



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

THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

August 2018						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			Msgr. John Mraz Allentown, PA 1	For the souls of our deceased FOP members 2	For prayer requests received 3	For our Holy Father, Pope Francis 4
Rev. George Winne Allentown, PA 5	Rev. John Brennan Boston, MA 6	Rev. Robert Carr Boston, MA 7	Rev. William Carroll Boston, MA 8	Rev. Donald Clinton Boston, MA 9	Rev. Volney DeRosia Boston, MA 10	Rev. Gerry Fraser Boston, MA 11
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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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_____ \$ \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other

This donation is to help the Fraternity of Priests in continuing their work of ministering to priests.

Dear Father Bob Franco,

Christian Death and Grieving

By Fr. Jim Hobert

Recently, I lost my 91-year-old mother, which led me to reflect on grief. As believers, we are called to grieve well, and to die well.

According to psychologists, in the list of traumatic events that cause the most suffering in life, the death of a spouse is number one. Human culture has recognized the importance of dealing with grief and loss. In many places there is a tradition of loud, public grieving when a loved one dies. Many cultures even have paid professionals who wail for the family at the funeral (the technical name for them is moirologists). This practice is referred to in Scripture (2 Chr 32:25; Ecclesiastes 12:5; Jer 9:17; and Mt 9:23). There is a whole book in the Bible dedicated to grieving—the Book of Job. I recommend those suffering deep grief to read Job. Over one third of the 150 psalms are psalms of grief and lament. They are meant to be prayed by those who are in turmoil over some loss. It can be shocking for us moderns to see how brutally direct and honest these psalms are in speaking to God about grief.

The cause and type of death of a loved one can affect our grieving. A sudden, unexpected, violent death often brings extreme, overwhelming, even violent grief.

This was true for me when my brother died suddenly at age 19 in 1975. I remember the experience as one of darkness and emptiness. It was a year of great suffering for the whole family.

On the other hand, a gradual decline through a long illness can allow for grief to be worked out more gently, over time. That was the situation with my mother. Her final journey began about six years before her death, when health problems began to pile up for both my parents. My mom also began to experience some short term memory loss. Up into their mid 80's, my parents were very active, in good health, and were still the center and strength of our family. The onset of their decline was a jolt for me. I had difficulty imagining what our family life would be without them. But the subsequent years of the aging process helped me greatly with the grieving when death finally arrived.

Usually, the better our relationship is with the deceased, the easier and lighter is our grief. Troubled relationships that have unresolved issues are harder to get over. I had a great relationship with my mom. Years ago I was able to work the ninth step of the twelve step program with her, making

amends to her for my addictive behavior when I was young. It was a beautiful experience that changed our relationship for the better. In the last month of my mother's life, I was able to spend quality time with her. We were able to acknowledge our love for each other, and to say goodbye.

My mother's decisions in her dying process also made the grieving easier. She maintained a great spirit of gratitude during the last years of her life. She would often say what a blessing it was that she had lived so long, especially since she had outlived most of her siblings and friends. She had few regrets. Her long term memory was intact, and she loved to recall stories from the past, with a spirit of thanks. For example, she often expressed gratefulness for the religious sisters who taught her in high school and college.

There was little denial in her about death. Six months before she died, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. The oncologists wanted to do surgery. My mother refused. Her wisdom was: What was the point about going through a major operation at her age, with only a remote chance of success, along with the pain and suffering that go with it, if she was going to die soon anyway? Another instance of her

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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!

Marking the beginning of the sixth year of his pontificate, (March 19, 2018) Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Exhortation entitled **Gaudete et Exsultate** (*Rejoice and Be Glad*), better known as *On the Call to Holiness in Today's World*. The document's goal is simple: become genuinely holy. By living our vocation we reflect the image of Jesus Christ in simple and practical ways. Pope Francis says: "I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbors, those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence. We might call them 'the middle class of holiness'". (par. 7)

Pope Francis gives laser sharp focus to this call in paragraph #34 with these striking words: "For in the words of Leon Bloy, when all is said and done, 'the only great tragedy in life is not to become a saint.'"

This exhortation is a road map to holiness for the modern Christian. Pope Francis teaches us that holiness is not found by fleeing worldly activity. "It is not healthy to love silence while fleeing interaction with others, to want peace and quiet while avoiding activity, to seek prayer while disdaining service." (#26)

On the other hand, "this does not mean ignoring the need for moments of quiet, solitude and silence before God...The presence of constantly new gadgets, the excitement of travel, an endless array of consumer goods at times leaves no room for God's voice to be heard." (#29)

Pope Francis highlights two enemies of holiness (Gnosticism and Pelagianism). The true path is found in the Beatitudes and the corporal works of mercy, which Pope Francis calls *The Great Criteria*.

