



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

THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

August 2017						
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Lessons from Lent to Keep in Mind in Summer

By Fr. Bob Giardina, Rhode Island Fraternity

Many years ago a very famous Cardinal, who shall remain nameless, was visiting my seminary and the staff gave him a very nice room on the top floor of the seminary. In those days however the Benedictine seminaries were built in such a way that there were no private showers in the rooms. There was a monastic style shower room, with individual shower stalls with curtains for the entire floor. As a certain seminarian, who shall also remain anonymous, was leaving the same shower room and came face to face with this rather rotund elderly man dressed in a long red robe with a towel around his neck and sandals on his feet. The seminarian stopped dead in his tracks and his jaw dropped never having seen such a world famous prestigious figure in the flesh before. In what could have been a rather awkward moment, the Cardinal quoted this verse from scripture, **"Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."**

In the March 2nd edition of the Rhode Island Catholic, Bishop Tobin asked a very good question, "And what will they say about you (when you are dead)?" "In

Lent we need to guard against superficiality or superstition. We accept these disciplines during Lent to strengthen us in our fight against sin; to reset our priorities; and to be sure that our relationship with God is strong and healthy." (Page 3)

There can be little doubt that we live in tumultuous times, demonstrations sometimes marked with violence or vandalism, uncivilized speech and sometimes even irrational behavior. Can we really believe what we read in the newspapers or see in TV news media? How do we, as Christians, maintain a "relationship with God" that "is strong and healthy" in turbulent times? I have heard many speakers address this question and speak about it more eloquently than I ever could. These are some thoughts that have remained with me with over the last 40 years of priesthood.

First, Make a Holy Hour in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament every day. I do not take credit for this idea. I was inspired to do this by Blessed Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. I know this may not be possible for everyone but for me it has become part of daily ritual. I have come to accept Psalm 127:1,

"Unless the Lord build the house they labor vain who build it." How can you do God's work if you don't spend time with God? If I want to make God laugh I go and I tell Him the best plans I can dream up and He will say to me, "That's very nice now come back tomorrow and we will talk about them. But for today just go and do what I just told you to do. Okay, Trust Me!"

So how did Jesus do the will of the Father? "I solemnly assure you, the Son cannot do anything by himself, - He can only do what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and everything the Father does he shows Him." (John 5:19) Scriptures tell us that Jesus would spend time in prayer with the Father. If He needed to spend time with Father how much more time do we need with the Father. Therefore, if we spend time in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, we are in God's "War Room" and God will tell us what He wants us to do. Remember God has the battle plan for the souls of His people.

Remember what St. Paul writes to the Ephesians, "Finally draw your strength from the Lord and his

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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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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!

My standard answer when someone asks me, "What's new?" is: *Jesus is Lord, we'll never get bored.* I usually get a chuckle. One person suggested I try some "rapping".

Though the statement rhymes and sounds clever, there is also truth to it. Because Jesus Christ is Lord, we will not get bored. We have embraced His mission and purpose. Connected to Jesus Christ, the whole of our lives have value. Ultimately, we will be caught up into His Person forever. And He is the only one who can keep us eternally free from boredom.

Many priests have too much on their plate. Boredom is not a concern. However, there are moments, especially during the hot summer months, when it seems that not much is happening. How do we embrace these times?

1. **Rest!** This can be a challenge for many people in our culture. We are conditioned that we are only as good as we are productive. The truth is that we are good because God made us (human *beings*, not human *doings*) and redeemed us by the blood of Jesus Christ. Just as there were seasons of great activity in our Lord's ministry, He also said to His disciples, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." (Mark 6:31) If our resting is in the Lord, it is not wasted time but time that is re-energizing and holy.

2. **Prepare!** Part of life is management and maintenance. Some of life is responding to crises; some is part of intentionally planning. This last part is sometimes the most difficult. There seems to be no immediate benefit to it. However, the fruit of pastoral planning is long term and transformative. This kind of planning is useful any time of the year. Sometimes it is easier to do in the summer.

3. **Unite!** St. Paul exhorts us to "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God..." (Romans 12:1) Whether we are busy or at rest, in health or sickness,

feeling blessed or experiencing trials-our lives can be a pleasing offering to God. We are yoked to Christ. Intentionally embracing our vocation and circumstances beyond our control pleases the Lord and readies us for eternity.

