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The Visitation

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Being Good Pastorally

By Fr. Robert J. Carr

I make it a rule that when I am on vacation, I attend Sunday Mass in my civilian clothes and sit in the pews. I do not celebrate Mass by myself in my hotel room, I experience the liturgy as a regular parishioner and see what I see that can help me improve my parish work.

Now, I am in hospital ministry so I am not part of an official parish, however, I still plan to do the same thing on my upcoming vacation. It is important for us to know what life is like for the laity and either build upon our own experience or make sure we do not do what may turn us off. I rarely have a bad experience and I like to listen to those who share good and bad experiences at a local parish.

Recently, I was waiting in line for confession, there was one man ahead of me and he had been waiting for a while. I had become the second person in the line and so arrived much later. The priest hearing confession had a green light to indicate it was time to enter the confession room and a red light indicating the room was busy. The current penitent came out of the confessional and the man ahead of me was ready to go in when we both noticed both lights went dark, no warning or even indication. Suddenly, confessions came to end. I said that was wrong. When I hear confessions, I will let people know usually through an exiting penitent that I have to end soon, but I always ask how many people are in line so I can gauge my time.

Sometimes, I counsel people online who have had a bad experience in confession and this is disturbing as well. We do not have to change Church teaching but we have to be pastoral in our approach and it is essential that people have an accurate but good experience in confession.

As a former public affairs radio producer and host in public radio, I had to live by one major rule put forth by the station's general manager. We provided a service on behalf of the University of Massachusetts in Boston which is a school of the commonwealth. The general manager insisted that everyone who entered the radio station left having enjoyed the experience. This rule was in place even if we had to address some tough issues on the air.

One of my favorite interviews was with the commonwealth commissioner of corrections. He came into the studio and for the entire hour he literally stared me in the eye. He was waiting for gotcha journalism and those tough questions that would put him in his place. When the interview was over, he smiled and told me he enjoyed the interview even though we did cover tough subjects. I explained that since the radio station was a service of the Commonwealth, we did not do gotcha journalism, we informed people of the real issues. I asked strong, direct questions, I covered every aspect of the topic I needed and fulfilled my role, but I did not embarrass or attack the commissioner.

Tough confessions must be similar. They must be like lessons in customer service. You can outline what a sin is and even speak directly of the sinful reality but you do not have to turn someone off from the Church. I hear these complaints all the time. I also see priests boast of how they will not fall for being nice in the face of sin. No one asks you to be unkind but the devil will be happy to ensure you lose a soul in the confessional.

St. Louis de Montford tells a story of a penitent who entered a confessional and was told that God would never forgive that sin and that the person was a horrible person or words to that effect. How could the priest say this, was the priest being stern to a bad penitent? Was the priest demonstrating that he would not relent on sin? No, the famous rosary

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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

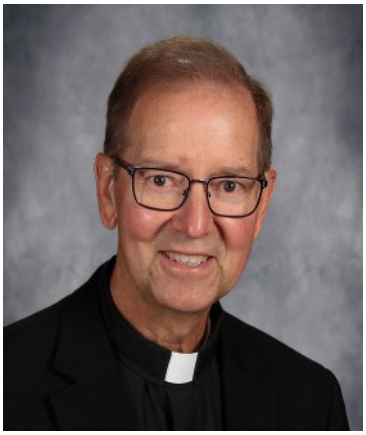
Monthly Budget:
$4,750.00
Actual Donations:
$2,028.00
Budget Deficit:
$2,722.00

Current as of August 31, 2025.

As a child I learned the folk tale *Stone Soup*. Hungry travelers unsuccessfully sought food from a village they were passing through. Being enterprising as well as hungry, they began to make "Stone Soup". They placed a stone in their large kettle and filled it with water. When the villagers asked what they were doing, they said that they were making stone soup. All soup needed was a little "garnish" to finish it off. The curious villagers began to add things to the soup. One added a carrot, another a tomato, someone else onions, and yet another some meat. When all was said and done, a hearty stew-like soup was created that everyone enjoyed.

This lesson was recently played out in the creation of the St. Peter Rosary Garden for my parish's 150th Jubilee celebrations. One couple donated their large, outdoor statues of Jesus and Mary. When dismantling a dilapidated parish garage, marble slabs were discovered: the former communion rail. These were refashioned into Rosary beads. One parishioner's excavating company donated a good portion of his goods and services (his digging and loads of stone). Other parishioners with landscaping skills tore out old shrubs and replaced them with new ones. Just before the demolition of my former rectory (to be replaced by an event center and elevator), pavers and decorative wall rocks were transferred to the garden. The list goes on.

The lesson is clear. When we overcome our fears and share what we have, we can create beautiful things. Unfortunately, there are times when our fears become prejudices that divide us. Left unchecked, these prejudices turn into ideologies that justify violence and inhibit free speech. Last month's assassination of Charlie Kirk demonstrated this evil.



Fr. Francis Martin once said, "Community is the work of the Holy Spirit. Isolation is the work of the devil." Our goal must be to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Dismantling walls of prejudice, misunderstanding and fear will take patience, sacrifice and a charity that forgives others for their ignorance and violence. Erika Kirk demonstrated this approach by publicly forgiving her husband's suspected killer at his memorial service.

