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The Visitation

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My Vocation Story

By Fr. Matthew Tuurosong

In William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet asks the following question: "What's in a name?" She goes on to explain: "that which we call a rose, by any other name, would smell as sweet", suggesting that a name has no bearing on the quality or character of a person. In many African cultures this is not the case; a name is not just an identity symbol. It is believed that a name can make a mar a person's future.

I was born on the midnight of September 20th, and given the name Matthew, in anticipation of the feast of Matthew the Apostle which falls on September 21st. I am the second in a family of 4 boys and 2 girls. My parents were uneducated, as there were no schools at the time they grew up. However, my father, as a young man, was one of the first to become attracted to the 'white man's' religion when they arrived in my part of the country. He eventually got baptized and went ahead to become a catechist in spite of his lack of formal education.

My journey to the priesthood has certain similarities with the call of Matthew the Apostle. Just as Matthew the tax collector was a very unlikely candidate to become an Apostle among his peers, so did I find myself a very unlikely candidate for the priesthood among my brothers. Out of 4 brothers in the family, I was the only one who could not make it to the Minor Seminary to have my secondary education. I ended up in a government secondary school which at the time had a reputation for rioting and causing mayhem. Yet it was in this institution that my interest in religious life was strengthened through the efforts of a Religious Sister who was our English teacher: Sr Herminia Corquia. From this Sister I learned how to sing hymns from the Catholic Hymnal, to be a lector, assist at mass and even teach catechism to fellow students who wanted to receive baptism.

After 7 years in this same school where I obtained my Advanced level certificate, I had to complete a mandatory year of National Service before I could proceed to any other educational institution. I carried out this service in a department known as *Social Security and National Insurance Trust* (SSNIT). Here again I find some similarity with the profession of Matthew the tax collector. SSNIT is a pension scheme that takes a percentage of workers' monthly salaries, invests the money, and disburses it to the workers when they go on retirement. This was a department that paid her workers very well with a lot of allowances and benefits. Even as a National Service personnel, my allowance was far more than the pay check of many workers. However, the workers whose salary deductions were invested by SSNIT had grievances against the department and its workers. They accused SSNIT not only of using their deductions to pay their workers well, but also for playing delay tactics when it came to paying their pensions, sometimes even making it impossible for them to claim these pensions. Just as tax collectors like Matthew were detested, so were workers of SSNIT

After the mandatory year of National Service, I was offered the opportunity to become a full time SSNIT employee. Would I be ready, like Matthew the tax collector, to give up this lucrative job and go to the seminary? Unfortunately, I failed to follow the example of Matthew the tax collector in this matter. I convinced myself that it was necessary to work for a few years to support my siblings who were still in various schools and needed financial assistance. Much as this was true, I realize that the lucrative nature of the job played a major role in taking

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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:
$3,475.00
Budget Deficit:
$1,275.00

Current as of August 31, 2026.

The sign outside the Baptist church read, "They're called the Ten Commandments, not the Ten Suggestions." The difference between commandments and suggestions is simple. A suggestion is optional. It may prove beneficial. However, one has a choice. Commandments by nature are not optional. To violate them means consequences.

These "Ten Commandment for Priests" are not on the same plane as the Ten Commandments that bind Jews and Christians. However, if a priest were to neglect these "commandments" he too would experience consequences. Initially they may seem slight, like a listlessness in one's heart or frustration with God's people. The consequences may grow to be great and lead to the loss of one's vocation.

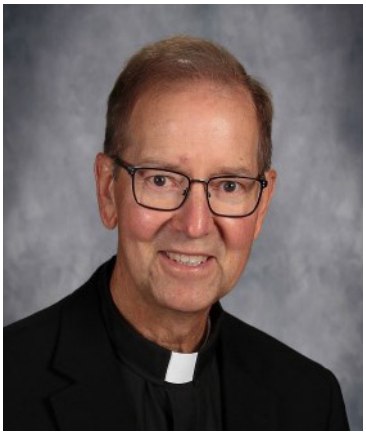
There is a positive side to living by these commandments. If priests fulfilled these commandments, he would most likely experience a vocation that was full and fruitful. He would be a blessing to the Church and pleasing to the Lord.

These "Ten Commandments" were given to me by a priest in the Diocese of Cleveland. I am not sure who wrote these "commandments". However, I do believe they contain wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Though they do not precisely describe the spiritual practices of the Fraternity of Priests, these commandments do capture some of the essence of Fraternity spirituality.

1. One hour each day to personal prayer.

2. Sleep seven hours a night; learn to say "no".

3. Eat a balanced diet and have a yearly medical checkup.



4. Pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

5. Go to confession and get spiritual direction: "A man is as sick as his secrets".

6. Have friends who really know you. Know and be aware of your defenses against people knowing you.

7. Be judicious in use of alcohol: Know whether you can or cannot use alcohol, either because you are an alcoholic or because alcohol has the effect of reducing your defenses and leading you to other forms of destructive behavior.

