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The Visitation

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Reading and Ministry

By Fr. Robert J Carr, Editor

Fulton Sheen explained that he often knew when a priest was ordained by the copyright of the books in the rectory. What he was saying of course is that many priests did not read many theological books after ordination.

Spiritual reading is important and also understanding the publishers from which to read is key as well. Further, reading authors you agree with is fine but a challenge is to read authors you don't find total agreement.

Maybe the latter is most important. I don't agree with some of the teachings of Bishop Athanasius Schneider particularly his downplaying Vatican II to the lifting up of the Council of Trent. Vatican II builds upon the teaching of the sixteenth century council, so I hold both equally important. However, on other things, I use his teachings in my ministry. For example, he teaches that one can always use his or her guardian angel for assistance in many ways. Ministering to people deeply saddened because they have "unfinished business" with a loved one now in a coma in the intensive care unit, I bring up the bishop's teaching on guardian angels at that time, explaining that the guardian angel can make sure the loved one knows how much the survivor loved him or her. There are areas where I disagree with Bishop Schneider but I don't dismiss him completely, nor would I do so with anyone.

Reading the authors with whom you do not fully agree is just as important as reading authors who will support every position you may have in Church teaching.

The fact is spiritual reading is important and many in the Fraternity will discuss books at their meetings.

There was a time in the Church where everything prior to the Vatican II Council was dismissed. Even today, I am sure those who are in more contemporary parishes will meet people who will proclaim they will not go back to the pre-Vatican II days. However, that implies that we are now enlightened and no longer need to pay attention to those days. That forgets there are powerful writings and teachings from those days just as there are powerful writings and teachings in ours. This is why our continued reading is so important. We received important teaching from the seminary but it certainly was not comprehensive. My favorite books I discovered outside of the seminary. Some, like New Seeds of Contemplation by Thomas Merton in my early days back in the Church and some long after I was ordained such as the writings of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

Whatever the case, engaging in spiritual reading is an essential aspect of priesthood both older and newer books to enhance our ministry and service to others. Those books with which we may have totally disagreement, we may not recommend to anyone, however, they may have us thinking.

Further, those books which we agree with totally will only support what we truly believe and may not really challenge us on anything. They are still important and worthy of reading but one needs all kinds of books to discover. This also means books that are not even Catholic books.

Again, Archbishop Fulton Sheen in one of his talks to priests recommended the Barclay Bible commentary series. He then pointed out that Barclay was protestant and added that we cannot dismiss him because he is not Catholic. It can lead us to be a bit myopic if we limit ourselves to strictly Catholic sources or for that matter strictly religious books. If we are going to minister well, we need a wealth of information and a comprehensive reading list is important.

When we read a whole host of books, we can be more informed to serve others. One complaint I hear

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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:
$998.00
Budget Deficit:
$3,752.00

Current as of February 28, 2026.

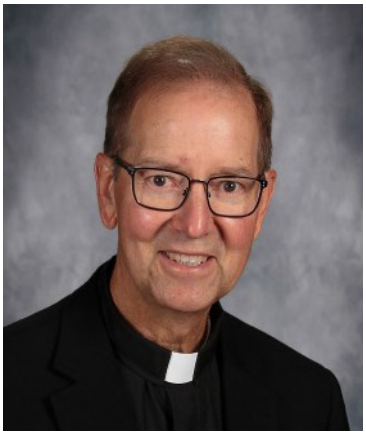
Like many of you, I have seen several movies about Jesus Christ. One of these movies has a Roman official arriving at Jesus' empty tomb and after a quick investigation, commented, "Now it begins."

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the new beginning that changes everything. Because Jesus is raised from the dead, human beings can have a new destiny. Death no longer has the final say. In Christ we can courageously say with St. Paul that, "we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8b) We await the hour when, as Jesus said, "All who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation." (John 5:28b-29 NABRE)

However, the resurrection of Jesus does not simply change our eternal destiny. His resurrection changes our manner of earthly living. St. Paul wrote the Church at Colossae: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory. Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry…" (Colossians 3:1-5a NABRE)

Some of our sinful habits need to be executed! Other sinful tendencies we need to be put away: "Put them all away: anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene language out of your mouths." (Colossians 3:8 NABRE)

In place of these things, we "…have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." (Colossians 3:10-12 NABRE)



By the power of Christ's resurrection, we replace our vices with virtues.

Finally, the resurrection of Jesus Christ will change everything else. From the Book of Revelation, St. John says: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more…The one who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new. (Revelation 21:1, 5a NABRE)

What will that be like? Again, St. Paul said that "…eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9b) C.S. Lewis once commented that this current world is a "false start." Christ has come to redeem it. Currently, the battle rages here. However, the new heaven and the new earth will be the real beginning.

