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The Visitation

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Do We Preach a Grace Filled Road to Salvation

By Fr. Robert J. Carr, Boston Fraternity

I lost another subscriber. It does not surprise me. I write material on my substack and speak in my podcast of what is not typical in the Catholic online world. I focus on ministering to those on the outside of mainstream Catholicism. These are the people who struggle with Catholic rules. Some have determined they will leave the Church for another and others would never leave but they have a difficult time with Church teaching.

What makes it worse is many influencers are ready to portray a Catholicism that is hard to do and even others claim that few will go to Heaven. With this as a backdrop, I think it might be time in this first part of the liturgical year to evaluate how we portray our relationship with God in the lives of our Catholic parishioners.

Many years ago, a priest taught the importance of knowing scriptures that are not Christian. Recently on one of my many day off journeys to Providence, Rhode Island, I visited one of my favorite bookstores there. I found a bound version of the Bhagavad Gita. I bought it immediately. Reading these Hindu scriptures, I came to understand just how much our Lord does for us.

Now, this is not going to be a summation of Hinduism, one read of their scriptures does not a Hindu make. However, that same one read does really deepen one's Catholicism. One of the great complaints I hear from Catholics is the fear of Hell and, therefore, an unhealthy fear of sin. Obviously, a choice to avoid sin is important but an unhealthy fear is spiritually destructive. Perfect love casts out all fear and the Bible says three hundred and sixty-five times do not be afraid.

Many live in fear of mortal sin and going to Hell. Online influencers do not help. I have a relative who once explained that he believed in reincarnation because one cannot be good enough to get to Heaven in one lifetime. Sadly, he died suddenly about two weeks later. He grew up in the era when understanding God's love was not taught as much as we teach today in the post Vatican II era.

This leads me back to the Bhagavad Gita. The Hindu scriptures teach a journey to enlightenment over many lifetimes. One has to work hard to separate oneself from any form of material and spiritual attachment. This is such a difficult process that it takes many lifetimes, hence, reincarnation. Further, the soul is eternal, neither created nor destroyed, so reincarnation is the eternal soul returning to a material body.

Ghandi put a stop to the practice of not helping the poor. The Hindu belief that those who are poor suffer because of sins they committed in the past is something that Ghandi rejected for his country. That was all part of the philosophy.

We, obviously, do not accept the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita, thankfully. However, when we reflect on that Hindu teaching in light of what the Church teaches about Christ, we can have a much bigger and more powerful understanding of what Christ did for us.

We believe that God created us out of love. We also understand that the devil sowed his hatred of God by what became original sin and its effects but nevertheless the Father sent his son so that we might be saved. St. Maximus the Confessor taught that Jesus' one mission was to live the law perfectly—love God and neighbor. He also taught that our lord's crucifixion was really the true last temptation. It was the devil trying to get Jesus not to love

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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:
$733.00
Budget Deficit:
$4,017.00

Current as of October 31, 2025.

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year is a popular holiday song in the United States. It was composed by Edward Pola and George Wyle and performed by Andy Williams. The tune is uplifting and the lyrics capture the vibe of the season. However, there is a problem. Though the title nails it, the song never mentions Jesus!

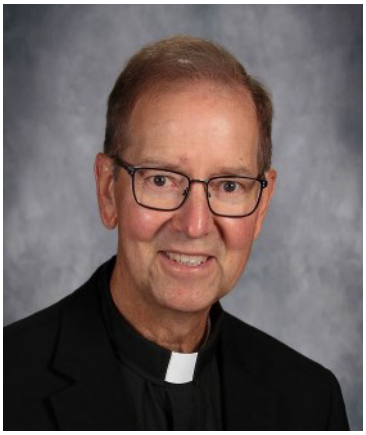
Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year because of Jesus. *O Holy Night* (original lyricist-Placide Cappeau, translated by Sullivan Dwight and music by Adolphe Adam) describes the wonder this way:

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining; It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.

Long lay the world in sin and error pining, Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.

From just about the dawn of time, the world was in bondage to sin and error. Yet, humanity ached for God. Then *He* appeared! God the Son was born in most humble surroundings, to the praise of angels, the surprise of shepherds, the amazement of Magi and the paranoia of King Herod. Now the *soul felt its worth*! No longer destined to futility and separation from God, our souls now know that they are valuable to God. The Son of God assumed a human nature, body *and* soul so that he could save us, body and soul. We now have a destiny of unshakable hope. This is why Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year.

I recently spoke with Fr. John Dreher, a priest of the Diocese of Providence and one of the original team members when Fraternity of Priests was founded in 1983. At 93, Fr. Dreher is still developing ways of presenting the gospel. During our conversation, Fr. Dreher put things in a very simple way. He raised the question, *Where are people going?* Fr. Dreher sees people moving in two basic directions. People are either going with the world, which will lead them to purgatory or hell. Or they are going with God, which will bring them to share the life with Holy Trinity for eternity.



Christmas is the ultimate invitation. Christ's coming into our world is his invitation to join Him in His world. Jesus has paved the way. His earthly life gives us glimpse of the power, love and mercy of God. His saving death and glorious resurrection liberates us from the bondage of sin and death. His gift of the Holy Spirit allows us to taste even now the life promised in the world to come. Our response is simple: we want to go with God by accepting the invitation of Jesus Christ who says, *Follow Me*.

