

May 2014						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				Rev. Eugene Bettinger New Jersey 1	Prayer Requests Received 2	Pope Francis 3
Rev. Brendan Murray New Jersey 4	Rev. John Primich New Jersey 5	Rev. Timothy Graff New Jersey 6	Rev. Stephen Toth New Jersey 7	Rev. Jim Cassidy New York 8	Rev. Tom Devery New York 9	Rev. Joseph Fitzpatrick, SJ New York 10
Rev. William Cosgrove New York 11	Rev. Alan Shnob Ogdensburg 12	Rev. Joseph Muldoon Ottawa 13	Rev. John Brennan Pittsburgh 14	Rev. Thomas Sparacino Pittsburgh 15	Rev. Thomas Kredel Pittsburgh 16	Rev. Paul Zywan Pittsburgh 17
Rev. James Holland Pittsburgh 18	Rev. John Sweeney Pittsburgh 19	Rev. Nicholas Mastrangelo Pittsburgh 20	Rev. Joseph Luisi Pittsburgh 21	Rev. John Lynam Pittsburgh 22	Rev. Tony Gargotta Pittsburgh 23	Rev. Thomas Galvin Pittsburgh 24
Rev. Stan Gregorek Pittsburgh 25	Rev. Robert Boyle Pittsburgh 26	Rev. Daniel Mahoney Pittsburgh 27	Rev. Kenneth Oldenski Pittsburgh 28	Rev. Donie McMahon Port-of-Spain 29	Rev. George Lewis Port-of-Spain 30	Rev. John Theodore CSSP Port-of-Spain 31



"To gather priests to Christ and to one another to proclaim..."

THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

Friendship

By Father Vlado Bizjak of the Slovenia Fraternity

Christian faith is community in its core. A self-standing Christian life is not possible and no piety is healthy if only practices it as a form of self-sanctification without a dimension of community or love of our neighbors. We cannot save our souls if we are concerned only for our souls. We cannot save ourselves without saving our neighbors. We will be saved together or not at all!

Communitarian spirituality was not so much emphasized in recent centuries. Maybe it was not necessary, because the life was harder and forced the people to live more connected, to help each other in the fields and so on. Today we feel the necessity to emphasize community because we experience that it is slightly disappearing also from Christian life and from the life of priests.

The life situation (standard) lets us live quite comfortable alone and we do not need others so much. We can manage all our basic work alone or use cheap services, so we do not need to ask for help or to help others. Technology gives us an opportunity to stay at home and communicate without any effort. We do not need to go towards people.

My priest friend said to me recently, referring to the failure of our evangelization: "Now we have cars to help us to reach people more easily, but mostly we use those cars to drive by the houses and people."

This is obviously not the only way in which we misuse technology, which is there for us to serve better and to make our life easier, to have more time left for others. Computers and internet are beautiful means to communicate and to connect to the world. However, very often it can happen that the result is quite contrary: we are more and more alone, more home, not sharing life with our brothers and sisters.

The original sin causes us to be tempted to be constantly turned towards ourselves and not towards others. Therefore, the battle against individualism is our constant spiritual and human battle. Priests today are living in alone, many cases, more than in the past, so they are tempted twice. People in the families are at least forced to communicate. Celibates can hide in their own big parish house, drive away any time or fall in activism pretending everything is OK.

The fight against the individualism is lifelong and the first question is: Are we ready to fight? Many times we are not. We are searching for excuses in the first place.

The fight against the individualism is lifelong and the first question is: Are we ready to fight? Many times we are not. We are searching for excuses in the first place. These can be like this: "We are not monks who live in a monastery", which is true, but also an excuse; "I have 3 parishes now and I have no time"; "I

am in touch with people at holy mass and other pastoral work" and so on. We have to know that relationships only with people we serve can be tricky. They are in a way subordinate to us, they take us as their superiors. So it is not easy to be friends and brothers with them in the way as with other priests with whom we share not only the same work but are also incorporated in the same sacramental brotherhood.

We are men of flesh and blood and we share this reality with all. It is characteristic for the human being that he has his intimate world. We can be deeply lonely in it or we can share it, not to be alone. First, we can share it with our God. That is why Jesus called his disciples his friends. Friendship is a way of relationship which characterizes sharing of the intimate – personal – world: "I have told you everything" (John 15:15). I am convinced that God gave us friendship with him and with people as a remedy against the temptation against individualism. Individualism doesn't mean only that I care only for myself and don't care for others. I can do pastoral work with people and remain individualistic. The question is, am I ready to open my inner world, am I ready to share my hopes, my fears, my doubts, my joys with someone? We know that we cannot do this with anyone. We do this with people that we trust; these people we

...continued on page 3

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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Please send articles, comments, and photos to the FOP Newsletter editor, Fr. Bob Carr, via e-mail to editor@fraternityofpriests.org

Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted. Any submissions will help make each issue better!

Saint Paul was a person who could quickly get to the bottom line. When the Christians at Corinth had questions and difficulties concerning the resurrection, he clearly told them that if Christ is not risen, they are still in their sins and are the most ridiculous of people. He was most emphatic in teaching that all of Christian faith stands or falls on the objective truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He even points out that there were many still alive who had received appearances of the risen Christ. (1st Corinthians 15)

Easter celebrates the fact that Christ who died on the cross and was sealed in the tomb actually rose from the dead. The resurrection validates who Jesus really is, the divine Son of God, and the reality of our eternal redemption. Sin, Satan, and death are defeated and we can look forward to eternal life with God.

