

THE VISITATION

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Caught in the Middle - By Fr. Dwight Merrick, Trinidad and Tobago Fraternity

Currently, there is a great discussion worldwide about the issue of homosexuality and how to respond pastorally within the framework of our Catholic teaching. Some cultures are seeing it as a reality that has no known origin and must be recognized as a part of our world that with all others can be addressed within the call to chastity. Others are seeing it as outside of their culture and their religion. This is especially true in Africa. Fraternity of Priest board member and citizen of Trinidad and Tobago Fr. Dwight Merrick writes of how parts of the world in the tropical areas including in his home country and in Africa see the issue within the Catholic parish life there. —ed.

First world leaders versus Africa:

The attempt by so-called developed countries to educate and chastise African countries has been met with fierce resistance. Furthermore, it seems to be the view of Africans on the continent, that departure from the traditional and the biblical binary view on gender is both heretical and probably another great deception of the old enemy. Yet this confrontation cannot be conflated into a purely racial issue.

Dr Ralph Martin in his recent book *The Church in Crisis*, sees the gender controversy as being more deeply rooted in the issue of homosexuality. He furthermore

posits that the very fate of the Catholic church may depend on how she positions herself on this issue.

Fr Chad Ripperger has an interesting teaching on the five major generals in Satan's army so to speak. Here it is hair-raising to listen to his conclusion that all five of these Satanic strongholds have made their way into general acceptance and even legal approval, in the United States of America.

For both Dr Martin and Fr Ripperger, homosexuality and not gender is the core issue. The promotion of a fluid gender spectrum to replace the binary understanding may therefore be a not so glorious smokecreen; evading the real issue of homosexuality.

So what is the position of the Roman Catholic Church today on these issues. The answers to these questions are as varied as cultures that have embraced the Catholic faith. Yet the experiences of other major Christian churches should serve to guide the Catholic church as she grapple with these issues; like it or not. A cursory look at the broiling controversy in the Anglican church is most interesting.

One assessment of the decisions of this church suggests that Anglican leaders around the world may have succumbed to congregational pressure and spun a web within

which they now find themselves. Should they continue along this path of first world popular positions and risk looking their continental African flock, or is there a need for deeper reflection, discernment and stronger leadership?

Another analysis of our dilemma, might suggest that the Africa leaders being interviewed on homosexuality, may actually provide helpful insights to leading the Catholic Church through this dilemma. Is it legitimate for the issues of gender and homosexuality to be addressed as human rights issues? A human right to be who one determines s/he wants to be is reasonable. But to insist that everyone else appreciates and agrees with such determinations, then deprives me of my legal and human right to make my own determinations on gender and homosexuality generally without specifically targeting individuals.

A historical perspective.

When I was growing up in the 70's and 80's one popular view of the Catholic church, was that it was stuck in the dark ages. Many persons saw the teachings of the RC Church as rigid, unyielding, static and totally closed to change. Recent decades have shattered all such perceptions about our Church. This is no where more emphatic than in the area of morality and sexual ethics. Fifty

...continued on page 3

Dear Fraternity Brothers and Friends of the Priesthood

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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 Budget:
\$4,750.00

Actual Donations:
\$2,639.00

Budget Deficit:
\$2,111.00

*Current as of
June 30, 2023.*

As I began to compose this brief article, a song I remember from my childhood came to mind – “Back in the Saddle Again”. It was made famous by the cowboy, Gene Autry, whom we older folk may remember. I completed my term as Chairman of the Fraternity Board in July 2015 to be followed by Fr. Bob Franco from Cleveland and subsequently Fr. Von DeRosia from Manchester, NH. I am grateful to each of them for their leadership over the past eight years. At our recent Fraternity Conference at Steubenville in June I accepted the position of chairman and so in a sense “I’m Back in the Saddle Again”. I am confident that our fraternity priests and friends of the priesthood will hold up in prayer both me and the other members of the board.

As I move into this position of leadership again, I would like to reflect on one of the greatest challenges facing the Fraternity of Priests. Many of us who have been with the Fraternity of Priests from the early days are among the “senior” priests of our respective archdioceses, dioceses, and religious communities. Some have gone home to the Lord; others are retired or in failing health; some are still highly active. It is evident that in many fraternities we are not doing enough to attract new members and/or to reach out to the younger priests of our areas. Some groups are growing, thank God. Some have been inviting seminarians to Fraternity meetings, especially seminarians who minister in their parishes during the summer. A number of these after ordination to the priesthood have committed to our Fraternity way of life. Let me encourage you, our priests, and our lay supporters, to constant prayer and

to take every opportunity to encourage priests to consider the Fraternity.

While we priests always need support and care for and from one another, it is especially necessary in the times in which we are living and ministering. For us in the United States and in other parts of the world, being a faithful Catholic and being a Catholic priest is becoming much more difficult and challenging.

As Dr. Robert George from Princeton stated several years ago at a National Prayer Breakfast: “The days of comfortable Catholicism are over”.

There are increasingly more issues where the Word of God and Church teaching conflict with the so called “politically correct”. We need all the help we can get from the Lord and from our brothers in order to be faithful. The Fraternity of Priests is more needed now than ever. A word we receive frequently in our Boston Fraternity is that the Lord established the Fraternity for the times in which we are now living. Let’s do all we can to promote this work of the Holy Spirit in our times for the renewal and strengthening of the Catholic priesthood and its mission. Again I ask you to keep in prayer this returning fraternity chairperson and the members of the board.

May the Lord bless and keep you.



Fr. John Kiley



Editor’s Note: Please send articles, comments, and photos to the our editor, Fr. Bob Carr, via e-mail to editor@fraternityofpriests.org. Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted.

