

July 2017						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Rev. Joseph Luisi Pittsburgh, PA 30	Rev. John Lynam Pittsburgh, PA 31					1 For our Holy Father, Pope Francis
Rev. Michael Woempner Marquette 2	Rev. Eugene Bettinger OCarm New Jersey 3	Rev. Paul Cannariato New Jersey 4	Rev. Msgr. John Demkovich New Jersey 5	6 For the souls of our deceased FOP members	7 For prayer requests received	Rev. John Gordon New Jersey 8
Rev. Timothy Graff New Jersey 9	Rev. William Halbing New Jersey 10	Rev. Paul Lehman New Jersey 11	Rev. Joseph Meagher New Jersey 12	Rev. Brendan Murray New Jersey 13	Rev. Paul Druggan New Jersey 14	Rev. Lewis Papera New Jersey 15
Rev. John Primich New Jersey 16	Rev. Stephen Toth New Jersey 17	Rev. William Cosgrove New York 18	Rev. Tom Devery New York 19	Rev. Alan Shnob Ogdensburg, NY 20	Rev. 21 Joseph Muldoon Ottawa	Rev. Robert Boyle Pittsburgh, PA 22
Rev. John Brennan Pittsburgh, PA 23	Rev. Thomas Federline Pittsburgh, PA 24	Rev. Thomas Galvin Pittsburgh, PA 25	Rev. Tony Gargotta Pittsburgh, PA 26	Rev. Stan Gregorek Pittsburgh, PA 27	Rev. 28 James Holland Pittsburgh, PA	Rev. 29 Thomas Kredel Pittsburgh, PA



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

# THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

## The Fraternity and Marriage Ministry

By Fr. Dwight Merrick, Trinidad and Tobago Fraternity

*On February 26, 1987, nine priests covenanted themselves together as a Fraternity of Priests at a Eucharist celebrated in the monastery Church at Mount St. Benedict, located on the highest mountain of Trinidad, West Indies. Four Dominicans, two Holy Ghost priests and three Diocesan priests made up the nine covenanted brothers. They made their initial covenant after four days of Fraternity Conference at Mt St Benedict retreat house.*

*Fr John Theodore, a Holy Ghost Father, and a native of Port of Spain, Trinidad was selected as leader of the Fraternity. Fr John is presently on the faculty of the Caribbean major seminary in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Fr Compton, a Diocesan priest, and pastor of Point Fortin, Trinidad was selected as assistant leader. Our newest Fraternity is now meeting weekly from 9am to 1pm every Thursday morning, as they live out their initial commitment this spring, after Easter.*

That was 30 years ago!! How time flies. The group photo which accompanied the article above back then, showed the original members of whom seven have since departed, including Fr

Donie Mc Mahon, who died at 93 on 06th January 2017, attended the International retreat in Tobago in 2014 and received the brotherhood award the following year. Interestingly, we have only Fr Theodore of the original nine members still alive and with us, though our numbers have stayed the same with seven other committed brothers and regular short term membership by priests who serve on our island from time to time.

### Priests and Couples Ministry

Around the year 2011, one of my parish coordinators started hinting to me that after ten years in the pastoral area, I would have done many weddings of young people who could probably benefit from some kind of ministry from the priest. After at least one year of resisting, we advertised that a meeting with couples 10 years or less married would be held with Fr Dwight at a given venue. Some ten couples turned up including a few persons who couldn't get their spouses to attend but who felt they needed some kind of help with their marriage. Five years later this Couples ministry has swollen to 21 couples with

monthly meetings and a few special annual events: a three night/four day retreat, our Family fun day on Easter Monday and our Christmas Dinner and dance. This year's fun day recently got to a whopping 94 persons and included almost all of our couples with close relatives and a few friends. Now we are already in full swing planning our retreat from 16-19th June 2017 at my parish on the Atlantic coast. Hotels got booked only today and all seems set to go. Yet it's not all fun with this ministry and so I'd like to share just some of the more important aspects of this ministry from my own perspective.

Many years ago, my ordaining Archbishop and the first locally born Ordinary on my island had given us this story. He said that a gentleman once asked him (the Archbishop), how could an unmarried man like him counsel married people without knowing personally what it's like to be married. My Archbishop said that he explained to the gentleman that while he probably knew the details of his own and maybe two or three other marriages, a priest after many years has listened to the details of hundreds of marriages, and then retorted with

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Father Bob Franco, 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.

# Dear Fraternity Brothers and Friends of the Priesthood

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### Editor's Box:

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!

The priesthood is a gift from God to the people of God. Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, wanted to extend His love through human instruments in order to teach, care and guide the people of God.

The priesthood is also a gift to the priest himself. If a priest stays focused on Christ and the gift he has been given, his vocation is truly an awesome journey.

