



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

THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

March 2019						
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Make 2019 Great in Your Own Small Way!!!

By Fr. Volney DeRosia

Since December, I have been reflecting on the coming of 2019. I started thinking about the last few years and their special remembrances. In 2015, we celebrated 50 years since the end of the Second Vatican Council. In 2016, we celebrated an extraordinary Year of Mercy. 2017 was the 100th anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions at Fatima. This past year, 2018, we celebrated 50 years from the incredible and prophetic encyclical of Pope St. Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*. Each of these remembrances touched my life in different ways, blessed my parish, and helped me to grow in holiness.

So I started wondering, about 2019, to what significant events do we look back? Going to *Google*, the purveyor of all information – helpful, useless, and questionable – I found several special events which will celebrate anniversaries this year. 100 years ago, 1919, marked the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, bringing World War I to an end. Also, in 1919, Congress passed the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote. Hmm... those are both hugely significant! 75 years ago, 1944, marked the D-Day invasion, which signaled a turning point in World

War II. In 1969 – 50 years ago – we saw the historic moment of Apollo 11, as man walked on the moon for the first time. 1994, 25 years ago, was a bit of a disappointment. Most of the references I found were pop-culture: *Forrest Gump*, *The Lion King*, *Shawshank Redemption*, creation of PlayStation, Amazon and Yahoo – lots of new ways to waste time! The only non-pop culture reference of significance I could find was Nelson Mandela becoming South Africa's first black president (and I graduated from high school... which was pretty significant for me).

With all of this, it can make me wonder what will 2019 bring? Will it have incredible historic consequence? Will the only things coming out of this year be new ways to waste time?

A better question may be, "What can **I** bring to 2019?" I can't promise the significance of major treaties, moon landings, or even great movies in 2019, but what I can promise is that if each of us – you and I – makes a sincere effort to follow God more closely, to become more holy in *the little things*, it will mean we find **eternal significance!** When we stand before Almighty God in judgment, He will not look at you or me

and say, "Well, you never walked on the moon, so you can't be that important." Nor will He condemn us for not making a block-buster movie (or even a B-movie!). He won't ask if our homilies were interesting. Rather, He will look at our circumstances, our gifts and weaknesses, and ask if we tried our best, if we loved until it hurt, if we struggled to follow Him even when it was difficult. Of course, we can't get to heaven by our own merit – it is all Jesus' work – but we enter heaven by accepting that grace on a day to day basis, by striving to grow greater than ourselves. This happens in the little things.

So what can we do? According to the Google, St. Teresa of Calcutta said: Peace begins with a smile. Smile five times a day at someone you really don't want to smile at; do it for peace.

This seems so small, so simple... yet, it is not very easy. I can attest to the difficulty in smiling when I just don't feel like smiling, in showing joy toward someone that makes me feel anything but joy on the inside. Yet, this is our call. Jesus tells us pointblank: **Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father.... For in you love those who love you, what**

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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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Editor's Box:

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!

Fr. Paul Scalia (Diocese of Alexandria and son of former Supreme Court justice Antonio Scalia) wrote a wonderful article on celibacy in a recent issue of *The National Catholic Register* (www.ncregister.com/dail-news/the-epiphany-of-celibacy). It is both timely and enlightening. Amid the scandalous revelations of the past year, some voices have again raised the cry for optional celibacy.

Fr. Scalia reminds us that celibacy came with the coming of Jesus Christ. Both the Lord and St. Paul spoke of celibacy (Matthew 19:12 and I Corinthians 7:25-40) as a charism, a gift of the Holy Spirit to be lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. And "...like gold in a bad economy, its value only increases in a sex saturated culture." This gift is bestowed on the priest so that they "stand at the altar with undivided attention." And like myrrh (used in ancient burials), "celibacy...reminds us of the death of this passing world...the celibate lives here and now what everyman will live in the world to come." The only marriage in heaven will be between the Lamb and the Church, His Bride.

One of the challenges in living a fruitful celibate life is that "death to self has been overlooked in recent years...Celibacy is still a sacrifice." It necessitates "self-denial, penance, physical mortification... and most importantly—prayer." Celibacy makes priests "free for prayer." Fr. Scalia also pointedly states, "unless poverty and obedience are more deeply lived, priestly celibacy will also always appear as an oddity in the clerical life."