Since Jesus is risen we can know him personally in this life. He longs to enter into each of our lives. As he says in the Book of Revelation: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." (Rev. 3:20) Easter is that special time of year when we are invited, encouraged, and urged to begin or deepen a serious and committed relationship with the Lord. We are to nourish that relationship with prayer and worship, study of our faith, and loving and compassionate service of the poor. Christianity, then, is not a philosophy of life, but the way to enter into a loving friendship with God through his son, Jesus Christ, and a way of life to be lived out each day. It is a vocation or call to bring the love of Christ and the gospel message to others. God has given this responsibility and mission to all the baptized and confirmed.

Where do we receive the power and grace to live out this mission? It is the Mass that is the "source and summit" of our Christian life according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. As we remain faithful to the weekly and even daily celebration of the Eucharist, we are formed by the Word of God, nourished by the true Body and Blood of Christ, and joined together in a community of prayer and worship.

We are then sent fourth to announce the gospel of the Lord.

Do you realize that one of the first things that Jesus did after rising from the dead was to celebrate the Eucharist? (Read Luke 24:13 and following.) Jesus encounters two disciples. He opens to them the meaning of the scriptures. He gathers with them around a table and they recognize him in the "breaking of bread". Renewed in faith they are now able to proclaim the resurrection.

I pray that each of you will experience the love of Jesus in a renewed way during this Easter season and go forth to share your faith. I wish you and your loved ones the joy and peace of Easter.



Fraternity Financial Report

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're providing this information to help communicate our specific need and to thank those many faithful benefactors who help make our service possible. Thank you!

Monthly Donation Budget: **\$4,750.00**

Actual Donations: **\$1,400.00**
Budget Surplus (shortage): **(\$ 3,350.00)**

Current as of February 28, 2014.

...continued from page 1

call friends. So, the first question is: Are we ready to do this? To share our inner life. Jesus calls us. He knows, and we know, that our life will be fuller and our heart will be richer. For some this can sound like a threat. It is not. Let our fears not block us from genuine relationships.

When we decided to fight for the gift of friendship, against individualism, we have decided for asceticism. Many times we do not come even so far. Now we have new challenges before us. What kind of friendship this should be?

Maybe you will be surprised, but "friendship" was one of the frequent topics of Pope Benedict XVI (*Deus Caritas Est*). He emphasizes the friendship with Jesus in the first place. It is not an idea or a bunch of moral rules. There has to be a decision for personal relationship with Jesus. Friendship with him is our response to his Love. God's love is also a source of love that we share with others. We know that friendship that attaches to each other too much is unhealthy and does not let God to be in the first place; it can lead to strange deviations. Genuine friendship with Christ will set us free from searching absolute fulfillment in people, because only He alone can give it to us. "Tu autem eras interior intimo meo" (You are more intimate to me than I to myself), said St. Augustine. If we have Him, we are not alone in our deepest inner world. I hope we all experienced that as we were baptized in Spirit or in some other occasion.

God also sends us brothers and sisters. Sometimes we are confused and do not understand why are we left in spiritual desolation for so

long. Maybe He wants to give it to us through others. The Lord will not come directly every time, he will choose our friends to visit us. And he will also use us to come to our friends. We are rarely aware of this beautiful path and we are not taking it seriously enough. I encourage all to take it more seriously. The Lord uses friendship as a means through which he alone visits us.

Benedict XVI's definition of friendship is inspired by classics: "Idem velle, idem nolle". Friends are those, who want and don't want the same things. Friendship is in the will. If my will is in harmony with God's will, then I am his friend. "You are my friends if you do what I command you." (John 15:14) It is similar in human relationships. If we extend it: friends are those who feel the same, who like the same things, who have similar interests. We don't have to force ourselves in friendship with someone who is much different, with whom I don't have much in common. On the other hand Thomas Aquinas said that friendship extends itself on everything that our friend likes, on everything that is connected with him. If, for example, Jesus our friend loves certain people that we don't like – our enemies –, we will also try to love them for his sake.

Aristotle, in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, explains the characteristics of friendship and many Christian authors copy him. He says that real friends seek the good of the other. Friendship also requests an exchange of feelings. Therefore, it has to be reciprocal, it has to be supported from both sides. The other has to show himself as worthy of love. He has to draw my attention. Then Aristotle distinguishes three kinds of

friendship: First, friendship based on utility, second on pleasure and third based on goodness (virtue). We don't have to think much, it is soon clear that friendship based on utility will end as soon as someone does not benefit from it. Friendship for pleasure only will end as soon as someone doesn't feel good in relationship. This also isn't real friendship. Real friends are virtuous – they seek the good of the other, not good of self. They love their friends for themselves as they are. So they soon discover that such friendship brings also benefit and pleasure, so they enjoy friendship in all its dimensions. He finishes: "I say, that without friendship life is no life. If it were possible that some god should carry us away from these haunts of men, and place us somewhere in perfect solitude, and then should supply us in abundance with everything necessary to our nature, and yet take from us entirely the opportunity of looking upon a human being. Who could steel himself to endure such a life?"

Finally, we will stress the last particular characteristic of friendship which is non-exclusivity. Real friendship is not possessive and dominative but it has to be transformative and liberating. It has to open us more for others.

Dear brothers, let us fight for real friendship as it is God's gift and it can enrich our Fraternity.

Father Vlado Bizjak is a member of the Fraternity Board and hails from the Slovenia Fraternity.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

