

# THE VISITATION

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## Prayer Not Repentance, Is First - By Fr. Robert J. Carr, Boston Fraternity

Our disciplines center around prayer and being priests of prayer. This is essential to our ministry. Unfortunately, it is easy to do everything we need to do as priests and never pray except the liturgy of the hours. If we are going to be truly effective as priests, prayer is absolutely essential. I mean here spontaneous prayer as opposed to rote prayer.

My parishioners tell me that my legacy is that I am always talking about prayer. I am because I believe in it. I also believe that when we pray and understand its importance, then we teach it to others. If we do not understand its importance, then we do not focus on it in our teaching to others.

Let me give you an example. I often hear people teach morality as the key to our faith. I remind my parishioners that our faith is not a moral code. It has one, but it is not summed in nothing more than moral living. However, many Catholics teach our faith strictly as a system of morals. Remember, you can be an atheist and follow Catholic morality. Some atheists even attend their own liturgies every Sunday. So morality is important but it needs a foundation of prayer.

One objection I hear people say

is that Jesus preached repentance as his first message. They will add that this must be our first message to the world. I point out, however, that the first thing people heard about Jesus is to encounter him. You could not attend the Sermon on the Mount if you did not first plan to attend and encounter Our Lord. Therefore, the first message people heard about Jesus is come and encounter Him. The call to repent comes after the call to encounter. Too many in the Church have it backwards. They teach others to repent so that they can encounter Him.

Our encounter, however, becomes the motivation for repenting. People will say for example, we must repent first and will leave others saying why? Why should we repent? This is an important question because too often the answer is so that we may not go to Hell. This is a terrible answer. Jesus called people to encounter Him so that they may know the truth and the truth will set them free. So the reason why people should repent, after they encounter Jesus, is so that they will understand the truth He embodies and live that truth.

These are all things that happen through prayer. If we do not pray,

then we will not so easily encounter Christ nor understand the truth. We may not see the big picture of God's hand working in the world because we do not have the wisdom to understand it when we see it.

The saints preached this as well. Notice the motivation the saints had to pursue holiness was to encounter Christ more. They fell deeply in love with Him and that love grew the more they were in contact with Him. The reason why they lived the morality they did is they saw to turn towards sin is to build an obstacle to truth that will set us free.

Their prayer transformed them to an even deeper knowledge of Christ and that knowledge and love motivated them to live more how He was calling them and us. So, when we teach morality over prayer, we give people a carrot on a stick approach. If you live a moral life you will end up in Heaven. This is not what the saints often taught.

Somehow the message often in more traditional circles is to pursue virtue. Without prayer, however, we pursue virtue for virtue's sake. Even building on the teachings of Aristotle, we learn if we pursue virtue we will experience a happy life. After all Aristotle, taught to live a virtuous life seeking the

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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:  
**\$2,857.00**

Budget Deficit:  
**\$1,893.00**

*Current as of  
May 31, 2024.*

**L**eon Cardinal Suenens (1904-1996), former Archbishop of Brussels-Malines in Belgium, was one of the fathers of the Second Vatican Council. He was also supportive of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal from its early days. He was once asked, "why are you a man of hope?". One of his responses was, "Because I believe in the surprises of the Holy Spirit". Pope Francis has also referred to "the surprises of the Holy Spirit". Hopefully we have experienced on occasions one of these "surprises".

A "surprise of the Spirit" in my own life and ministry was the call several years ago, as a "retired" priest, to serve as one of the spiritual directors at St. John Seminary in Boston. During the academic year I visit the seminary about six to nine days each month. This call was totally unexpected and has been a special grace in my own life and hopefully for the seminarians.

During the past several years and more recently I have been meeting with five deacons, four of whom as I write this, have been ordained to priesthood, and one who will be ordained at the end of June. It was a very moving experience during the Boston priesthood ordination on May 25 to lay hands on these men and then to concelebrate several of their "first Masses".

In my final "official" meeting with them in May I offered four pointers which have been important in my own life and priesthood and which I trust will be helpful to them.

1) Be faithful to your daily holy hour. This is one of the most important of our Fraternity Disciplines and was constantly stressed at Priests Retreats by the late Archbishop Fulton J Sheen. To grow in the graces of priesthood

depends on relationship with Jesus and it is a faith filled regular and committed daily prayer time that keeps that relationship alive and growing.

2) Seek our priestly fraternity. I recently sent all our newly ordained a letter of congratulations and invited them to visit and pray with us at one of our Boston Fraternity meetings. I stressed with my directees that if they do not join some fraternity group, please seek out two or three brother priests that you can meet with regularly for prayer, encouragement, and honest sharing.

3) While never becoming cold or aloof, develop a bit of a thick skin in order to deal with criticisms, just or unjust, which are sure to come and not allow them to lead to discouragement or a sense of bitterness.

4) Work at developing a healthy sense of humor and don't take yourself too seriously. Remember that you are participating in what is the Lord's work. We are simply His servants. We do our best at planting, but the Lord give the growth.

At this time of year when many dioceses are celebrating ordinations, pray for the newly and recently ordained. If one of them is assigned to your parish, be a person who encourages and supports this new priest. Pray also and actively encourage priestly vocations.



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](mailto:editor@fraternityofpriests.org). Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted.

