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The Visitation

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The Journey to the Other Side of Sin

By Fr. Robert J. Carr

According to what I understand about the non-violence resistance movement Ghandi led against the British, he had certain parameters for recruits. One was he would ask if they would be willing to take up arms for the cause. If they said no, then he would not allow them to join his movement. Non-violent resistance, he taught, is not a movement that goes up to but not into violent resistance. Instead, it is on the other side of violence, the step further. Therefore, if someone was not willing to take up arms for their cause, they could not go the next step into non-violent resistance.

So often, I hear about teachings of avoiding sin. Obviously, avoiding sin is important but the commandment Christ calls us to live is not avoid sin but to love God and neighbor. I often warn against a focus that avoids sin but never seeks to live the two great commandments. Clearly, I've met enough Christians in my life who were grumpy and irritable, yet they would be ready to call people out for practicing sinful habits.

Many online Catholic influencers do the same and they are always ready to proclaim the dangers of Hell, the sins that will lead us there and they call their audience to turn from those sins. Again, they rarely speak of the true message which is to love God and neighbor.

The way to avoid sin may be similar to the rule we find in Ghandi on non-violent resistance. Sin is not to avoided so that we don't end up in Hell, but rather it is the plateau that stops us on the way to where Christ is calling us. To focus on sin, is to be satisfied with the lesser value, where God calls us to the greater value which we discover living the two great commandments of love.

Sin is not a territory we dare not cross into but it is the plateau that prevents us from going the next step into where Christ call us. We avoid it because it stops us from our ultimate destiny on following Christ.

One of the more remarkable natural monuments in the United States is Devil's Tower Wyoming. If you saw the movie Close Encounters of the Third Kind, you are familiar with the structure as it plays prominently in the story.

Maybe we can also say it is aptly named because it gives a great example of what I am explaining. It is a popular place, to some they go there on pilgrimage especially for any movie enthusiasts but it is a structure that only goes so far. There is a flat top with the sides rising from the floor of the Earth. It is a great natural monument, a popular place for tourists and a sacred place for native Americans. It is also part of the National Park Service in the United States.

The tower for our purposes can give us another image. It rises above the Earth floor but then it stops. If you want to go further, you will have to go somewhere else. Devil's Tower is not the place to climb a huge mountain and look over the terrain. It is a beautiful place as far as I can tell, I have never been there. It is, however, a limited place. Climb seeking a summit but then it stops, you never find the pinnacle because there is not one.

If we teach people to avoid sin, a question we may ask is are we teaching them not to reach beyond sin but to make sure they stay on this side of it. Whereas, if we truly understand where Christ is calling us, he is calling us beyond sin to the greater treasures at greater heights.

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Fraternity Financial Report

Monthly Budget:
$4,750.00
Actual Donations:
$1,325.00
Budget Deficit:
$3,425.00

Current as of July 31, 2026.

One of the parting gifts of Jesus, as He hung upon the Cross, was His Mother.

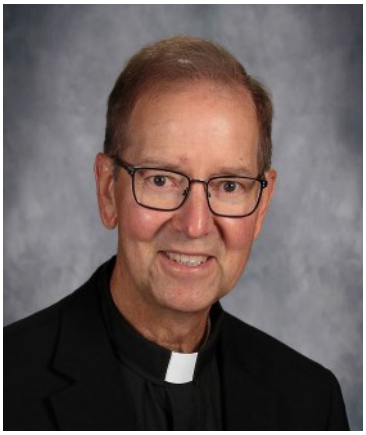
When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. (John 19:26-27 NABRE)

Jesus addressed his mother Mary as "woman" in the gospel of John to highlight her role as the New Eve. In the re-creation of the world, commenced by the death and resurrection of Jesus, Mary, the personification of the Church, becomes our spiritual mother.

What does the "spiritual motherhood" of Mary look like for priests? I believe it begins with doing what the beloved disciple did when Jesus gave him his mother. He took Mary into his home. This implies a relationship that is personal, intimate, respectful and helpful.

Shortly after my experience of baptism in the Spirit and shortly before my entrance into the seminary, I was influenced by "bible alone" Christians. Though most of them were well meaning, their piety highly discouraged any sort of Marian piety. Consequently, I went to seminary with lots of questions about Mary.

By the time I was ordained a priest, my questions were answered. However, a personal devotion to Mary did not take root until a weekend pilgrimage to Medjugorje after the Worldwide Retreat for priests in 1984. Since then, the Rosary has been woven into my daily routine. Now, when I get up each morning and after I pray the Morning Offering, I invoke Mary's intercession for growth in virtue by praying the Memorare. At different periods of the day, I ask our Lady's intercession for a variety of needs. And, of course, I conclude Night Prayer with one of the Marian prayers listed in the Breviary.



For me, taking Mary into my home means invoking her intercession frequently and reflecting on her life of virtue. When I feel anxious or overwhelmed, I see in Mary one who surrendered to God's providential care. When tempted by pride or lust, I see in her a source of humility and purity. And when ministry unravels more than unfolds, our Lady of Holy Hope helps me get up and get back on the field of service to God's people.

Fr. Mike Schneid (+1999) was a member of my Cleveland fraternity. Throughout his priesthood he had a great devotion to our Lady even as he was involved in many different renewal movements, especially the charismatic renewal and Cursillo. He was convinced that the intercession of Mary helped renewal movements stay united. Our Lady's presence and prayer helps people humbly welcome the power and gifts of the Spirit.

