



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

THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

March 2018						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 For the souls of our deceased FOP members	2 For prayer requests received	3 For our Holy Father, Pope Francis
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Proclaiming the Gospel in Word and Deed

By Father Ryan Ford of the Marquette, Michigan Fraternity

For the past three years, I have been working at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan as a seminarian spiritual director, while also teaching undergraduate theology courses. This assignment has immersed me in a culture of evangelization being fostered by Archbishop Allen Vigneron's recent pastoral letter entitled *Unleash the Gospel*, the culminating document of a three-year diocesan synod on evangelization. Archbishop Vigneron presents a vision which results from listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church through the synod process. It represents a real milestone moment, orienting every member and institution in the Archdiocese of Detroit toward a missionary focus. While it is not possible to do justice here to the scope of the letter, I wish to highlight one point which pertains to those of us called to proclaim that God is visiting His people through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The second section of the pastoral letter outlines ten "guideposts" along the road, orienting us to mission. In the

first guidepost, the archbishop confidently asserts that the Gospel mysteries of the Great Commission and Pentecost are still being lived out in our time and continuing in our midst. Indeed, no evangelization can be accomplished without a new Pentecost! Archbishop Vigneron highlights the reasons why this is so. First, it is only the Holy Spirit who can pour the Father's love into human hearts and impress upon human minds the reality of the lordship of Jesus, as well as make real to a person the truth of their identity as beloved sons and daughters of God. Second, it is only the Spirit who can fill believers with the boldness, and enthusiasm – the zeal - to go forth and announce the message of Jesus.

This is important for us priests. No matter how well-prepared we are to preach, no matter how good our pastoral planning, we need the Spirit to guide our ways, empower us, and fall upon those who hear our words, impressing upon their souls the realities of which we speak. Indeed, we ourselves have to seek this refreshment in the Spirit each day, asking to be filled

again and again with His love so that we can minister that love to others.

Archbishop Vigneron explains that the same elements of repentance and faith, signs and wonders that we find in the New Testament, are elements which remain essential in the proclamation of the Gospel today. As the first evangelization included a clear call to repent and believe, so too the goal of our proclamation is for people to make the life-changing decision to turn away from sin and toward God. Indeed, speaking of repentance is not fashionable today, but we know that Christ does not want us or His people enslaved to sin or lies or deceitful desires. Repentance is what unlocks the heart of God, says the archbishop, as the Lord meets our misery with his mercy.

Surely we cannot force people to change their minds about sin and God. This too is something which only the Spirit can work in the depths of each heart. Thus, when we meet people whose hearts are hardened against God, or those who come to us struggling with sin and needing to make serious choices about their lives, our job is not to solve all their problems. It is rather,

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

Email: contact@fraternityofpriests.org
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This donation is to help the Fraternity of Priests in continuing their work of ministering to priests.

Dear Father Bob Franco,

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

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

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent. This forty day period (actually spanning more than forty days) is based on Jesus' forty days in the desert after his baptism and before his public ministry. During that time Jesus defeated the temptations of the devil. He readily desires to share his victory with us.

The season of Lent reminds that we are in a battle. Surrounded by creature comforts we are easily lulled into complacency. We yield to worldly attitudes, sins of the flesh and self-centered approaches to life that are demonic. Lent summons us to a battle readiness. We are to resist the world, the flesh and the devil and grow in the freedom of Christ.

Here are some helps to spiritual warfare: *Immediately paintball wicked thoughts.* Ground zero for temptation is the mind. Jesus said, "From within people, from their hearts come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile." (Mark 7:21-23) When we have these thoughts (we all have some of them, see I Corinthians 10:13), we need to immediately identify them for what they are: wicked thoughts! We then turn our minds to the Lord and to the good we are to dwell on. (Philippians 4:8) The sooner we do so, the quicker peace returns to our soul.

Consistently do small penances. The three traditional penances prescribed by Jesus for Lent are almsgiving, prayer and fasting. Weaving these practices into our lives on a regular basis empowers us to live in the freedom Christ has won for us.

Be balanced. God empowers some people to do heroic penances. They make their sacrifices cheerfully. They do not become a penance for other people. However, most people need a prudent approach spiritual warfare. Too much penance can lead to a weariness that Satan can use to his advantage. When St. John Paul described

the formation seminarians needed, he broke it down into four categories: *s p i r i t u a l , i n t e l l e c t u a l , p a s t o r a l a n d h u m a n .* A zealous priest will be tempted to throw himself into the first three categories and neglect the human side.