The Pope also describes saints as

joyful. "Far from being timid, morose, acerbic or melancholy, or putting on a dreary face, saints are joyful and full of good humor. Though completely realist, they radiate a positive and hopeful spirit." (#122)

Saints are bold (Acts 4:29), prayerful and community minded. More than battling "the world" and personal weaknesses, saints are also engaged in spiritual warfare (#159).

And where do we get this kind of holiness? The Pope encourages us to pray: "Let us ask the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us a fervent longing to be saints for God's greater glory, and let us encourage one another in this effort. In this way, we will share a happiness that the world will not be able to take from us." (par. 177)

Finally, Pope Francis reminds us that "Holiness is the most attractive face of the Church," (par. 9) Knowing that there is no *vacation* from our *vocation* to holiness, let us press on!

In Christ,



Fr. Robert J. Franco



PS. Priests-final call for the Annual Fraternity Meeting in Pittsburgh. Registration material can be found at www.fraternityofpriests.org.

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: \$ 881.00

Budget Deficit: \$ 3,869.00

Current as of May 31, 2018.

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spirit of acceptance was when my dad came into her room with a rough draft of her obituary which he had written. They went over it together in my presence, and she "edited" it with him, with a lot of good-natured humor and laughter, asking him to take out a detail here, and adding a detail there. She was very realistic about death.

She also strove to think of others in her final months. Certainly, we have permission to be "selfish" when we are dying, as we deal with pain, discomfort, and our own grief as we face the loss of our lives and relationships. Our loved ones usually understand this, and are willing to wait on us hand and foot, making great sacrifices to make us feel comfortable. I myself was honored to be able to help my mom during my visits, lifting her up to get on the commode, helping to clean her up, etc. But she made an effort to break through the natural self-centeredness of dying, doing her best to respond to others despite her suffering. For example, she was bedridden at the end and had lost her appetite. But when I came to visit her the final time, she insisted on getting up and eating with the family at the dining table (she would then just nibble at the food to be polite). This amazed my family, since she hadn't done this for some time. They attributed her actions to her wanting to make the sacrifice for me.

Other signs of her selflessness were that she complained very little. She also made efforts to be talkative and friendly to all who visited

her, especially the hospice aides and nurses who attended her. She always tried to use humor to make others around her feel more at ease. An example: When she went into a nursing home the final week of her life, to give my family some respite, she was asked by the nutritionist what she wanted that first night for dinner, meatloaf or chicken. My mom replied, "I'll have the lobster."

My mom's strong faith also helped us in the transition. She was loyal to the Church, with a "stubborn" faith—she would never have left the Church in any circumstances, and would not even listen to anyone who tried to convince her to switch religions. She did not show any fear of the unknown as death approached, and she expressed no doubts about her faith in God's goodness. I believe she recognized the call to be brave in faith for our sake in her last days. In this, she was very biblical. I like the example of King David in 2 Samuel 12, who prays with great fasting, dedication, and fervor, that God grant a miracle to save his newborn son who was dying. The miracle did not come. But David's response upon learning of the death of the child was to go immediately to the temple to worship and praise God. Scripture clearly tells us that to accept our grief, sorrow, and pain is to accept the cross itself (see Gal 6:14; Phil 3:10-11; 2 Cor 4:7-11). Jesus calls those who mourn "blessed" (Mt 5:4), and he himself expressed grief at the death of his friend Lazarus (Jn 11:35). For us believers, then, death is not the end, and so our grieving is not the

same as those who have no hope (1 Thess 4:13). My hope is that I die as well as my mother did, when my time comes.

Yet at the same time, we Christians must also recognize the reality of loss and the pain of the grieving process. Belief in the resurrection does not exempt us from the normal process of grief. Our faith may even make our grieving more difficult. For example, we may harbor a deep or unconscious anger towards God because God "took" our loved one, or did not respond to our prayers for a healing. If this anger is denied or suppressed, or not respected by others, our faith will suffer. True spirituality is to recognize any anger or hurt feelings we have toward God, and then to release these by talking things out with others—and also through prayer.

And finally, we have as a model for grieving Mary, Mother of Sorrows. In our Catholic tradition, the fourth Station of the Cross was called the "Spasm of Mary," with the connotation of a desperate, uncontrollable, violent outburst of grief as she saw her son suffer. But she is the "Sorrowful Mother," not the "Depressed Mother." Her grief led her to compassion and love. She realized that she had lost her son, but also that she had gained a new family—the Church. On the cross, Jesus asked her to make us, the disciples whom Jesus loves, her new family (Jn 19:25-27). And she joins the new community of Jesus as they pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). With courage and faith, she grapples with grief and suffering.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