During this Month of October, as we honor our Lady of the Rosary, let us all take Mary into our home. Jesus has given her a special role in the recreation of the world. May her motherly care be a source of grace and virtue for each of us.

In Christ,

Fr. Bob Franco

Fr. Bob Franco
Board Chair, Cleveland

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We find them by choosing to love.

However, love is on the other side of sin. The person who chooses sin chooses a plateau and is satisfied with it. Jesus calls us beyond it. This is something we can reflect upon in a fraternity meeting regards to our preaching at Mass. Sin is the plateau, Christ calls us to the pinnacle of our destiny.

As one who struggles with my weight and works hard to maintain some semblance of a weight level, I know that one of the quickest ways to go off a diet is to have a list of foods you cannot eat ever again. Eventually, you will give in that one time to try that desert you have craved for years. Diet experts teach that to prevent that dynamic one must not restrict a food from their diet but know how to indulge properly. For example, the local supermarket chain—Market Basket sells mini-cannolis that have less than 150 calories. If I want a cannoli for desert, I can have one of those. However, I still have the goal of not going off my diet and I can remain on track.

Now, obviously, I am not saying it is ok to indulge in a little version of the sin. However, one of the great problems is people declare a sin to be bigger than it actually is. It is a sin to engage in sex outside of marriage, but it is not healthy to live as a hermit so that you will not fall into that sin. How does one live the difference? Bring Christ into your journeys and ask him to lead you where you can go and where it is best you cannot.

One of the cities in our country is of course Las Vegas. Its reputation is that it is Sin City. Some people will never go there. I had to go to Vegas in my former service of ministering to bull riders in the PBR. One thing I teach about Vegas is that it is a great place if you do not gamble. There is much to see there including the Guardian Angels Cathedral just off the strip. However, one does not have to do anything immoral or illegal there. Some people do, you don't have to be one of them. However, if you are seeking to live the Gospel and you go to Vegas, you may find that you will avoid any sinful venues because you realize they are the plateau. They are the place if you go there, you will have decided to be satisfied with less than what Christ is calling you to experience.

If you choose never to go there out of fear of sin, you will never know of the beauty in the local national parks, the great places to pray in the surrounding territory and in local churches, a shrine and the Cathedral and plenty of good wholesome entertainment.

Sin is a plateau. It is like Devil's tower, it has great excitement in getting there but then where do you go from there? Christ calls us not to live in fear of sin but in recognizing it leads us to a plateau with nothing beyond it. Christ calls us to a destiny that is greater than any sin can offer. However, we follow him to the other side of sin. That is the side where we recognize that sin is offering us so little compared to what Christ offers us.

Readers complain that they go to Mass and hear priests or deacons preach about sin in such a way that they find it turns them off from God himself. I would suggest the reason is simple. They teach a focus on avoiding sin that does not lead to the deeper call to encounter Christ and channel his love.

There is a great model that St. Paul shows us in the athlete who denies himself many things for the glory of the championship crown. One turns away from a lesser thing to find a greater thing, it is living on the other side of sin.

Jesus warned about living a life of turning from sin and having nothing to replace it. It just becomes a place where the demonic can return with all its friends. When we teach that sin is the plateau, the Devil's tower that only goes so far, we can help people to understand that Jesus is calling not away from sin but beyond it. Sin, is the ersatz prize, Christ calls us to the real one.

If the product of our teaching is people who live in fear of committing sin, then we may have made an error. If instead people understand that there is greater joy than can be found in all sin combined then maybe we can say our preaching is one target.

In either case, Jesus calls us to the other side of sin, where great joy awaits that sin can never offer.

Please send us your prayer intentions:_____

_____

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THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

October 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. Mark Innocenti *St. Cloud*	5 Rev. Peter Kirchner *St. Cloud*	6 Rev. Gerald Mischke *St. Cloud*	7 Rev. Todd Schneider *St. Cloud*	8 Rev. Mark Stang *St. Cloud*	9 Rev. James Dyer *St. Louis*	10 Rev. Msgr. Edmund Griesedieck *St. Louis*
11 Rev. Martin Mannion *St. Louis*	12 Rev. David Novak *St. Louis*	13 Rev. Gerald Zienaa *Tamale*	14 Rev. James Brown *Toledo*	15 Rev. Kishore Kottana *Toledo*	16 Rev. Edward Littelmann *Toledo*	17 Rev. Nicholas Weibl *Toledo*
18 Rev. Dale Branson *Tucson*	19 Rev. Isaac Fynn *Tucson*	20 Rev. John Gonzales *Tucson*	21 Rev. James Hobert *Tucson*	22 Rev. Liam Leahy *Tucson*	23 Rev. Msgr. Domenico Pinti *Tucson*	24 Rev. Thomas Quirk *Tucson*
25 Rev. Ray Ratzenberger *Tucson*	26 Most Rev. Vitalij Skomarovski *Ukraine*	27 Rev. Francis Dabre *Vasai India*	28 Rev. Bennette Becheyie *West Africa*	29 Rev. Stephen Dassah *West Africa*	30 Rev. John Bosco Eledi *West Africa*	31 Rev. Paul Gaa *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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☐ $10 ☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ Other $_____

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