

# THE VISITATION

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## Time to Re-Fine Our Relationship With God and Neighbor - By Fr. Paul K. Bekye, Ghana

**Introduction:** How do we concretely express our response to God for this great act of love that He has shown us through the suffering, death, and resurrection of His Son? *Refine our relationship with God and neighbor.* I will first deal with how we can re-fine our relationship with God, and subsequently, how we can refine our relationship with the neighbor.

### Refining our relationship with God

**Living with a sentiment of constant and deep gratitude to God:** As priests, our daily experience is of the miracle of God's providence that is constant in our personal lives, in our maintenance and in our ministry in general. We depend absolutely on God, through others, for our survival and ministerial needs. Our only response to God is to live with a constant sense of deep gratitude to God for providing for our personal needs, and for what we need for our ministry. If this sense of gratitude is not forthcoming enough from us, then, we need to re-fine it.

- **Maintaining a healthy prayer regime.** Prayer is the means by which we are constantly in relationship with God. If our prayer life has become dull or lukewarm, then let us re-fine it, that is, make it fervent again. We can do this in a number of ways: (a) by observing faithfully our prayerful obligations as priests. If you have relapsed in your obligation to recite the Divine Office as imposed upon us by our ordination, then re-fine it – make it good again. (b) By identifying

for ourselves a particular devotion through which we establish a unique prayer and spiritual relationship with God. (c) By creating a prayer space in one corner of your room for some private devotional activity. Or, it could be making more ample use of the presbytery chapel, or even making a pilgrimage from time to time to a Holy of Sacred Place. As priests, we need to have a healthy personal spirituality, organized according to one's sentiment and need, and kept alive through being faithful to it. If lukewarmness has set in in our personal spiritual regime, then we need to re-fine it.

- **Dutifully and devotionally celebrating the sacraments, and personally profiting by them:** By the celebration of the sacraments we, as priests, maintain an active daily communion with the Supreme High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is our model and mentor. If we have been casual in celebrating these mysteries of our Redemption, then we need to re-fine our attitude as presiders over these sacred mysteries. Above all, we should experience ourselves as deeply immersed spiritually in the realities that we celebrate, and profiting by them for our personal growth in holiness, otherwise, we are mere ritual functionaries.

**Making room to participate in, and patronizing those activities that are organized to enhance our spiritual encounter with the Lord, or to grow in our knowledge of Him;** e.g., recollections, retreats, ongoing formation programmes, and so on.

If we realize that lukewarmness, or spiritual sloth, has set in in any of these areas of our relational life with God, then we need to re-fine them.

To conclude this first part of the topic on re-fining our relationship with God, I refer to the remarks of two people. One spiritual writer remarks aptly that *a successful and an impactful priest is one who goes out to the people out of the presence of God.* How true! Another person has also remarked that it is *holy and saintly priests who make holy and saintly parishioners.* This is good food for thought.

**Refining our relationship with our neighbor:** As we know, the scriptures unequivocally relate the love of God and the love of neighbor. Jesus gives us the twin commandment: "Love God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your soul, and love your neighbor as yourself". St. John puts it aptly that one cannot say he loves God whom he has never seen, and yet hates his brother whom he can see; he sharply rebukes such a person as a liar.

How do we refine our relationship with our neighbor in the aftermath of the celebration of Easter? If, at Easter, we really experienced the profound depth of the love of God for us as exemplified in the Paschal Mystery, this should lead us to experience and express such love for those with whom we celebrated Easter, namely, our fellow priests and our parishioners. I shall deal with this second half of the recollection topic by identifying three categories of neighbour: our fellow priests, our parishioners, and our own selves.

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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:  
**\$971.00**

Budget Deficit:  
**\$3,779.00**

*Current as of  
April 30, 2024.*

I am delighted to have Father Bob Franco from the Diocese of Cleveland share his witness. Father Franco has been with the Fraternity since its beginning and has served on the Fraternity Board and as chairman. He has also contributed many articles to the Newsletter.