In Christ.

Fr. Bob Franco

Fr. Bob Franco

PS: Priests-do not forget to sign up for the Priests, Deacons and Seminarians Retreat in Steubenville June 15-19, 2026.

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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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people say and you can see it in online influencers that Catholics seem to consider all things related to sex sinful and only those things related to sex sinful. There is an old adage that in a Catholic household, a man can leave work early, get drunk at a bar, get into a fight, drive home drunk but as long as he did not get into bed with anyone but his wife, he did not sin. Obviously, that is incorrect but there are Catholics who may think that way.

St. John Vianney preached that one of the worst of all sins is detraction which he described as saying anything bad about another person, even if it is true. In his day, in 19th century France that might have been a serious problem but in our day, there are channels on YouTube that traffic in it and many of them are Catholic ministries.

Do the same priests who often preach on sexual sins also preach on cyberbullying which is the 21st century version of detraction? It is worthy of a question. I am sure anyone who has done youth ministry had to counsel a teen suffering from cyberbullying. In Massachusetts, unlike other states, it is a crime. If cyberbullying leads a person to suffer life threatening or worse emotional injuries it is felony. In other states, it is dismissed. Yet, it is part of a family of the some of the worst of all sins but is it even mentioned in parishes? This is a classic example of using reading to enhance your ministry. It is essential.

Cardinal Robert Sarah has some fascinating words to share in our time. During the interim period between the death of Pope Francis and the naming of Pope Leo XIV, many people in traditional circles said they wanted to see him named pope. I kind of smiled because they were familiar with his more traditional teachings but Cardinal Sarah fully embraces Vatican II in its truest form. He also has some serious disagreements with various aspects of western culture and looks upon money sent to help the African nations but with strings attached to conform to some western ideology as a form of colonialism. He does not mince words in anything he says. Familiar with his writings, I know he may not be what some people would have expected.

Limiting oneself to just Catholic books or even religious books can also restrictive to our ministry. I live in New England and have read many stories by Howard Philip Lovecraft known as H.P. Lovecraft. An atheist who wrote horror fiction and invented the monster Cthulu, he even has interesting words to teach us.

Some of his writings evoke the attitude: "Do not walk down that path." It is a great lesson for people to know well. In his novella, *The Strange Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, he has one of his characters speak words that I believe are perfect for an American congregation even though the author was an atheist and clearly not Catholic. The main character secretly uses chemistry to ensure his continual living. When everything goes wrong, one of the characters teaches that we have the right to do everything but some things should just not be done. A powerful lesson we can teach to our congregation even though, you can find it in book by an atheist, a horror writer who inspired the likes of Rod Serling and Stephen King.

Presently, I am reading a book I hated in high school. Absolutely, hated studying it. Of course, one reason I may have hated it was that I never read it and only learned of it in class hoping the teacher would never call on me. Finally, after many decades (I graduated from high school fifty years ago), I finally decided to read the book and I love it. Again, there are lessons I can bring up from this book if they match themes in upcoming homilies even though the author was not a Catholic, the book is not a theology book and it comes from another century and continent. The book? *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens.

Spiritual reading and reading in general is essential to our ministry. This was one of the issues that Archbishop Fulton Sheen lamented, priests who did not read. Further, we can be careful of reading only popular books. We need to know the many publishing houses especially in the Catholic world and knowing their slant.

As a podcaster, I interviewed many authors. I make it clear that I do not necessarily agree with everything that comes out of a publisher. However, knowing the publishers where you find generally you do not agree with their authors one can still find some great gems. There is a great difference between for example Tan and Orbis but there are authors connected to each publisher who have words to enhance our ministry.

Fulton Sheen was right to warn against priests who do not read and Fraternities are right to promote good reading.

Please send us your prayer intentions:_____

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

May 2026						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Rev. 31 Gerry Fraser *Boston*					1 **For prayer requests received**	2 **For our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV**
Rev. 3 Victor Ganaa *West Africa*	Rev. 4 Stephen Kantubog *West Africa*	Rev. 5 Aloysius Kpiebaya *West Africa*	Rev. 6 Cletus Kulah *West Africa*	7 **For the souls of our deceased FOP members**	Rev. 8 Chrisantus Kulbile *West Africa*	Rev. 9 Vincent Kuubatge *West Africa*
Rev. 10 Godfrey Naagyie *West Africa*	Rev. 11 Sylvester Nankpi *West Africa*	Rev. 12 James Nasaalbeteryeb *West Africa*	Rev. 13 Nicodemus Nongnenuor *West Africa*	Rev. 14 Aloysius Nuolabong *West Africa*	Rev. 15 Aloysius Sunnoba *West Africa*	Rev. 16 Romanus Tampah *West Africa*
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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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