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The Visitation

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On Conquering Evil in Christ

By Fr. Damjan Mlinarič, Slovenia Fraternity

Evil. How much evil there is in this world. Why is there evil at all—where does it come from? People have been asking this ever since humanity has existed… why, why do I suffer?! What is the point of it all? Why wars, tycoons, corruption, exploitation, broken families, addictions (drugs, relationships, computers)? Wouldn't the world be beautiful if none of this existed? How wonderful life would be?

Many people, especially when they are confronted with death in their own family or when someone close to them dies, blame God for it. How could He allow this? What kind of God is that? In a way, people grow resentful toward Him and no longer let Him be part of their lives. For them, God no longer exists, because He is unjust, because He allowed the death of their loved one.

The question arises again, at this point: where, then, does evil come from? If God created everything, did He also create evil? If we consider the Bible and know who God is, then we can say that everything God created is good. Everything He created is good. And when He created man, God said that it was very good. Man is the crown of creation, because he is created in God's image—he has freedom, reason, and an immortal soul.

So where does evil come from? For me, until I became a Christian, I did not have an answer. I didn't understand. I asked myself so many times: why must I suffer, why do so many people exploit me and mock me, why do my parents argue, why do I have to endure all this?! I did not receive an answer until I accepted Jesus into my life, until I invited Him in and made room for Him.

In doing so, I encountered something I had not known before. I realized that personalized evil exists, that there is an evil spirit—the devil. Until then, I thought this was something the Catholic Church had invented in the Middle Ages, some kind of bedtime fairy tale. Then, from my own experience, I saw that this is reality—that this is real evil with a single purpose: to destroy a person, to cast him into eternal fire, into eternal evil that goes on and on.

My dear friends, this is no joke. I'm not saying this to scare you; it is a harsh truth. Lucifer—how did he fall? He wanted to be like God. He was the most beautiful of the angels.

Most of you have probably seen exorcisms in movies, but real possessions are rare—perhaps one in a hundred thousand people (according to St. John Vianney, Padre Pio). In the Archdiocese of Maribor in Slovenia, there is one priest who is an exorcist—Marjan Veternik. He says that 70% of the people who come to him do so because they previously went to bioenergy healers.

Most often, however, the evil spirit works through temptations, which we encounter in the Gospel. We see that Jesus faced three fundamental temptations of every human being.

In the first temptation, the devil offers Him to turn stones into bread. One might say: what's the big deal? Just perform a miracle—what is that for Jesus? But Jesus immediately rejects it, because He recognizes and knows that man does not live by bread alone, that physical food is not the most important thing, but spiritual food is. People often care and work only for this earthly life, forgetting spiritual nourishment—God's word, prayer, the sacraments. When was the last time we read the Bible? We Catholics are very weak here, and because of this we are poorly equipped to fight against evil. God's word is the sword with which we battle evil.

The second temptation the devil offers Jesus is to throw Himself down from the temple: "Throw yourself down, if you really are the Son of God…" Do you recognize the tone of this temptation?! It immediately reminds me of paradise, when man sinned for the first time. The serpent

...continued on page 3

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:
$818.00
Budget Deficit:
$3,932.00

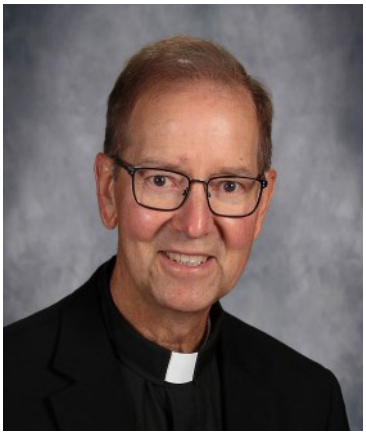
Current as of November 30, 2025.

