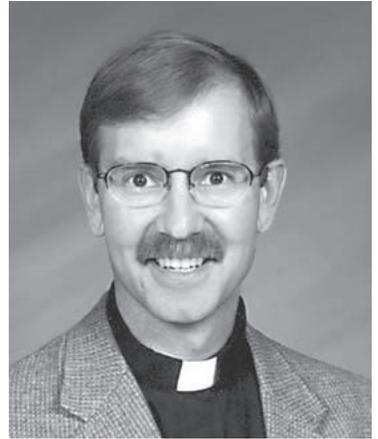
The presentation highlighted the purpose of the body as the means by which the invisible becomes visible. Love, sadness and joy cannot be seen, except through a human body. We know love when some "body" loves us. Sadness is revealed by tears and facial expressions.

We know that the "heavens proclaim the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1). How much more can God's glory be seen through the creatures made in his image and likeness! And not only do we see a glimmer of God's glory in each human being. We have come to see the fullness of God's revelation in human form: Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word who became Flesh to save us.

This is a unique liturgical year. The Christmas season, celebrating the Incarnation of Christ, ended on January 9, as early as liturgically possible. Due to the lunar calendar, the season of Lent, preparing us to celebrate the Paschal Mystery, begins as late as possible, March 9. This gives us a full three months between the Christmas and Lenten seasons. Perhaps we can use these three months to reflect on how "bodily" our religion really is.

Many of us invest much effort in trying to become spiritual. God became physical in Jesus Christ. We often seek to avoid pain and suffering. Jesus Christ accepted bodily suffering and death out of love for us to bring us forgiveness and new life. His resurrection is the promise of our rising from the dead, with our full humanity sharing in his glory.

Whatever our state in life may be, whether ordained or vowed religious, married, widowed or single: all of us express the love of



Jesus to the degree we "present [our] bodies as living sacrifices acceptable to God" (cf. Romans 12:1). Grateful for our bodies, instruments of encountering and proclaiming the living God, let us fearlessly embrace our calling to be living sacrifices in Christ.

To all who have become made sacrifices by offering prayers and making donations to Fraternity of Priests, I thank you very much. Your self-giving fuels and inspires our priestly service of God's people.

And as a final word to the priests in the Fraternity: by now you have received information regarding our annual conference in Slovenia at the end of July. Mark your calendars and make arrangements to participate in this event!

Sincerely in Christ,



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: **\$2,370.00**

Budget Surplus (shortage): **(\$2,380.00)**

Current as of December 31, 2010.

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We need to remind those who disregard human life “that we are fearfully, wonderfully made. Knit together in our mother’s womb, fashioned in secret in the depths of the earth” (Psalm 139). We must answer those who no longer venerate the human person as “mysteriously different” but only a mere “thing” subject to our control and manipulation that the way we measure the goodness of a culture is how we value the most vulnerable; life at its beginning and end.

Developing a truly Christian sense of who we are is both a grace and a work. Growth does not happen overnight. However, by meditating upon the Truth, as revealed to us in Scripture our self understanding matures.

All Catholics would do well to spend some time with these words of St. Peter.

But you are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were “no people” but now you are God’s people; you “had not received mercy” but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

St. Peter highlights the great dignity we have in Christ. We have been chosen! We are royalty! We are God’s own people. Called out of darkness, be it moral, intellectual, religious or relational, we have a mission to announce the praises of the One who has brought us into his wonderful light!

St. John reminds us,

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be

called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved we are God’s children now; what shall be has not yet come, been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:1-2)

If the world did not recognize Jesus as the Son of God, we cannot expect it to recognize us as God’s children. However, we can remind each other of our real identity. When we, by word and deed, love each other in Christ, our identity as God’s children deepens.

For the Priest

The ordained priest shares in the baptismal dignity of the laity. However, the sacrament of orders configures him to Jesus Christ in such a way that his identity flows from his relationship to Jesus Christ and His Church. The document *Pastores Dabo Vobis* expresses this relationship as Head and Shepherd.

Jesus Christ is head of the Church his body. He is head in the new and unique sense of a “servant”...As St. Augustine once reminded a bishop on the day of his ordination: “He who is head of the people must in the first place realize that he is to be the servant of many. And he should not disdain being such; I say it once again, he should not disdain being the servant of many, because the Lord of Lords did not disdain to make himself our servant.” (PDV #21)

Christ’s gift of himself to his Church, the fruit of his love, is described in terms of that unique gift of self made by the bridegroom to the bride (PDV #22).

The ordained priest must not only stand in awe of such divine love. His dignity and vocation is to make that love visible to the flock of God.

...in virtue of his configuration to Christ, head and shepherd, the priest stands in this spousal relationship with regard to the community...the priest’s life ought to radiate this spousal character, which demands that he be a witness to Christ’s spousal love and thus be capable of loving people with a heart that is new, generous and pure, with genuine self-detachment, with full constant and faithful dedication and a kind of “divine jealousy” (2 Cor. 11:2) and even with a kind of maternal tenderness, capable of bearing “the pangs of birth” until “Christ be formed” in the faithful. (cf. Gal.4:19) (PDV #22)

The lofty call of the priest is often shrouded by the dulling messages of our culture and busyness of our lives. St. John Vianney said, “O priest of God. If you only knew what you were, you would die.” Oh that priests would grasp more deeply who they are!

Final Word

Noah Monsour, a high school math teacher, often exhorted the seniors before their graduation, “Be yourself, but be your best self.” Our best self as Catholic laity and clergy means seeing ourselves in Christ: chosen and given a royal dignity, called to make Jesus Christ known and present by imitating and incarnating his love.

The spell that obscures our identity has been broken. However, like a surgically repaired joint, full freedom comes through therapy. By prayer, reflection, sacramental encounters with Christ and the charisms of the Spirit, let us embrace this divine therapy and become our best selves.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

March 2011						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Rev. 1 Robert Hamel St. Cloud, MN	Rev. 2 Mark Stang St. Cloud, MN	Rev. 3 Anthony Dattilo St. Louis, MO	Rev. 4 Aaron Nord St. Louis, MO	Pope Benedict XVI 5
Rev. 6 John-Paul Hopping St. Louis, MO	Rev. 7 David Novak St. Louis, MO	Rev. 8 Charles Tichacek St. Louis, MO	Rev. 9 Matthew Bonk, CSSR St. Louis, MO	Rev. 10 Martin Mannion St. Louis, MO	Rev. Msgr 11 Edmund Griesdieck St. Louis, MO	Rev. 12 Albert Danter St. Louis, MO
Rev. 13 James Dyer St. Louis, MO	Rev. 14 Thomas Oedy Toledo, OH	Rev. 15 Gerald Knueven Toledo, OH	Rev. 16 Norbert Howe Toledo, OH	Rev. 17 Edward Littelmann Toledo, OH	Rev. 18 James Brown Toledo, OH	Rev. 19 Jerome Nowakowski Toledo, OH
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Rev. 27 James Hobert Tucson, AZ	Rev. 28 Isaac Fynn Tucson, AZ	Rev. 29 Dale Branson Tucson, AZ	Most Rev. 30 Vitalij Skomarovski Ukraine	Rev. 31 O.Pietro Hewlet Ukraine		

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

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