



THE VISITATION

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My Journey to the Priesthood - by Father Damjan Mlinarič

I am Father Damjan. I was born to my mother Jelka and father Ivan. I also have a sister Mateja. I attended primary and secondary school in my hometown, and then I enrolled in the faculty of computer science and informatics in Maribor.

Because I was not raised in religion, I often wondered about the meaning of life. I did not have this deeper meaning. I did not know why I was living, where the world came from and where I was going. I lived for the moment, for pleasure, for this world, but slowly everything became more and more empty and desolate. Fortunately, my life changed at just the right moment when in the fall of 2003, when a friend and I were invited to the town Loznica to see Father Zoran. There I realized that God loves me (and this is quite concrete, not just theoretical), that he forgives my sins and that he gave his life for me, that he paid the price for me. I realized that I cannot deserve salvation. This was truly something shocking and experienced for me, and since then my life has never been the same.

First, I started reading the book by Emilien Tardif, Jesus called me to be his witness. Soon, I also started reading the holy scriptures, praying (I felt this as a need, not as a compulsion), learning basic prayers, and soon I began preparing for the the introduction of adults to christian life. A prayer group that was founded in Ptuj at that time helped me a lot. It gave me the strength to then live my christian life. I also soon met the youth group, *the watch of jesus*, which was a great support for me in my walk with christ. On the easter vigil, I was baptized in the church of st. George in Ptuj and received holy communion. It was truly something special and profound. Immediately afterwards, we also went to Medjugorje, where I experienced Mary's closeness in a special way and that she was accompanying me on my journey. At that time, I also gained a special joy in praying the rosary.

But the desire to know what God wanted from me, what I should do in this world, burned more and more within me. And slowly, step by step, God showed me through people, through the bible, through

the priest, through various other signs that he wanted me to embark on the path of consecrated life. During this time, I also received the sacrament of holy Confirmation and slowly began to go to mass not only on Sundays, but also several times during the week. Somehow, I began to recognize that if I accept the plan that God has for me, I will be the happiest, the most blessed myself and that at the same time I will be able to do the most for other people. So I yearned more and more and I saw more and more clearly that my path was to go to theology. Of course, there were also difficulties and trials, but fortunately I had quite a few friends who stood by me and helped me.

While studying theology, I went on an experience in the Cenacolo community, founded by Mother Elvira. I consider those five months spent in Italy an invaluable experience, because I strengthened myself there.

There you see people who were on the street, lost. There they pray before the Most Holy Sacrament, they even get up in the middle of the night for this. I experienced an example of closeness. It was a powerful experience that helped me

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Dear Fraternity Brothers and Friends of the Priesthood

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Fraternity Financial Report

Monthly Budget:
\$4,750.00

Actual Donations:
\$745.00

Budget Deficit:
\$4,005.00

*Current as of
November 30, 2024.*

We are living in an age where we are encouraged and challenged to “open doors”. On the evening of December 7, 2024, the archbishop of Paris, Archbishop Laurent Ulrich, pounded several times with his crozier on the main doors of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris seeking entrance. With great fanfare the doors were finally opened wide and the procession entered the bright and newly renovated cathedral. This was after five years of closure following the devastating fire of Holy Week 2019. On Christmas Eve Pope Francis opened the Holy Doors of Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome ushering in the Holy Year of 2025. The most important doors to be opened are the doors of our hearts and lives to welcome Jesus Christ, the King of Glory. This is the reason for this current Holy Year. As Pope Saint John Paul II used to preach so often: “Open Wide the Doors to Christ.”

Hope is the theme of this Holy Year. What is hope? The Catechism of the Catholic Church in paragraph 1817 describes hope as “the theological virtue by which we desire the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit”. The Baltimore Catechism defines hope as: “the virtue by which we firmly trust that God, who is all powerful and faithful to His promises, will in His mercy give us eternal happiness and the means to obtain it.” With the help of God we can gain heaven, a goal we could never attain of ourselves.

In inaugurating the Holy Year, Pope Francis calls our attention to Romans 5:5: “*Hope does not disappoint – Spes Non Confundit*”. This call to hope by St. Paul was meant to offer

the Christian community in Rome words of encouragement during times of difficulty and persecution. Why does hope not disappoint? The second half of Romans 5:5 gives the answer: “because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us”(NABRE) If we know God’s love we are strengthened to remain rooted in hope when facing serious difficulties and challenges.

We live in a world and culture that presents us with many reasons to lose hope. We face divisions in our Church and in our nations. Wars rage in various places in our world. Loss of human life through natural disasters, famine, shootings, terrorism, abortion etc. is widespread. As disciples of Jesus Christ, clergy and laity, we are called to be rooted in God’s love, confident that God is a Father who fulfills His promise, secure in the truth that Jesus is Emmanuel, God-With-Us.