*Fr. John Kiley*  
Fr. John Kiley

Ordained June 12, 1982, I was assigned to a city parish with a new pastor and a school of 600 plus students. Someone described one's first year of priesthood as, not being busy, but dizzy. That was somewhat true for me. Funerals, weddings, parish groups, the elementary school kept me moving. Our parish staff was quite diverse and even had some radically different visions of what it meant to be Church.

I ended my first year of priesthood a bit dazed and tired. However, just a few days after my first anniversary, I found myself in Steubenville at the Priest and Deacon Conference. (Seminarists were added later). It was just what the Divine Physician ordered. I was inspired by the times of praise and worship, nourished by the teachings and liturgies, and greatly encouraged and ministered to by the small sharing groups.

I returned to parish life rejuvenated. And though I didn't doubt that I could make it through another year until next year's Steubenville conference, I did long for something more. I later learned that Fr. Michael Scanlon TOR had discussed with Ralph Martin some sort of follow-up to the summer conferences. During that summer of 1983, Fr. Scanlon, along with Fr. Jim Ferry from Newark, invited Fr. George

Kosicki, Fr. John Dreher and Fr. Ed Wade to design a follow up that would be on a local level for priests. Thus Fraternity of Priests was born.



This team came to my diocese of Cleveland in November 1983. They gathered members of the local presbyterate on two Friday afternoons. At the end of these two meetings, this team commissioned Frs. Tom Dunphy, Mike Schneid and myself to begin a local expression of the Fraternity. In January of 1984 our local Fraternity of Priests began to meet.

The Fraternity has proven invaluable to me. The personal disciplines of prayer, reading Sacred Scripture, fasting and tithing have kept me rooted in the Lord. Meeting with my brother priests and sharing our lives, and especially celebrating the Sacrament of Penance with each other, has been a great source of encouragement. The disciplines of living in the power of the Holy Spirit and bringing the people I serve into a deeper life in the Holy Spirit has brought focus to my ministry.

I am deeply grateful for the presence of the Fraternity for the last 40 years of my priesthood. The relationships I have developed locally, as well as coming to know brother priests in the USA and abroad, has been a source of joy and strength. I pray that the Fraternity of Priests continue to be an instrument of grace for priests in the years to come. Our culture has grown spiritually darker. May the Fraternity of Priests assist priests to shine for Christ more brightly.

**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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**Re-financing our relationships with our fellow priests:** In our parishes, we live together with another priest, or with other priests. These are our immediate neighbours. Perhaps, over time, our relationships have soured, hence the topic is inviting each of us to re-fine our relationship with the confreres with whom we live and interact daily. How do we do this?

- One connotation of the expression “re-fine” is **“to make good again”**. If, during the course of time we have had an axe to grind with a confrere, or a Parish Team mate, now after Easter, after having experienced the outpouring of God’s forgiveness to sinful humanity, as expressed in Jesus forgiving his torturers as he hung upon the cross, then we have a good example to follow: to make good the hurt we have caused each other as confreres, to make amends and to endeavor to live a harmonious fraternal life as priests in one presbytery.

- If we have not been living well together, or eating together, or sharing the common space of the presbytery, then the invitation is: “re-fine” your relationships as people who share one common vocation, the priesthood, and one mission, the pastoral service to the same people in the parish. As we all know, in some of our parish communities, relationships between confreres is not the best. But the fact is that, we perhaps attended the same seminary, we share one common priesthood, and have the same mission to serve the same people. How come that we cannot overcome our differences and enjoy working and living together? Quarrelsome relationships among priests has a huge negative impact on our pastoral effectiveness. By these uncharitable attitudes towards one another we drive people away from the Church. In this case the invitation is: let us re-fine our relationships as confreres for the good of our parishioners. Let us take note of

Jesus’ warning: “Woe be the one who leads one of these little ones to sin; it were better for a millstone to be tied around his neck, and he be thrown into the ocean!” During this Easter period (and beyond), re-fine your relationship with your curate, with your parish priest and with your brother priest!