The month January is aptly named after the Roman god Janus, who is depicted has having two faces: one looks backward and one looks forward. Obviously, we do not believe in other gods. We also affirm at the Easter Vigil, as we prepare the Paschal Candle, that "all time is in His hands". However, it is good to look back on the blessings of 2025 and bring them into the New Year 2026. Here are three gifts I am bringing with me from 2025 into 2026.

The first blessing is hope! *"Hope does not disappoint"* (Romans 5:5a) was the theme of last year's Jubilee Year. The hope of many people has been undermined and dampened by the problems in our world: terrorism, Jihadism, Communism, consumerism, persecution, unregulated AI to name a few.

Hope does not disappoint because Christ does not disappoint. Raised from the dead, Jesus is Lord! He reminds us, *"…In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."* With that Baptist preacher and hymn writer Robert Lowery (+1899) we can say, "No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to that Rock I'm clinging" (*How Can I Keep from Singing*, 1869) We can have hope amid this world's troubles.

The second blessing I bring into the New Year is St. Carlo Acutis. I recently picked up a book of meditations on quotes from this newly canonized saint. (*Carlo's Simple Wisdom* by Carlo Acutis and Giorgio Maria Carbone; published by Our Sunday Visitor, 2024). I then visited St. Carlo tomb in Assisi during a recent pilgrimage. Though Carlo's life was short, it was holy and fruitful. His most famous quote gives people young and old much to ponder: *"We are all born as originals, but many of us die as photocopies."*. May our relationship with Jesus be deep enough to keep us from conforming to this world and becoming photocopies!



The third blessing I am bringing into 2026 came from some time in prayer before the San Damiano Cross that hangs in the Basilica of St. Clare in Assisi. As you may recall, St. Francis heard our Lord instruct him from this cross: *"Francis, Francis, go and repair My church which, as you can see, is falling into ruins."* Francis first began to physically repair Our Lady of the Angels Church, just outside of Assisi. In time he realized that he and his confreres were to spiritually renew the Church.

As I pondered this message before the San Damiano Cross, I began to think about the *domestic church*, the family. Prosperity and busyness have taken a toll on many families in the western world. Instead of being the primary vehicle to transmit the faith, families are often fragmented and indifferent to the faith. Lord, *renew our families*!

This year's Fraternity of Priests Annual Meeting will again take place within the Priests, Deacons and Seminarians Conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville, June 15-19, 2026. Information is online. Members of the Fraternity will be contacted later this winter.

In Christ,

Fr. Bob Franco

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.

...continued from page 1

said to man: “You will certainly not die… just eat the fruit… because then your eyes will be opened and you will be like God!”

You see, the eternal temptation of man—to be like God, to consider oneself God, to be in charge, the strongest, the best, to be the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, and ultimately to do everything by one’s own power, without God. “I don’t need God; I can do better without Him!” And then we are unhappy, frustrated, lost.

Without God, my dear friends, there is no future. That is why Western civilization, until it accepts God again into its midst, has no future. It is lost, despite technology, despite science and reason. Because then we think we understand everything, that we know everything, that we can explain everything psychologically, and so on. But if that is really so—why, when death comes, when suffering comes, do we fall silent? Why do we have no deeper explanation?

The third temptation: the devil offers Jesus authority over all nations, over everything that has been created. Isn’t that absurd? The devil offering something to Jesus, who is God? I don’t know whether he was that naïve or whether he truly thought Jesus Christ would take it. Either way, the devil wanted Jesus to pay him homage, as if he were the king of creation. He was testing Him.

And in the same way, we too are tested—especially when we don’t know who we are or where we come from. Are we really children of God? Are you really God’s child? Look how you suffer, look how poor you are, look at everything that is happening to you. Do you really think you are God’s child when you see how God is taking care of you?

Doubt quickly creeps in, and a person begins to accuse God and blame Him for everything that happens. But in reality, at that moment God wants you to profess your faith in Him and begin to praise Him. It may sound strange and crazy, but it is a proven method: to praise God even when things are bad, difficult, and you don’t understand why. Why? Because God is greater than every problem and every difficulty. God knows why this is happening to you, and if you trust Him and surrender yourself to Him, it will be resolved.

