



# THE VISITATION

! "The Visitation" is now digital! Visit [fraternityofpriests.org](http://fraternityofpriests.org) to sign up to receive this newsletter via email and to access our online donation form. This will help the Fraternity of Priests be more efficient and to simplify costs as we enter the new year.

## O Come, Let Us Adore Him! - By Fr. John Kiley, Chairman

It was mid-December and one of our Junior High religious education leaders brought up the idea with his group that they gather on a particular evening and go through the neighborhood singing Christmas carols. This group of young people became very enthusiastic which greatly delighted their leader. The awaited cool and crisp December evening finally arrived and the teens came together to rehearse the music they would sing. When the teacher decided to begin the rehearsal with "Silent Night" he was met with blank stares. Not one student knew it. He moved on to "O Come, All Ye Faithful" and again observed the puzzled looks on the faces of the young people. He suggested "Joy to the Word" and the kids shook their heads. Finally he asked them what Christmas carols they knew. With renewed interest they responded: "Jingle Bells", "Frosty the Snowman", "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer". Once they were able to get their act together the evening was a moderate success. It was also a wake-up call for this particular teacher and for me as a priest. Most of the traditional Christmas Carols revered and loved by former generations are largely unknown today.

We all recognize that our

society has become increasingly secularized. One unfortunate aspect of this is that it is now commonplace and politically correct for many people to see Christmas simply as the "Holiday Season" with the result that not only our youth, but many of our adult Catholics are no longer familiar with the true religious meaning of the season and the theological richness of our Christmas carols. For those Catholic families (in places the majority) that participate at Mass only once or twice a year, exposure to the Liturgy and to the religious music of Christmas is minimal.

The late Father Raymond Brown S.S., one of our outstanding Catholic scripture scholars, wrote in a book on the Infancy Narratives that these narratives of the Birth of Christ are really the "gospel in miniature". I believe that the same can be said of many of our traditional carols. Many of them present to us aspects of the basic message of the gospel wrapped up beautifully in poetry and song.

In recent years during Advent I have been encouraging families to have some quality recordings of traditional Christmas carols in their homes. Many of these carols are profound expressions of Christian faith, composed by people of faith. I have urged families

and individuals to listen to some of these carols and then to reflect on the texts. This can be followed by a sharing of what the texts teach about Jesus and the meaning of the redemption He has accomplished. I have also at times woven the texts of carols into the Christmas homily. Two great resources to have on your bookshelf are: *The Penguin Book of Carols* edited by Ian Bradley and published by Penguin Books and *Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas* by Ace Collins and published by Zondervan. These books present not only the texts but also the history of many of the best loved carols throughout the world. Let's consider some examples.

One of the most theologically rich carols is *O Come, All Ye Faithful*. The shorter version which is in most of our Missalettes proclaims that the One born in Bethlehem is *Lord and is to be adored* – a clear and concise statement of the divinity of Christ. Continuing on in the carol we acclaim that Jesus is the *Word of the Father now in flesh appearing* – the mystery of the Incarnation. If we are fortunate enough to have the complete text we sing that Jesus is *God of God, Light of Light, Lo! He abhors not the Virgin's womb; Very God, Begotten, not created*. What a magnificent echo of the Nicene Creed that we pray each Sunday and

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# 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:  
**\$1,092.00**

Budget Deficit:  
**\$3,658.00**

Current as of  
October 31, 2023.

In an earlier Newsletter I mentioned that occasionally I would ask a Fraternity brother to contribute a brief witness as to the inspiration and graces received through the Fraternity of Priests. The following is from **Father Mike Roy of the diocese of Worcester, MA.** - Fr. John Kiley

Don't we all have a high regard for this time of the year? But I don't mean the early darkness or the plummeting temperatures in the northern hemisphere. The appeal of this time of the year comes from the festivals we celebrate and the gift giving in response to the greatest gift ever given, God's own Son. Jesus is our guide who accompanies us on our way to Heaven. In close conjunction with Christmas is Thanksgiving. It is a natural feeling that flows when we appreciate how much we have received.

When our chairman, Fr. John Kiley, asked me to write about my many years with the Fraternity of Priests, my thoughts immediately turned to two priests who influenced my decision to join the Fraternity and for whom my heart overflows with gratitude. One, a priest of the Diocese of Worcester, who had just returned from a sabbatical at Franciscan University of Steubenville. The other, a priest of the Diocese of Providence and one of the founders of the Fraternity, Fr. John Dreher. I don't know where my priesthood would be without the influence of these two men.

I was ordained in 1975 which, I believe, was the first year of the Priests and Deacons Conference at Franciscan University. What energizing and inspiring conferences they were, attended by hundreds from throughout the country. The singing,

the talks, the comradery, were simply amazing and inspiring. However, I confess that after a few conferences I stopped going. Why? Simply because it was

like "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit" while on campus, but soon after going back home it was "As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end." It was so discouraging. There wasn't an evident way of sustaining the vision of priesthood that was presented to us during the Conferences. That was until a handful of holy men who were open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit proposed the Kingdom Disciplines and organized the Fraternity of Priests. Among them was Fr. John Dreher whom I've come to know and for whom I have the highest regard.

