



THE VISITATION

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Embodying the Son of God on earth: Priestly Holiness

By Fr. Joseph Briody, Professor of Sacred Scripture, St. John Seminary, Boston

That some places, persons, and times are set aside and consecrated reminds us that all life is to be lived before God in holiness. The saintly Vietnamese Cardinal Van Thuan observed that the saints made each moment a response of their whole being to God's love. The saints grew into God's plan. The one hundred and forty-four thousand, the multitude around the throne of God and the Lamb, have entirely grown into God's plan for them. Holiness (God living in us) looks different for everyone. We are to grow into God's plan for us, to become ourselves fully in Christ—not photocopies, as Blessed Carlo Acutis would say, but originals.

For the priest, too, holiness looks different for each one. His sanctification through the living out of pastoral charity bears a very personal stamp. Christ lives, acts, loves, and ministers through each priest in a unique way, for he has specifically chosen each priest.

Many saintly priests grew gradually into their response to

Christ's question: "Who do you say I am?" The response to this pivotal question shapes a life, and, over time, the answer became clearer. For Saint Vincent de Paul, Christ Jesus was the Son of God who walked this earth and revealed the face of God.

It's encouraging for us to be reminded that priest-saints are not readymade. In his first parish assignment as a priest, St. Vincent de Paul did not know what to do! He wrote: "To my own embarrassment . . . I had *no* idea how to proceed . . ." Earlier in his life, he had experienced the horrors of doubt, temptation, and darkness. St. Vincent de Paul changed from someone who looked out for better conditions, better benefices, a better parish, with perhaps some careerism, to a much deeper living of the priesthood. His living of the priesthood was transformed by the influence of other remarkable priests—highlighting the benefits of priestly fraternity. One priest, especially, greatly influenced his life: Saint Francis de Sales. Vincent de Paul saw in Francis de Sales the very face of God. So impressed was he by Francis de Sales that he said: "I came to see

in him the man who best embodied for me the Son of God on earth."

That says a lot about Francis de Sales. It also captures who the priest is meant to be: an extension Christ and his healing, sanctifying, teaching, pastoral ministry. Through the priesthood, Christ still serves his Father and his people. In Francis de Sales, St. Vincent *glimpsed* who the priest is: a "living image of Jesus Christ," Shepherd and Spouse of his Church.

What St. Vincent de Paul glimpsed in Francis de Sales was the *identity* of the priest. In St. Francis de Sales, Vincent saw what he himself wanted to be—and would indeed become. Most of all, Vincent was moved by the humility of St. Francis de Sales. Subsequently, Vincent never missed a chance to make himself small, which is why he became great.

We have letters of St. Vincent de Paul, though sadly thousands of them were lost in the French Revolution. He laid what he called "the ruin of the Church" in certain parts of the world at the feet of priests. Bad priests, he repeated, were the principal cause of the ruin of the Church of God. Tough words for us, but he didn't wallow in a bleak outlook. He did something. He

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Fraternity Financial Report

Monthly Budget:
\$4,750.00
Actual Donations:
\$1,939.00
Budget Deficit:
\$2,811.00

*Current as of
October 31, 2024.*

In my years as a young seminarian there was a book that was very popular written by Charles Davis, a British theologian. The title was simply: *Theology for Today*. The book outlined and summarized in an understandable way several basic teachings and doctrines of the Catholic faith. One chapter was entitled: *The End of the World*. Davis began that chapter with the statement that the strangest thing about the end of the world is that we Christians are supposed to be hoping and longing for it.

Are you hoping and longing for the end of the world? Is that true of you? It was for the earliest Christians. Davis wrote that while the early Christians longed for it, we tend to hope and pray that the end will not come about in our day. Perhaps the early Church understood it quite differently from us. We are accustomed to view it as doom and gloom, they saw it as the Lord coming in glory to usher in New Heavens and a New Earth transformed by the glory of God. When the early Church gathered for worship each week on the Vigil of the Lord's Day, the hope was that the Lord would come in glory on this night. When that did not occur, they would celebrate Eucharist and the Lord would truly come to them not in glory but under the simple signs of bread and wine transformed into His Body and Blood.

We still have indications of this positive hope in our present liturgy. The prayer following the Lord's Prayer ends with the words, "as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." The former translation read, "we wait in joyful hope for the coming our Savior, Jesus Christ." One of the prefaces

used at daily Mass reads, "his Coming in glory we await with unwavering hope."

May the Lord help us to regain this mindset of the early Church regarding the

second coming of Christ and the end of the world. Who would not hope for and long for the end of death and suffering, the end of diseases and broken relationships, the end of pain and sorrow, the end of addictive and destructive behavior, the end of terrorism, the end of all evil?

We are now living in the prayerful and beautiful season of Advent which calls to mind the three comings of Christ, His coming in History - Christmas, His coming in Mystery - Church and Sacraments, and His glorious coming in Majesty at the end of time. May the Lord help us to truly await in joyful hope His coming in glory. May we constantly give thanks for the many ways the Lord does come to us and prepare our hearts and homes for a joyous celebration of the coming Christmas Season.