Perhaps we can learn a lesson from summer itself. The blossoming of spring and the colorful foliage of fall have an eye popping quality all their own. In comparison, the steady green of summer can seem a bit boring. Every day looks the same. Yet summer time is not idle time. Often imperceptible, living things are growing. Trees get bigger and give more shade. Fruits and vegetables grow toward the fall harvest. Summer's quiet activity produces fall's bounty.

In seemingly idle moments, may we never forget: *Jesus is Lord...we'll never get bored!*

Again, I am grateful for your prayer-filled support of Fraternity of Priests! God's blessings to you this summer!

In Christ,



Fr. Robert J. Franco

PS: Brother priests: FINAL CALL-Our gathering with Ralph Martin at the La Salette Retreat Center in Attleboro is July 30-August 4. Hope to see you there.

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 thank those many faithful benefactors who help make our service possible. Thank you!

Fraternity Financial Report

Monthly Donation Budget: **\$ 4,750.00**
Actual Donations: **\$ 2,207.10**
Budget Surplus/Deficit: **(\$ 2,542.90)**

Current as of May 31, 2017.

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mighty power. Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. Our battle is not against human forces but against the principalities and powers, the rulers of this world of darkness, the evil spirits in the regions above." (Eph. 6:10-12) If you are not "prayed up" before the battle, then I say don't show up because you are not ready to face the world, the flesh and devil. You are just going to get in the way of those who are ready to do battle. You may become a casualty.

Second: Repent of your "pet sins". Use the sacrament of Penance especially to break habitual sin. This is not an original thought either. The Blessed Mother at Fatima asked the Church to frequent the Sacrament of Penance at least once a month. "Seek first his Kingship over you, his way of holiness and all these things will be given you besides." (Matt 6:33). Do we examine our consciences and say an act of good contrition before we go to sleep every night?

The old timers use to call them the "Last Rites" and we call the Sacraments of the Sick. I remember a special moment in a previous assignment an elder man was rushed to the local hospital with an acute and dangerous ailment. They wanted to operate on him immediately. The doctors and nurses all told him "If we don't operate on now you are going to die." All they did was to scare him

half to death. But he was stubborn, thick headed Italian and insisted "call my priest and then you can operate." They tried to argue him out of calling the priest. When finally one of the CNAs just picked up the phone and called me. They were shocked to see me show up so quickly while they were arguing with him. They gave me "the look". You know what I mean the "Get this primitive ritual over as quickly as possible so we can do our thing" look.

I went in and very quietly at his request heard his confession, anointed with the Oil of Sick and gave him a small piece of Holy Communion. Then they took him into surgery. I stayed with the family for some time and the hospital staff kept coming telling the odds of his survival which weren't very good, like 1000 or 10,000 to 1. I didn't know that hospitals could be fronts for "Bookie Joints". This upset his family very much. I invited the family to pray with me and we said the rosary. I kept telling them "Fear is useless, what is needed is trust." (Mark 5:36) After I was sure the family was doing well enough to cope, I took my leave. The next day they called me and told me a miracle happened, the elderly man was resting comfortably and survived the long operation.

After he recovered, we had a conversation and this is the way he explained it. "I wanted the Sacraments. I knew it was more than matter of my life and death. If

it was my time to meet the Lord I wanted to be in the State of Grace anointed with holy oil with my sins forgiven and Holy Communion on my tongue. Then, I would throw myself on the mercy of God. If it were not my time then I wanted a complete and miraculous healing to witness to the power of God." He lived for another 18 years.

Third; keep your eyes on Jesus! What would Jesus do? That means using all the gifts of Sacraments especially the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us at Confirmation. It means be open to the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit wants to bring us to the heart of the Father. Some authors have said we will be judged on the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit will lead us into an ever growing intense hunger for Jesus.

Test everything and give God permission to work in power in your life. We need wisdom, understanding and discernment more than ever. If our world is going to be saved, it needs the witness of good Christians. Again, I will say it, "Fear is useless, what is needed is trust." (Mark 5:36)

Put on Love. Jesus commands us to love so do we really have another choice? If our eyes are fixed on Jesus we will know how we are to put His teaching on love into action. This is His two great Commandments. Will the pagans of this age say of us, "See how these Christians love one another?" Just remember three things, Pray, Repent and Keep your eyes on Jesus!

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