I am deeply grateful because I don't know where I'd be if it wasn't for this Fraternity. The discipline of the daily hour of prayer, the commitment of the weekly meeting, the documents we have read together and discussed have sustained, guided, and empowered my priesthood for more than thirty years. Considering all the challenges and changes that we've all experienced these last decades I could have easily become a cynical, bitter, and pessimistic person. Of late I have developed some significant mobility issues making attending the Steubenville Conference impossible, but getting to our weekly meetings is a priority. After all these years I could not imagine my life without my brothers in the Fraternity of Priests.



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

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Holyday!

There is a wonderful story about the origin of the carol *O Little Town of Bethlehem*. Outside Trinity Church in Boston's Copley Square is a statue of Philip Brooks. He was born in Boston and at one time was rector of Trinity. Later while ministering in Philadelphia he had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land. Traveling on horseback from Jerusalem to Bethlehem on one Christmas Eve and then attending a service at the Church of the Nativity he had a profound religious experience. Later back in Philadelphia he reflected on this experience and penned the beautiful hymn *O Little Town of Bethlehem*. If our Catholic congregations can persevere to the final stanza we sing *O Holy Child of Bethlehem Descend to us we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today*. Here we have the beautiful gospel themes of Jesus taking away our sins and the importance of personally inviting Jesus Christ into our lives.

There are several themes for reflection and preaching that can be found in the hymn *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*. In the very first stanza we find the theme of Jesus coming to reconcile the human race to God: *God and sinners reconciled*. In the third stanza we have the theme of Christ coming to overcome death and the theme of our new and rebirth in Christ Jesus: *Mild he lays his glory by, Born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth*. A careful study of the entire hymn will reveal other significant themes.

Perhaps the best known and loved Christmas song is *Silent*

*Night*. Originally composed and sung in German it has found its way into all the major languages of the Christian world. The basic theme of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior can be found throughout this carol. At the end of the second stanza we have the words: *Christ the Savior is Born*. The final verse of the carol is *Jesus, Lord, at thy birth*. In this carol we can find the earliest creed of the Church: *Jesus Christ is Lord*. These simple, but significant words can be a wonderful source for prayerful reflection and preaching at Christmas.

*The Twelve Days of Christmas* is not a carol that would be sung at Mass. However its history and message can be brought into a homily. Even though there is no space to go into these details, a study of the background can be profitable. There is some evidence (*this is also disputed*) that the words were composed in 16th century England when Catholics were being persecuted and had to practice their faith clandestinely. The meaning of the song is not so much in the twelve days but in the symbolic meaning of each of the gifts. This was a way of teaching Catholic children about their faith. For instance "my true love" who gives the gifts is not the singer's human lover, but God Himself who gives the twelve gifts which symbolize aspects of the Catholic faith. This carol in a sense is like the Book of Revelation which was written in a "code" that the persecuting authorities would not recognize. I leave it to each of you to research the rest of the carol and the possible hidden meaning of each of the gifts.

In many parishes in the United

States it is customary to end Christmas Masses with the hymn *Joy to the World* and so I will end with this carol. The phrase *Let every heart prepare Him room* certainly has significance for us today. Whereas Luke's Christmas gospel reminds us *that there was no room in the inn* this carol urges us to make room in our hearts and in our lives. In a culture that keeps us so busy and can fill our lives with so much clutter, the theme of *preparing or making room* for the Lord has a particular relevance. This carol also challenges us to be people of joy because God has come among us in Christ. Certainly the people who come to Christmas Masses looking heavily burdened and stressed need to know they are loved. We need to help them to know the joy of the Lord.

These are just a few examples of the way our traditional Christmas music can provide food for our own personal meditation and also enrich our preaching during the Christmas season. At the same time we can help our people to become familiar with these Christmas treasures. The carols take us beyond the manger scene of Bethlehem to the truth of Who this child is and why He came into our world.

While these thoughts apply primarily to our Fraternity Brothers and supporters in parts of the English-speaking world my hope is that they will assist all of us as we prepare to celebrate the Christmas Season. I wish each of you, your parishioners, and families all the joys of this season. Be sure to join with your faith community to "Sing to the Lord" with the carols of Christmas.

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

# THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

January 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Rev. 1 William McCarthy <i>Sioux City, IA</i>	Msgr. 2 Edward Burian <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	Rev. 3 John Helmuller <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	4 <b>For the souls of our deceased FOP members</b>	5 <b>For prayer requests received</b>	6 <b>For our Holy Father, Pope Francis</b>
Rev. 7 Joseph Vogel <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	Rev. 8 Richard Baumberger <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	Rev. 9 Rodney Farke <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	Rev. 10 Edward Pierce <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	Rev. 11 John Rasmussen <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	Rev. 12 Joseph Short <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	Rev. 13 Gregory Frankman <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>
Rev. 14 Roger Geditz <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	Rev. 15 Randy Phillips <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	Rev. 16 Jerome Ranek <i>Sioux Falls, SD</i>	Rev. 17 Mark Innocenti <i>St. Cloud, MN</i>	Rev. 18 Peter Kirchner <i>St. Cloud, MN</i>	Rev. 19 Gerald Mischke <i>St. Cloud, MN</i>	Rev. 20 Gregory Paffel <i>St. Cloud, MN</i>
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## 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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