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means as opposed to the extremes. It is not the richest person who is happiest but the one who is neither overly rich nor overly poor. Aristototele, however, never encountered Jesus, so his words are honorable but they are not Christian. Contrast that with the words of Jesus that he who hates his life will find it. That does not indicate that one is to live a virtuous life to be happiest. It contrasts that one who sacrifices for the greater common good will find it. This is a drastic difference.

If we take the life of St. Paul, he encountered Jesus and preached his message. He even called his audience to live in a way that is like running a race, preparing like athletes for our journey. However, St. Paul did not live an easy life. His example could be defined by sacrifice that all may know Christ. It might be also possible to say that St. Paul had it easier and better when he was a pharisee persecuting Christians but he too first had an encounter with Christ and then he repented of his sin. It was then his most difficult journey began in bringing Christ's message the world. He embraced that journey that all may be saved.

We know that St. Paul had mystical experiences teaching him greater truth than he would ever understand as a pharisee. It is highly probably that sacrificing himself for the vision he understood came from Christ Himself, including entering the Third Heaven. He saw a different way of living and it had much

more to do than simply pursuing virtue. You can rest assured his prayer was a central part of his life.

St. Teresa of Avila had an intense relationship with Christ and in her books referred to Him as His majesty. Her writings, especially, the Interior Castle highlights again not the teaching to pursue virtue but to pursue Christ by turning from those things that lead us away from Him. Again, that is much more than pursuing virtue.

St. Alphonsus Liguori saw prayer as the avenue of salvation. He taught that those who prayed were saved and those who did not were damned. The saint saw prayer as essential to Catholicism. So it must remain for us. The more we pursue prayer, the more we may teach the fruits of it to others and help them to understand the truth of prayer.

I teach my parishioners to beware of a common misunderstanding in Catholicism which is our priority is to live a virtuous life. This leads people down the wrong track. It is easy to decide to live a moral life and still never pray. The saints taught that one cannot live the former if they first do not practice the latter. St. John Chrysostom taught that one had to pray in order to live the commandments. Those words are now incorporated into the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph #2098

*Prayer is an indispensable condition for being able to obey God's commandments. "[We] ought always to pray and not lose heart."*

We just finished what the secular world calls Pride month. I often see comments and even tweets from Catholic priests and others directing us to the Sacred Heart which is the focus in Catholicism during the month of June. Others will call this humility month. I always point out that every month is humility month in the Catholic Church, after all it is the mother of all virtues. However, I do not see these same people calling all those in and out of the Church to pray, to encounter Christ. If you want to lead people to Christ, you need to introduce Him to others and there is no greater way than to teach them to pray.

Back in the day, I was a Sonar Technician in the Navy, I was also a lay leader in prayer on my ship. The ComNavSurfPac chaplain, Captain Bob Ecker, CHC, USN, a Catholic priest, taught us that if you can teach people to pray then you have put them on the path to Christ. This, he taught, was key.

Prayer really has to be key in our ministry. The discipline to pray is not only so that we can serve Christ but that we can teach Christ to others. If we only teach morality, we may find ourselves preaching material that you can also hear in the Unitarian-Universalist Assembly. They also teach morality. We, however, need to always make prayer a priority in our own lives and to lead others to experience it in their own. This is why this discipline is so important and it pains me the many times I see people talk about Catholicism and never mention prayer.

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

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# THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

August 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 For the souls of our deceased FOP members	2 For prayer requests received	3 For our Holy Father, Pope Francis
Rev. 4 Joseph Vogel <i>Sioux Falls</i>	Rev. 5 Richard Baumberger <i>Sioux Falls</i>	Rev. 6 Rodney Farke <i>Sioux Falls</i>	Rev. 7 Edward Pierce <i>Sioux Falls</i>	Rev. 8 John Rasmussen <i>Sioux Falls</i>	Rev. 9 Joseph Short <i>Sioux Falls</i>	Rev. 10 Gregory Frankman <i>Sioux Falls</i>
Rev. 11 Randy Phillips <i>Sioux Falls</i>	Rev. 12 Jerome Ranek <i>Sioux Falls</i>	Rev. 13 Mark Innocenti <i>St. Cloud, MN</i>	Rev. 14 Peter Kirchner <i>St. Cloud, MN</i>	Rev. 15 Gerald Mischke <i>St. Cloud, MN</i>	Rev. 16 Gregory Paffel <i>St. Cloud, MN</i>	Rev. 17 Todd Schneider <i>St. Cloud, MN</i>
Rev. 18 Mark Stang <i>St. Cloud, MN</i>	Rev. 19 James Dyer <i>St. Louis, MO</i>	Rev. Msgr. 20 Edmund Griesedieck <i>St. Louis, MO</i>	Rev. 21 Martin Mannion <i>St. Louis, MO</i>	Rev. 22 Aaron Nord <i>St. Louis, MO</i>	Rev. 23 David Novak <i>St. Louis, MO</i>	Rev. 24 Charles Tichacek <i>St. Louis, MO</i>
Rev. 25 James Brown <i>Toledo, OH</i>	Rev. 26 Kishore Kottana <i>Toledo, OH</i>	Rev. 27 Edward Littelmann <i>Toledo, OH</i>	Rev. 28 Nicholas Weibl <i>Toledo, OH</i>	Rev. 29 Dale Branson <i>Tucson, AZ</i>	Rev. 30 Isaac Fynn <i>Tucson, AZ</i>	Rev. 31 John Gonzales <i>Tucson, AZ</i>

## 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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