May the Holy Year that we are now living in bring us the grace of opening the doors of our hearts to know and experience deeply that “Hope does not Disappoint”.



Fr. John Kiley

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a lot. I learned patience and trust in God, even in moments when I would have preferred to leave everything and leave.

So all these years of theology were really extremely rich, I learned a lot, received a lot and I am truly grateful to God for everything he does in my life. I can only confirm the words of Jesus: “ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Luke 7:7-8).

Now I am a pastor in Slovenj Gradec in Slovenia. I also devote a lot of time to "religious education" for adults. My experience has confirmed to me that the Alpha course is the most suitable for this.

This is a program that brings people closer to Jesus. In a come-and-see style. During the pandemic, we also had a course via Zoom. It's like inviting someone to your home and talking about religion, not the weather, politics or sports. Alpha lets a person know that they are accepted. But everyone can say what they want about religion. Without bullying, saying that some thinking is wrong. Gradually, we start talking about who God is. So I have a very positive experience with Alpha.

I sincerely ask you to pray for me, so that I may truly serve people in all their fullness, so that I may truly be a holy priest.

God's One Year Plan

This is a time of new beginnings on so many levels. We begin a new year which in the Church is also a jubilee year. Here in the United States, we have a new president which brings some hope and trepidation as all new administrations do.

We have a new set of expectations which every new year brings and maybe even for ourselves a new set of plans.

This is also a good time to go beyond focusing on resolutions of what habits we want to change this year but more importantly where we want to be at this time next year.

Many businesses have not only a one-year plan but also a five year plan. Where will we be one year from now but also five years from now. I want to focus on the former more than the latter. Where do you intend to be spiritually? Let me ask you to turn this around: how about another question, where does God want you to be the next year?

This is a question that I learned to see more of in this time. It can come across as trite and I don't mean it that way. Pastor Merlin Carothers taught me, through his books, a practice I use to this day. It is to praise God for all things good and bad. When something happens to us, we may look at

it as bad. What if we learn to praise God even when such things go wrong? We may find that this life changing event was actually a benefit to us in the long run.

Maybe it is that difficult parishioner who gives you butterflies in your stomach every time you see his or her phone number show up on your console. Maybe it is the struggles you have in your parish financially or even some of the issues that you deal with in administration. Maybe it is a family issue. In either case, when you praise God even when you may be feeling trepidation, you may find the benefit of the event that worried you led you to become better at what you do.

This is a form of letting go of control and allowing God to lead the way. When we do that, we do not know what is coming and it forces us to trust Him more. Even bring it to our prayer in trust. However, if you are still worried or angry about what happened bring that to prayer as well.

We don't know where we are going to be a year from now but what we really want is for us to be where God wants us to be. We learned from His son Jesus that we may in a good place after a long term struggle. However, it is still a good place and it is even better if we realize, we are where Our Lord wants us. —ed.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

February 2025						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 For our Holy Father, Pope Francis
Rev. Gerard Bernier <i>Port-of-Spain</i> 2	Rev. Riginald DeFour <i>Port-of-Spain</i> 3	Rev. Raymond Francis <i>Port-of-Spain</i> 4	Rev. Clifford Graham <i>Port-of-Spain</i> 5	6 For the souls of our deceased FOP members	7 For prayer requests received	Rev. Harold Imammshah <i>Port-of-Spain</i> 8
Rev. Dwight Merrick <i>Port-of-Spain</i> 9	Rev. Ian Taylor <i>Port-of-Spain</i> 10	Rev. John Theodore CSSP <i>Port-of-Spain</i> 11	Rev. John Dreher <i>Providence</i> 12	Rev. Robert Giardina <i>Providence</i> 13	Rev. Michael Kelley <i>Providence</i> 14	Rev. Roland Lepire <i>Providence</i> 15
Rev. Michael Roy <i>Providence</i> 16	Rev. Gerry Sabourin <i>Providence</i> 17	Rev. Terry Brenon <i>San Angelo</i> 18	Rev. Robert Bush <i>San Angelo</i> 19	Rev. Bernard Gully <i>San Angelo</i> 20	Rev. Santiago Udayar <i>San Angelo</i> 21	Rev. William McCarthy <i>Sioux City</i> 22
Rev. John Helmueller <i>Sioux Falls</i> 23	Rev. Joseph Vogel <i>Sioux Falls</i> 24	Rev. Richard Baumberger <i>Sioux Falls</i> 25	Rev. Rodney Farke <i>Sioux Falls</i> 26	Rev. Edward Pierce <i>Sioux Falls</i> 27	Rev. John Rasmussen <i>Sioux Falls</i> 28	

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

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Email: contact@fraternityofpriests.org
<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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Dear Fr. John Kiley,

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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