8. Take a day off each week; an evening; a vacation each year. Have something to look forward to.

9. Internally accept and be comfortable with (not complacent about) your own limitations; and the limitations of others and of the church and its authority. Don't reduce the whole gospel to a single idea.

10. Say a Mass for yourself regularly. Offer the Mass of our Lady. Prepare for Mass. Never go to the altar unprepared in soul and heart. Be unfailingly reverent.

God's blessings on us, fraternal brotherhood and priestly ministry!

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.

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this decision.

After three years with SSNIT, I resisted the temptation to keep working and applied for admission to the seminary; but this decision to leave the job and go to the seminary was dealt a severe blow when suddenly, management of SSNIT offered me a scholarship with full salary, to go and earn a degree in Financial Administration and return to SSNIT in a managerial position. How could I resist this mouth-watering offer? I did not hesitate to fill the admission forms, and the University did not hesitate to offer me admission. At this point I thought my dilemma was over; I had made up my mind to go the University. However, I soon learned that the Lord was not ready to let me go so easily.

One weekend I got an invitation from my father to come home. When I got home, he informed me that the pastor of my home parish (Fr Ireneus Songliedong, one of the pioneers of the Priests Fraternity in my diocese, and the priest who eventually brought me into the fraternity many years later), wanted to see me. That night I prayed, telling the Lord that I had made up my mind, and that I was sure that my decision not to go to the seminary was in right direction, after all I was the first boy of the family, and the family needed every assistance I could give. Going to the seminary for 7 or more years would deprive my family of any financial support. Besides, I still had 3 brothers who were in better positions to become priests. This was how I prepared to meet the priest who had sent for me, for I could guess why he was calling me.

The next morning, I went for mass, after which I went to meet Fr Ireneus. As soon as I greeted him, he went straight into business: 'I have good news for you!'. The look on his face as he made this announcement, made me uneasy. He looked so happy and at peace, as if to say, 'my dream has finally come true'. With that he handed me a letter. I took the letter and thanked him, while avoiding contact with his eyes. There was silence, then: 'are you not going to open it?' I realized it was a polite way of saying: 'open the letter!', so I did. It was a letter of admission to the seminary. After reading it I wasted no time in letting him know that there would be no seminary in my life. My mind was made up. When I looked up at him after saying these things, I was surprised to find that he neither looked angry or even disappointed. All he said in response was: 'I understand, but there is just one thing I want to ask of you; before you leave for the university, come home and spend time with us.

Three weeks before schools would reopen, I took time off my job to go home and prepare. Each morning I would go for mass, after which Fr Ireneus would invite me for morning prayer. During the prayer he would ask the Lord to breakdown barriers that prevent young men from answering His call. I knew this was directed at me, and I felt very uncomfortable, but at the same time I could not resist the urge to go for mass and the morning prayer.

While the pressure from my pastor was a subtle one, the one from my father was more aggressive. After the morning prayer with the pastor, I always went back to the house to find my father waiting for me. We would then walk to the farm together. In spite of his limited knowledge of scripture he was determined to use scripture to breakdown my resistance. He would often recall sayings of Jesus such as: "what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul". His most popular verses were those where some would-be disciples gave various excuses for not answering the call of Jesus to follow him: "let me go and say goodbye to my family", "let me go and bury my father first". I experienced a lot of sleepless nights during this period.

"Lord, and I let myself be seduced you were too strong for me, and you prevailed. (Jer 20.7) This was how I felt after spending time with my pastor and my father. When the seminary reopened, I packed my bag and went for admission. I never went back to my job to tell my colleagues that I was not coming back. My first 3 months in the seminary were very agonizing. There were days I felt like picking my bag and going back home. It was only during my first vacation that I went back to SSNIT to apologize and put in an official resignation. From this point onwards, I knew that "once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Lk 9.62)

Please send us your prayer intentions:_____

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THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

November 2026						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Rev. 1 Victor Ganaa *West Africa*	Rev. 2 Stephen Kantubog *West Africa*	Rev. 3 Aloysius Kpiebaya *West Africa*	Rev. 4 Cletus Kulah *West Africa*	5 **For the souls of our deceased FOP members**	6 **For prayer requests received**	7 **For our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV**
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*	Rev. 17 Cyracus Tang *West Africa*	Rev. 18 Frederick Tantie *West Africa*	Rev. 19 Matthew Tuurosong *West Africa*	Msgr. 20 Stan Jaworski *Winnipeg*	Rev. 21 Michael Nault *Winnipeg*
Rev. 22 Francois Paradis OMI *Winnipeg*	Rev. 23 George Dunkley *Worcester*	Rev. 24 Jean-Paul Gagnon *Worcester*	Msgr. 25 John Mraz *Allentown*	Rev. 26 John Brennan *Boston*	Rev. 27 Robert Carr *Boston*	Rev. 2 William Carroll *Boston*
Rev. 29 Donald Clinton *Boston*	Rev. 30 Volney DeRosia *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.

Please cut and return this form with your donation.

Dear Fr. Bob Franco,
This donation is to help the Fraternity of Priests in continuing their work of ministering to priests.

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

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