A true story. A military chaplain recounts: "a soldier comes to me because he is facing a dishonorable discharge from the army and prison because of drugs.

"The soldier says: 'I’ve ruined my life; now it’s too late for anything to change.' The look in his eyes was dark and desperate.

“What about God?' I asked him. 'He has the power to change you.'

"The soldier shrugged. 'Why would He?' he replied. 'I’ve never done anything for Him.'

“He loves you,' I said. 'He sent Jesus to take upon Himself the punishment for everything you have done. He can heal you as well.

"The soldier looked dejected. 'I’ve heard of Jesus. I’d like to ask Him to be my Savior, but I don’t believe it would help now. I can’t stop using drugs, no matter how hard I try. I’ve been an addict for too long.'

“God can heal you,' I said confidently. 'Don’t you believe He is stronger than drugs?' The soldier looked at me doubtfully. 'Do you want to try?' I asked him.

"He nodded. 'I’d try anything,' he said. 'I want to get out of the hell I’m in now.'

“Then thank God now for what He is about to do for you in the next few minutes, and for everything that has happened in your life that brought you to this point.'

"The soldier became agitated. 'Do you mean I should thank God for everything in my life up to this moment—even for being an addict?'

“Your addiction brought you to Him, didn’t it?' I replied. 'If God heals you, forgives you, and gives you a completely new, eternal life with Jesus, don’t you think you can thank Him for everything through which you realized that you need Him?'

"There was still a dark, doubtful look in the soldier’s eyes.

'May I pray for you?' I asked. He nodded. I placed my hands on his head:

“Heavenly Father, I thank You for loving this young man and drawing him to Yourself. Send Your Holy Spirit now to help him believe how You have been at work in every dark and lonely moment of his life, to lead him to Jesus Christ.”

"When I finished, there was a new light in the soldier’s eyes.

"Strange,' he said, 'I don’t know why, but I believe that God has taken all the evil that has happened to me and is turning it into my good.'

"I then prayed for him, that God would heal him. I felt a force flow into the young soldier. His face lit up, and tears streamed down his cheeks.

“It happened!' he cried. 'I don’t need drugs anymore. Jesus Christ lives in me!”

Please send us your prayer intentions:_____

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THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

February 2026						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Rev. Anthony Bekpare *Nasaalbeteryeb*	2 Rev. Nicodemus Unezumeh *Nasaalbeteryeb*	3 Rev. Eugene Bettinger O.Carm. *New Jersey*	4 Rev. Paul Cannariato *New Jersey*	5 **For the souls of our deceased FOP members**	6 **For prayer requests received**	7 **For our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV**
8 Rev. John Gordon *New Jersey*	9 Rev. Joseph Meagher *New Jersey*	10 Rev. Brendan Murray *New Jersey*	11 Rev. Lewis Papera *New Jersey*	12 Rev. John Primich *New Jersey*	13 Rev. Ernest Rush *New Jersey*	14 Rev. John Wassell *New Jersey*
15 Rev. Ben Williams *New Jersey*	16 Rev. William Cosgrove *New York*	17 Rev. Tom Devery *New York*	18 Rev. Joseph Muldoon *Ottawa*	19 Rev. John Brennan *Pittsburgh*	20 Rev. Thomas Galvin *Pittsburgh*	21 Rev. Stan Gregorek *Pittsburgh*
22 Rev. Thomas Kredel *Pittsburgh*	23 Rev. Joseph Luisi *Pittsburgh*	24 Rev. John Lynam *Pittsburgh*	25 Rev. Daniel Mahoney *Pittsburgh*	26 Rev. Nicholas Mastrangelo *Pittsburgh*	27 Rev. Kenneth Oldenski *Pittsburgh*	28 Rev. Thomas Sparacino *Pittsburgh*

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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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☐ $10 ☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ Other $_____

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