...continued from page 1
years ago, who could foresee a time in the Catholic Church when homosexual priests and religious sisters would boastfully proclaim their sexual preferences, take part in Gay Pride marches and fight for the normalizing of the homosexual sexual orientation? Who could imagine a time when RC Church leaders who publicly advocate for gay rights, same sex marriages and the homosexual lifestyle, and would be rewarded with prominent roles in planning the future of the Church?

In the 1970's there was for a few seasons running, a TV series called "Up Pompey", (I stand corrected). This was a satirical fictional comedy based on the lifestyle of the wealthy at the height of the Roman Empire and featuring moral decadence, drunkenness and debauchery. Interestingly, all the features displayed there as depravity have now been redefined as being inclusive, with behaviors formally thought of as immoral now considered minority groups e.g. LBGTQ persons. In a nutshell, behaviours formally considered immoral and sinful are now thought of as disadvantaged minority groups. The result of these rapidly changing attitudes to sex, sexuality and gender is that behaviours which used to receive an emphatic "No" now receive a "Maybe" and those which used to receive a "Maybe" now receives a "Yes".

Looking at the history of Roman Catholic teaching on these areas of sex, sexuality and gender, is also interesting. Homosexuality used to be considered by the Church as a mental disorder. Homosexual acts were for centuries considered

so grievous that these cried out to heaven for vengeance. Openly homosexual unions were an abomination for Roman Catholic persons. A non-binary understanding of gender probably did not exist before very recently. One wonders what Roman Catholic church leaders in centuries past would have said about contemporary Catholic discussions on transgenders, alternative lifestyles, and a host of other moral issues. (361)/800.

Salt of the Earth

One view to which I would add my voice is that mainstream Christian churches have succumbed to congregational pressure and surrendered the mandate to be salt of the earth. Case in point would be attitudes of such churches to artificial contraception and female ordination to priesthood.

In the earliest days of reflection on the then newly discovered "pill", it was the Roman Catholic Church which rejected the fundamental separation of procreation from sex and the promotion of sex simply for fun and significantly without responsibility. In condemning the use of the pill, the Catholic Church was joined by all other Christian churches who cared to voice an opinion on the topic. History has now shown that one by one, the Episcopalians, and others have changed their tune whole-heartedly, presumably due to congregational pressures.

The issue of female clergy is another point of departure from the traditional male only clergy. The latter half of the 20th century saw several Protestant denominations open to women clerics much to the disappointment of Catholics in

the ecumenical circles. The recent elevation of a married lesbian to the rank of bishop severely hurt the laity bringing one denomination to the brink of a schism. In the Catholic church too, there are growing numbers of theologians and religious fighting for female clergy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Catholic laity and clergy must ask of ourselves a few fundamental questions. Are we still called to be salt of the earth in 2023? Do our actions, policies and political postures convey that belief to our laity? Are we being light of the world and fulfilling our role as a prophetic people bringing the mind of God to bear upon a fallen world?

One recent assessment of aspirants and seminarians offering themselves is significant. On the one hand the parishes and spiritual seedbeds producing these vocations see these young men as part of the solution to our church's dilemma moving forward. They are orthodox, conservative and are inclined to the traditional ways of being Catholic. They are not interested in fighting battles on behalf of LBGTQ or any other recently emerging liberal group. On the other hand, powerful Church leaders look at these young men with disregard and even disdain, judging them as the wrong kind of men to form the clergy of tomorrow. Shocking! Yet this presents a telling example of the state of confusion in our church. Many conclude that the Roman Catholic church has truly lost her way at this time and must decide sooner rather than later, what will be her true purpose in the world. Hopefully, the Lord Jesus would intervene and deliver us from all evil.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

September 2023						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 For prayer requests received	2 For our Holy Father, Pope Francis
Rev. Thomas Reilly <i>Boston, MA</i> 3	Rev. Roarke Traynor <i>Boston, MA</i> 4	Rev. Chris Wallace <i>Boston, MA</i> 5	Rev. Daniel Zinger <i>Boston, MA</i> 6	7 For the souls of our deceased FOP members	Rev. Donald Roy <i>Burlington</i> 8	Rev. Andy Bord <i>Cardiff, Wales</i> 9
Rev. Barry English <i>Cardiff, Wales</i> 10	Canon John Griffiths <i>Cardiff, Wales</i> 11	Rev. Matthew Jones <i>Cardiff, Wales</i> 12	Rev. David O'Donnell <i>Cardiff, Wales</i> 13	Rev. Barnabas Page <i>Cardiff, Wales</i> 14	Rev. Ryan Cubera <i>Cleveland, OH</i> 15	Rev. Kevin Elbert <i>Cleveland, OH</i> 16
Rev. Robert Franco <i>Cleveland, OH</i> 17	Rev. James Mazanec <i>Cleveland, OH</i> 18	Rev. Homer Blubaugh <i>Columbus</i> 19	Rev. Peter Gregor <i>Comayagua</i> 20	Rev. Robert Shaldone SOLT <i>Corpus Christi</i> 21	Most Rev. Sam Jacobs D.D. <i>Episcopal Advisor</i> 22	Most Rev. Mark O'Connell <i>Episcopal Advisor</i> 23
Rev. Duaine Cote <i>Fargo, ND</i> 24	Rev. Richard Goellen <i>Fargo, ND</i> 25	Rev. Dale Kinzler <i>Fargo, ND</i> 26	Rev. Donald Leiphon <i>Fargo, ND</i> 27	Rev. Gary Luiten <i>Fargo, ND</i> 28	Rev. Bernard Schneider <i>Fargo, ND</i> 29	Rev. Msgr. Dennis A Skonseng <i>Fargo, ND</i> 30

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

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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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Dear Fr. Von DeRosia,

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

\$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____

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