St. Peter Parish will dedicate its Rosary Garden on October 7th, the day we honor Mary as *Our Lady of the Rosary*. It is during the Fifth Sorrowful Mystery that we recall Mary's presence at the crucifixion. From the cross her son said, *"Woman, behold your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother."* (John 19:26-27) And from the Cross, Mary also heard Jesus pray, *Father, forgive them. They know not what they do*. (Luke 23:34)

During this month of October, let us invoke our Lady's intercession. She, who is our mother, can teach us to forgive. And, mindful of the Third Glorious Mystery, Pentecost, she can also pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God. By the Spirit, the Architect of Unity, calling forth the gifts of all, we will be empowered to give credible witness to Jesus Christ, our true hope.

In Christ,

Fr. Bob Franco

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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saint explained, the devil took the priest's place to proclaim his evil to a vulnerable sinner. In that case, the devil demonstrated how not to hear confessions.

Many people can forget that the priest who is stern at Mass, who preaches nothing but sin and condemns sinners and the one who is the mean priest in the confessional may be serving the devil more than Christ, especially if it leads someone into despair.

A cashier once explained to me that her job was to ensure the customer had a good experience at her register and she was able to assist anyone who had a bad experience from an employee at another department. Since, she was the last person the customer would see in the story, that positive experience was essential to a returning consumer.

Similar principles apply for us priests. It is not an honorable thing for a person to have a bad experience at Mass or in the confessional or anywhere else. The priest may be speaking the truth but all the saints explained that the truth must be proclaimed with love and pastorally. There is no place for the stern priest pushing the rules of the Church in ways that turn people off from our faith.

When I lived with then Archbishop O'Malley, I was concerned about what to do if the current presidential candidate, a Catholic, came to receive communion. This was in 2004 and that was, of course, former Massachusetts Senator John Kerry. My concern was that I did not want to give him communion on the front page of every newspaper in the world, which is exactly what would happen. I spoke to the Archbishop and did not even get my full question out when he explained that I do not deny anyone communion coming up in line. I know that the question of receiving the Eucharist is not to be addressed in the line but beforehand. I have a simple instruction about receiving the Eucharist at weddings and funerals. I do not read the USCCB instructions, instead, I explain what it means to receive and indicate that those who do receive are proclaiming that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ and by receiving they embrace Christ's teachings in the Gospel and in the Church. This means people have a full understanding that this is a significant act. I also explain what they should do if they choose not to communicate that message. It is a gentle explanation but one that gives people instructions on what it means to receive. So many people do not know what to do or feel uncomfortable refraining when everyone else comes to receive. Therefore, I give the congregation an understanding of the action and a reason and method to refrain if they so choose.

This brings me back to my Mass habit on vacation. I also do not receive the Eucharist, that way if someone is uncomfortable with not receiving but feel they should not, I give them the opportunity to see they are not the only one refraining.

It is important that people have a good experience when they are receiving the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation. This is a tremendous service we do and we must not be so focused on the rules that we take the humanity out of it completely. There are many Catholics who are not ordained on the internet who do just that. They speak and write sternly and bring up specific rules with no pastoral sense at all demanding people follow those rules. I instruct people bothered by these influencers to ignore them but if they must engage then ask them by whose authority they speak. People do not have the right to condemn people based on some rule in the Church without a good pastoral manner about them.

Many years ago, when I was in the seminary, there was a local shrine that offered confession every day and all day. There was one priest who would be in the confessional from time to time who was nasty. A friend explained that the priest threatened not to absolve him of his sin, however, he would but if my friend committed the sin again, he would be condemning the priest's soul to Hell.

We all know there is nothing in Catholic teaching about this at all. Another friend was so appalled to hear this story, he said, he would've committed the sin just to give the priest what he deserved. Obviously, all attitudes are wrong there but you can see a bad confession can do great damage and that is never what we must do.

We must not only speak the truth, we must do it pastorally and in a way that does not lead people into despair of salvation or anger at the Church but who learns the truth with love.

Please send us your prayer intentions:_____

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

November 2025						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Rev. 30 Richard Kelley *Boston*						1 **For our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV**
Rev. 2 Sylvester Nankpi *Wa, West Africa*	Rev. 3 James Nasaalbeteryeb *Wa, West Africa*	Rev. 4 Nicodemus Nongnenuor *Wa, West Africa*	Rev. 5 Aloysius Nuolabong *Wa, West Africa*	6 **For the souls of our deceased FOP members**	7 **For prayer requests received**	Rev. 8 Aloysius Sunnoba *Wa, West Africa*
Rev. 9 Romanus Tampah *Wa, West Africa*	Rev. 10 Cyracus Tang *Wa, West Africa*	Rev. 11 Frederick Tantie *Wa, West Africa*	Rev. 12 Matthew Tuurosong *Wa, West Africa*	Msgr. 13 Stan Jaworski *Winnipeg*	Rev. 14 Michael Nault *Winnipeg*	Rev. 15 Francois Paradis OMI *Winnipeg*
Rev. 16 George Dunkley *Worcester*	Rev. 17 Jean-Paul Gagnon *Worcester*	Msgr. 18 John Mraz *Allentown*	Rev. 19 John Brennan *Boston*	Rev. 20 Robert Carr *Boston*	Rev. 21 William Carroll *Boston*	Rev. 22 Donald Clinton *Boston*
Rev. 23 Volney DeRosia *Boston*	Dcn. 24 Paul Dow *Boston*	Rev. 25 Gerry Fraser *Boston*	Rev. 26 Christopher Gaffrey OFM *Boston*	Rev. 27 Patrick Gilbert *Boston*	Dcn. 28 Chuck Hall *Boston*	Rev. 29 Elson Kattookkaran *Boston*

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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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