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.

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did what he could with God's grace. And he did what he could *from the heart of the Church*, not going off to set up his own Church, like a branch cut off from the vine; not going over to seemingly pristine groups with their own dangers, like the Jansenists.

St. Vincent gathered priests together who would try to live the priesthood fully and faithfully. And so, as his liturgical collect states, his great concerns were "the relief of the poor and the formation of the clergy."

From St. Vincent de Paul, we learn that the authentic response to sin and failure, in ourselves and in others, is first of all our own conversion, and then, seeing what good we can do where God has placed us, building up the kingdom of God. This attitude, with God's grace, dispels despondency, frustration, and cynicism.

Things were bad in the France of Vincent's time. Madame de Gondi, a pious woman who helped him, described the ignorance of the rural clergy. When she went to confession, the priests had no idea how to absolve. They did not know the sacramental formulae. They "contented themselves with mumbling a few unintelligible words." She had to write out the formula of absolution and give it to them to pronounce. Worse still, most people had stopped going to confession because the priests were incapable of instructing them and the faithful were scandalized by

aspects of the priests' lives. All in all, things were not good in parts of France at this time. Yet from such times sprang great priests and great saints.

St. Vincent resolved to do something to reform the clergy. He prayed a lot and did something. With two curates and a few neighboring priests, he set to work, deciding to live an ordered life, rising early, praying the Divine Office together, visiting the poor and the sick, catechizing the people, and hearing confessions. Then, attracted by the good reputation of these priests, people came in growing numbers. The rest is history.

St. Vincent de Paul was very practical, a contemplative in action. He would say, "perfection does not come from ecstasy, but from doing the will of God." To recognize God's will, he recommended considerable prayer and meditation before decisions or action. Pray a lot and then do something! But he counselled people not to leap ahead of Providence, not to hurry ahead of what God wants, not to dash into things. Most of all, St. Vincent de Paul was a man of prayer. "You must have an inner life," he would tell his followers. "You must have an inner life." "If you lack this, then you lack everything."

Every year in the seminary "Eucharist and Holy Orders" course we read a declaration from the time of Pope Paul VI on priesthood and the question of women's ordination. Every year, I'm struck, not so much by the convincing argument as

by a line towards the end of the document that puts everything in perspective. It's the reminder that, for every one of us, the primary vocation is to be a saint. The document states: "The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven are not the ministers but the saints" (*Inter insigniores*, 6). While we are called to be priests and *good* priests, we are called first to be saints.

In the Beatitudes, Christ describes the features of the holy. He is in fact describing himself. And he is describing the saints—those who let Christ live in them, those who let their *lives* be the answer to the questions people have about life and about God. The best answer to the world is the saint. It has been said that the saint is the only truly authentic individual. Since Our Lord ascended into glory, he left a reflection of himself in his saints. For us, priestly saints like Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul are important reflections of Christ and of what we can be.

The will of God is that we become saints (1 Thess 4:3): that the features of Jesus be reproduced in us. Blessed Columba Marmion would say "The Father has no other will for us" (cf. Rom 8:29)—than that we become like Jesus. This is why we *pray* the gospels, searching there for the face of Christ, that his features be reproduced in us. People should see in the priest a man who lives in the presence of Christ and reflects him. Our life is to be the living of his life, and our love, the loving of his Sacred Heart.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

January 2025						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			Rev. 1 Anthony Bekpare <i>Nasaalbeteryeb</i>	2 For the souls of our deceased FOP members	3 For prayer requests received	4 For our Holy Father, Pope Francis
Rev. 5 Nicodemus Unezumeh <i>Nasaalbeteryeb</i>	Rev. 6 Eugene Bettinger O.Carm. <i>New Jersey</i>	Rev. 7 Paul Cannariato <i>New Jersey</i>	Rev. 8 John Gordon <i>New Jersey</i>	Rev. 9 Joseph Meagher <i>New Jersey</i>	Rev. 10 Brendan Murray <i>New Jersey</i>	Rev. 11 Lewis Papera <i>New Jersey</i>
Rev. 12 John Primich <i>New Jersey</i>	Rev. 13 Ernest Rush <i>New Jersey</i>	Rev. 14 John Wassell <i>New Jersey</i>	Rev. 15 Ben Williams <i>New Jersey</i>	Rev. 16 William Cosgrove <i>New York</i>	Rev. 17 Tom Devery <i>New York</i>	Rev. 18 Joseph Muldoon <i>Ottawa</i>
Rev. 19 John Brennan <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 20 Thomas Galvin <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 21 Stan Gregorek <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 22 Thomas Kredel <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 23 Joseph Luisi <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 24 John Lynam <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 25 Daniel Mahoney <i>Pittsburgh</i>
Rev. 26 Nicholas Mastrangelo <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 27 Kenneth Oldenski <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 28 Thomas Sparacino <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 29 John Sweeney <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Rev. 30 Paul Zywan <i>Pittsburgh</i>	Msgr. 31 Cuthbert Alexander <i>Port-of-Spain</i>	

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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