So yes, this is the most wonderful time of the year, but not for the reasons Andy Williams sang about on his famous Christmas album. Not everyone will be able to enjoy Christmas parties and holiday cheer. However, we can all welcome Christ, who reveals our true value and gives us definitive hope.

As we conclude this Jubilee Year, may the wonder of Christ give us unfailing 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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once, which would have made our last chance for salvation a failure and we would be lost. However, Jesus in the ultimate act of love and obedience to the father did not falter and he won for us salvation.

This brings us to the comparison between the two understandings of scripture. I am struck just how much salvation in Hinduism which is enlightenment and total detachment from the physical and spiritual worlds is our effort. Souls have to work hard to achieve enlightenment. Salvation is to be totally separated from the material and spiritual world to become fully enlightened and united to the universe. It takes many lifetimes to do this and it is all on us.

God does all he can so that we can be saved. If you look carefully, the initiative is always from God. Jesus is obedient to the Father, to reverse the initiative of Adam and Eve to pursue the prize of being like gods. Even our sacramental life is God initiating His work in our lives. I like to teach the parishioners that Jesus gives totally of himself in his body and blood and when we receive the Eucharist we give ourselves totally to Him. It is a powerful act of co-operation. All our sacraments are the work of God leading us to Him and drawing us to eternal life.

The Council of Trent teaches us in response to the Protestant Reformation that we are indeed saved by grace but we co-operate with it. We know the reformers believed that through Jesus' death and resurrection on the Cross, he achieved for us our salvation. Some taught, we have to do nothing else. We do not believe this wholesale but neither do we believe we can earn our way to salvation. We co-operate with grace. God does all he can that we can be saved and we respond by co-operating with his gift.

When we study our scriptures more deeply, we can see that God is active in our lives doing all he can to help us to salvation. It is his greatest desire that all are saved.

The Bhagavad Gita teaches that if we want to achieve enlightenment we have to work hard to separate ourselves from all attachments. This means also joy. Pursuing spiritual joy is still the fruit of attachment. St. Paul teaches that joy is a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. As you can see the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita and of our faith are not compatible at all.

We have our fraternity disciplines to draw us always to be closer to God. We need to teach his mercy and love and help people understand our call to respond to it. Unfortunately, many people learn a lesson that is more like Hinduism—we have to work hard to ensure our place in Heaven. We will encounter God when we stand before him at his throne and, hopefully, he judges us worthy. This is not what we believe and I know the readers know it. However, do the parishioners understand this? Are your parishioners terrified that they are going to Hell because they did not do enough to get to Heaven? Do any of your parishioners believe in reincarnation because they do not believe they can be good enough to get to Heaven in one lifetime? Do they believe they have to live a life rejecting sin in a way fundamentally no different than the teaching in the Bhagavad Gita; to remove from their lives all attachments even to joy? Do they understand that the whole point of the Christmas season is to celebrate that God is with us. He is always leading us to eternal life and that we co-operate with his grace that is never not coming to us.

As you prepare your homilies during not only this year but through this three year cycle, may I encourage you to make sure that no one walks away with the belief that they are not able to go to Heaven, that God could not possibly love them. Jesus may have died on the Cross so that all could be saved but that could not be them because they are (fill in blank here).

I hope we all appreciate that many people suffer everyday because of bad Catholic teaching. Our mission is to teach the truth. A lesson I taught a while ago when I was producing the local broadcast of Vatican Radio was if we do not support true Catholic teaching, someone will take our place and they will not be as good.

Correction: Last month's article "Apostolic Priesthood, What Will It Take" was by Fr. Conrad Bayor at St. Victor Major Seminary Tamale, Ghana.

Please send us your prayer intentions:_____

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THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

January 2026						
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 Leo XIV**
4 Rev. Steven Meyer *Fargo*	5 Rev. Bernard Schneider *Fargo*	6 Rev. Msgr. Dennis Skonseng *Fargo*	7 Rev. Peter Pienaa Donzing *Ghana*	8 Rev. Robert Sackey *Ghana*	9 Rev. Donald Lomasiewicz *Grand Rapids*	10 Rev. Mark Mitchell *Grand Rapids*
11 Rev. Ayub Nasar *Grand Rapids*	12 Rev. Michael Shea CM *Grand Rapids*	13 Msgr. Cyril Lamontagne VG *Grenada*	14 Rev. Robert Grant *Hartford*	15 Rev. Paul Halovatch *Hartford*	16 Rev. Joseph Looney *Hartford*	17 Rev. Will-Roger Malave *Hartford*
18 Rev. Robert Rousseau *Hartford*	19 Rev. Thomas Cawley C.M. *Indianapolis*	20 Rev. Roderic Giller *Indianapolis*	21 Rev. Timothy Ekaitis *Marquette*	22 Rev. Ryan Ford *Marquette*	23 Rev. Christopher Gardiner *Marquette*	24 Rev. Benjamin Hasse *Marquette*
25 Rev. Jeff Johnson *Marquette*	26 Rev. Dustin Larson *Marquette*	27 Rev. Thomas Merkel *Marquette*	28 Rev. Darryl Pepin *Marquette*	29 Rev. Michael Steber *Marquette*	30 Rev. Larry Van Damme *Marquette*	31 Rev. Michael Woempner *Marquette*

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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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