St. Thomas Aquinas recommended to us five things to do when we are sad: #1: granting ourselves something we like, #2: weeping, #3 sharing the sorrow with a friend, #4 contemplating truth, and #5 bathing and sleeping. These things not only help us in sadness. They keep us balanced. This balance will help us ward off one of the devil's greatest tools: *discouragement!* May our prayer and brotherly relationships keep us encouraged, strong against the enemy.

Half the battle of life is remembering that we are in a battle. The devil does not take a day off! By keeping watch over our thoughts, doing small penances regularly and living a balanced life, we will share in the victory of Jesus Christ and bear good fruit for God's glory.

I again thank you for your support of Fraternity of Priests. Know that you are in our prayers. Happy Lent!

In Christ,



Fr. Robert J. Franco

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: **\$ 4,779.00**
Budget Surplus: **\$ 29.00**

Current as of December 31, 2017.

...continued from page 1

to help them turn toward God and invite the Spirit to come to them with power. While we cannot make their choices for them, we can lead them into an encounter with Jesus by inviting them to pray with us right there in the office or confessional, the hospital room or home, or wherever we happen to be at the time. All that is needed is a small opening of the heart's door and the Spirit can enter and do His work of convicting sin and revealing the glory, majesty, and lordship of Jesus, leading people one step closer to faith and surrender to Him.

This has been my experience, and you can probably relate. I sometimes put a lot of pressure on my ability to say the right words, or give the perfect advice, or encourage a person in just the right way so that they will decide to change their lives and turn toward God. But in fact, what we actually possess to offer people is not "Good Advice", but the "Good News" of Jesus' ongoing reign over sin, brokenness, and every evil. So, while in conversion, we can listen attentively to both that person and to the Holy Spirit, looking for an opening to pray with them right then and there, inviting Jesus and the Spirit into the area that needs change. We can do our part to help the person make an act of faith in Jesus, to express to Him a desire to change, to invite Him into their life and situation, and ask His presence to come, to give Him permission to

show whatever He wants them to see. Then the Holy Spirit can do what only He can do: reveal the Father's love and the power of Jesus' name.

It is not as though something extraordinary happens every single time. However, sometimes this does occur, and it can initiate a relationship with Jesus that will deepen over time. Memories from the past may surface in which Jesus can reveal His presence and bring healing. Thoughts that are untrue can be exposed and Jesus can enter in and replace them with His truth. Words or imaginative thoughts can be spoken to the person's heart by the Spirit as we pray and give time and space for Him to work. Or, a peace can come upon the person or even a powerful experiencing of love, which gives them hope that the Lord really is present and responsive to our prayers.

Archbishop Vigneron writes that "the invitation to believe in Jesus is always personal; it is not a moral program but the offer of communion with a person, Jesus." Even if nothing discernable happens while we pray with a person, they go away from us with more than just good advice. They leave having encountered Jesus, if only the fringe of his garment, as we facilitated a time of prayer and reaching out to Him.

At the conclusion of Guidepost One, the archbishop recalls that Jesus preached the Gospel "not only in words but in healings, miracles, signs and wonders visibly demonstrated the message."

So today also "we look for the proclamation of the good news to be accompanied by signs and wonders that visibly demonstrate God's love and convince people that Jesus Christ is truly alive." Whenever we take the time to proclaim the Gospel message to someone who trusts us enough to open their hearts to us, we should not proclaim the ever-necessary verbal message alone. We ought also to take the time to pray with them, helping them move from message to encounter in prayer, and ask the Lord to demonstrate the truth of the message by giving revelation of His presence and love in their concrete situation. Writes Archbishop Vigneron, "Often it was these signs that moved the hearers to believe the Gospel (Acts 8:6; Hebrews 2:4) ... Signs, small and great, are a normal part of the Christian life," and they point to the presence of the risen Lord!

As we proclaim the Visitation message, let us confidently call upon the name of Jesus in every area and at every time of ministry, that He may send His Spirit to demonstrate and make real the message of the Gospel to those to whom we preach. "By the power that is at work within us, He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20)!

To read Archbishop Vigneron's pastoral letter, visit www.unleashthegospel.org.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