- **Re-financing our relationships with our parishioners:** At the blessing of the Oils, we renew our priestly obligations and we make this declaration before the congregation: **“At our ordination, we accepted the responsibilities of the priesthood, out of love for you and your people...”**! This is a solemn pledge that we make before God and His people. Perhaps, we do not give it much thought after saying it, but it is a grave obligation we impose upon ourselves: we accepted to be ordained because of our love for love God and for His people. In this recollection, we are asked to re-fine our love for God and for the people whom we have accepted at our ordination to serve. Let us therefore do some introspection: **what is the quality of our relationship with the people we serve in our parishes? In some parishes there are serious relational issues between the priests and the people they are there to serve.** We know this, because these are expressed at various levels, and in various circumstances **as discontent**. Some areas where discontent is expressed towards us include poor financial accountability, not enough involvement of, or collaboration with, the PPC or the Finance Committee in managing the affairs and the finances of the Parish. Others are: the arrogance on the part of some of us towards parishioners, and gross disrespect of people. Though the Parish Committees are advisory in nature, yet for the smooth management of the parish, close collaboration with, and creatively involving them, make parish administration a joy, rather than a tussle! Where there are cracks in our relationships with our parishioners,

let us re-fine these for more effective and impactful collaborative pastoral ministry.

- **Re-financing our relationship with our own selves:** We may not consider this as the case, but your very self is your most immediate neighbor! You relate with yourself daily as the most proximate neighbor! The second commandment of love says: “love your neighbour as yourself!” We need to love ourselves, and to treat ourselves well. This often is however not the case. We often treat our bodies roughly and recklessly, and then they eventually take a toll on us; we can’t cheat nature. There are so many pre-mature deaths lately involving those laity and the ordained. This is a worrying trend worth reflecting soberly on. Love yourself and take care of yourself! This involves watching over your health: regularly doing health screening; having good eating habits; good drinking habits; a good working regime that takes into account enough rest and reduction of stress, and so on. How many of us make a good checkup once a while? How many take a holiday? A day off? Let’s take a good look at how we care for our wellbeing and we may see that we need to re-fine our relationship with our body! If we take good care of ourselves, then we can live healthier and happier lives, and work more fruitfully and find great fulfillment in our lives and ministry as priests, and also as human beings!

**Implications for us of the Easter Event:**

- The topic for our recollection invites us to live the newness of the Easter event by re-financing our dead or lukewarm relationships with God, with our confreres, with our parishioners, and with our own selves.

- The task ahead is this: **living with a new heart!** Therefore, with the Psalmist, let us pray that God may create in each of us a new heart during this Easter season, and beyond (cf. Ps. 51.12).

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

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# THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

July 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Rev. 1 John Lynam <i>Pittsburgh, PA</i>	Rev. 2 Daniel Mahoney <i>Pittsburgh, PA</i>	Rev. 3 Nicholas Mastrangelo <i>Pittsburgh, PA</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 Kenneth Oldenski <i>Pittsburgh, PA</i>	Rev. 8 Thomas Sparacino <i>Pittsburgh, PA</i>	Rev. 9 John Sweeney <i>Pittsburgh, PA</i>	Rev. 10 Paul Zywan <i>Pittsburgh, PA</i>	Msgr. 11 Cuthbert Alexander <i>Port of Spain</i>	Rev. 12 Gerard Bernier <i>Port of Spain</i>	Rev. 13 Riginald DeFour <i>Port of Spain</i>
Rev. 14 Raymond Francis <i>Port of Spain</i>	Rev. 15 Clifford Graham <i>Port of Spain</i>	Rev. 16 Harold Imammshah <i>Port of Spain</i>	Rev. 17 Dwight Merrick <i>Port of Spain</i>	Rev. 18 Ian Taylor <i>Port of Spain</i>	Rev. 19 John Theodore CSSP <i>Port of Spain</i>	Rev. 20 John Dreher <i>Providence, RI</i>
Rev. 21 Robert Giardina <i>Providence, RI</i>	Rev. 22 Michael Kelley <i>Providence, RI</i>	Rev. 23 Roland Lepire <i>Providence, RI</i>	Rev. 24 Michael Roy <i>Providence, RI</i>	Rev. 25 Gerry Sabourin <i>Providence, RI</i>	Rev. 26 Terry Brenon <i>San Angelo, TX</i>	Rev. 27 Robert Bush <i>San Angelo, TX</i>
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## A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

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<http://www.fraternityofpriests.org>

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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