Finally, Fr. Scalia highlights the necessity of holy friendships for a vibrant celibate life: *Indeed, one of the depressing revelations of the past six months is the apparent dearth of friendship within the clergy. Or, rather, the lack of that kind of friendship by which men strive together in sacrificial service, by which one man confronts and corrects another, and by which men aspire together for greater things – even holiness.*

This final quote highlights the need for Fraternity of Priests. Our relationships are to be rooted in our personal and prayer-filled relationship with the Lord Jesus. From this basis we can be open and honest with

each other. We can support and strengthen each other in living the charism of celibacy in a fruitful and holy way.

This month Pope Francis is meeting the bishops who head up the conferences of Catholic bishops from around the world. They will focus on developing some kind of strategy for dealing with clerical sexual abuse. Pray for this meeting. May their efforts bring justice and healing to victims of clerical sexual abuse as well as spiritual renewal among the ordained. The treasure of celibacy, when lived out, bears great fruit.

I also ask your prayers and assistance for Fraternity of Priests. Every soul among the ordained and laity is in a tug-of-war with the world, the flesh and the devil. Fraternity of Priests "gathers priests to Christ and to one another" so as to assist priests in winning those battles.

SAVE THE DATE: *The 2019 Annual Fraternity Meeting, will be within the Steubenville Conference for Priests, Deacon and Seminarians from June 17 -21, 2019 at Franciscan University of Steubenville. The Focus is: Unbound and the team will included Neal and Matt Lozano, Fr. Dave Pivonka and others.*

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: \$ 3,372.12
Budget Deficit: \$ 1,377.88

Current as of December 31, 2018.

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recompense will you have? ... And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? (Matthew 5:44-45a, 46a, 47a NABRE)

There you have it. Jesus calls us to go beyond natural love to supernatural love. While smiling at someone may seem small, it is, after all, in the smallest things that we find the strength and courage for the great things.

I look at one of my favorite saints – St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the master of doing small things with great love. She shares in *The Story of a Soul* (and I paraphrase) that there was one sister in particular in Carmel that got on her nerves; everything about her grated against St. Thérèse's nature. The saint decided, though, to smile at her whenever she saw her. One day this sister comes up to her and says, "Sister Thérèse, I don't know what it is that you like so much about me, but every time I see you looking at me you are smiling." St. Thérèse responded that it was because she was happy to see her, and she adds in her autobiography, that she did not say, "from a spiritual perspective."

This little act of kindness of St. Thérèse touched this other sister, covered over her own imperfection, and worked to bring about peace in the world. It was from small actions like this that Thérèse Martin became a saint.

What is the point of bringing all this up? When we look at holiness, we too often think of things far beyond us. We read about the mystical union of saints like John of

the Cross or Teresa of Ávila, and we can be in awe of their sanctity and holy they were. However, it can be "too sublime for me" (Psalm 131:1 NABRE); we perceive holiness as unattainable. True, we cannot become holy on our own, but by God's grace, *all things are possible*. Our role is to participate with grace, to say, "yes" to God. When we look at the mountain of holiness that we need to climb, it seems too steep, too high, but if we look only at *this first step*, we see it is possible with God. It is in little things that great things are done. It is in the little "yesses" that we give the big "YES" to God.

What other little things can we do? Well, that depends on what most needs to grow in us. If we find we love being the center of attention, then we can strive to keep from telling "just one more interesting and funny story." If we struggle with food, then maybe it is choosing to take just a little bit less on our plate, or forgoing a midafternoon snack. If we struggle with wasting time, maybe we can opt to delay our YouTube or Facebook surfing (or our time wasting medium of choice), until later in the day. If we struggle with objectifying gazes upon the beautiful children of God, then maybe we choose to remember (as we gaze) the beginning of Psalm 84, "How lovely is your dwelling, O LORD of hosts" (Psalm 84:2 NABRE).

To say, "I will never again seek out the center of attention... From this moment, I will only eat temperately... I will never go on the internet again... I will never use another person in my mind again,"

may be far beyond our reach. It certainly places too much emphasis on our ability to "white knuckle it" through our temptation and sin. Quite frankly, after over fifteen years of hearing confessions – and many more of going to confession – I know that human nature is too weak to overcome temptation by our own power. As Jesus told St. Faustina: **The cause of your falls is that you rely too much upon yourself and too little on Me. But let this not sadden you so much. You are dealing with the God of mercy.** (*Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul*, §1488)

As we surrender more to God, He overcomes us. I also found that it is the smallest acts of love – choices to give up this, sacrifice that, share a tiny joy, glance to heaven, speak a word of love – that so delight the Heart of God.

As we continue to make our way through 2019, I pray that we each make 2019 significant, not by worldwide accomplishments, but by our fidelity to the smallest choices to love God and neighbor, that we become the holy people God made us to be. God's blessings be upon you.

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