I recently received a note from Fr. Roger Geditz, one of our Fraternity priests from Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In commenting on Fr. Vlado's article in February about the beginnings of the charismatic renewal, he writes:

*It reminded me of May 29, 1969 when I was ordained a priest by Bishop Lambert Hoch. When he laid his hands on me, I experience the awesome love of God that Patty Mansfield wrote about, only I had no idea what happened...never heard of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. I too had read The Cross and the Switchblade in the seminary. I had gone to the Dean of Studies to ask why didn't have a course on the Holy Spirit. He didn't know. That was probably my 6th or 7th year of studies. I began praying to the Holy Spirit-never had prayed to him before. I didn't know what I was praying for!! The wonderful journey of priesthood began. I began to see people healed of all kinds of sickness, physical, mental and spiritual, especially in the confessional and during the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of the Sick. How blest I am! The journey is about over and I am anxious to see our Father and our brother Jesus face to face. May God be praised!*

May God be praised! That is the goal of each of our lives no matter what our vocation. Whether priesthood, marriage, religious or single for the Lord-throughout our lives and especially at the end of our lives- May God be praised!

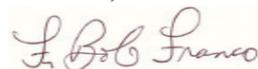
In the United States the secular holiday Father's Day and the Church's Solemnity

of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ both occur on the weekend of June 17-18. Each priest embraced the call of the Lord with a dream to make a difference for the Lord and his Kingdom. Many priests see only a glimmer of the good they do. The dreams of some priests fade into disappointment and discouragement.

Pray for priests that we might live up to the title of "Father" in the way that St. Paul described himself to the Corinthian community (I Corinthians 4:15). Pray that we have an ever deepening understanding of what we handle at Mass. If we are genuinely nourished by Jesus Christ himself, we will continue to be instruments of grace for the people we serve.

Again, I express my gratitude for all of you who support Fraternity of Priests by your prayers and donations.

In Christ,



Fr. Robert J. Franco

**PS: Brother priests: I look forward to our gathering with Ralph Martin at the La Salette Retreat Center in Attleboro, July 30-August 4.**

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: \$ 4,194.00  
Budget Surplus/Deficit: (\$ 556.00)

Current as of April 30, 2017.

...continued from page 1

the question, "so which of us do you think has more experience about marriage?" After just five years of this couple ministry I think that I have experienced the truth of this argument in ways I never thought possible. So here are some of the most significant lessons I have picked up from the ministry thus far.

1. *Marriages are much more similar than they are different.* Probably the most important revelation to hit the members of our ministry was the observation that as they shared in the large group as well as in the break out groups i.e. Men only and women only, they heard their own personal experiences and viewpoints uttered by others members in their sharing group. This point continues to amaze me as a listener and observer as well as a counselor to these couples. Yet even more important, I believe, is the empathy and sense of being understood that emerges when people share themselves and their stories.

2. The unplanned yet deeply faith-driven method of *each one help one* that occurs with inspiring regularity. Here, and often without my prompting, there is usually someone sharing about how hopeless and frustrated they feel over some situation, only to have another couple tell them that they have "been there, done that" and that they too would survive to tell their story.

3. *Many marriages ending in*

*separation and divorce could be saved if only there was help readily available when they needed it.* Almost on a monthly basis it seems, I get a phone call from someone in our group talking about giving up and thinking that there's no other way out other than divorce. Yet years later there's just one couple who actually are going through divorce and it's significant that this couple never shared with anyone in our group when things were going badly. In fact they kept maintaining that everything was fine months after their separation and right up to the divorce proceedings.

4. *"We cannot change another person, including our spouse."* The only person (adult) you are responsible for changing is yourself." Probably the most recurring temptations among our members, is to try to recreate one's spouse into one's own image of whom he or she thinks the spouse ought to be. One then becomes frustrated and angry when the spouse refuses to change just to please the other. As I often remind them, "there's so much about me I'm trying to change and finding it so hard, do you really think I'm going to change anything about me just to please you?" That's not very likely.

5. *One's peace of mind and happiness does not depend on the spouse making the changes one desires.* Our peace and contentment lies primarily in our friendship with the Lord. Indeed, our hearts

are restless until they rest in God.

6. *Learning how to forgive and deal with bitter feelings is essential if we are going to avoid accumulating the garbage people dump on us as we go through life.* Thus Jesus's command to forgive everybody everything is crucial for the Christian life and especially so within marriage.

7. *The amazing male brain versus female brain phenomenon* provides not only great support for persons among their own gender but also explains much of what otherwise could easily deteriorate into "something's very wrong with my husband/wife". This group certainly could vouch for the theory that male and female brains are quite different so that men pretty much speak a common language and so do women but these are like two different languages.

The scourge of divorce afflicting families today must be a concern to the Catholic Church in dioceses where the problem is of crisis proportions. Here in Trinidad and Tobago, some estimates put the divorce rate as high as 70% with no discrimination toward younger or older marriages. In the Caribbean, there is no organized Catholic Church ministry toward married couples yet everyone is concerned that the very cell of society is crumbling.

May this article stir in the hearts of our priests members everywhere toward supporting couples in their vocation of Holy Matrimony.

Please send us your prayer intentions: \_\_\_\_\_

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