



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

THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

September 2014						
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Tools to Successful Ministry: Prayer and Fraternal Support

By Father Robert J. Carr of the Boston Fraternity

I learned on the retreat last year at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio to do the annual consecration to Mary following the book written by Fr. Michael Gaitley: *33 Days to Morning Glory (2011 Marian Press)*. Actually the consecration process can be done before any Marian feast, but I choose the Assumption for no other reason than that was the closest one to when I finished my retreat.

As I began the book again for this year's consecration, I decided to simultaneously read the book on which this process is based: St. Louis de Montfort's *True Devotion to Mary: With Preparation for Total Consecration (2013; Catholic Way Publishing; Kindle Edition)*.

I read some of de Montfort's material many years ago when I first returned to the Church and while a sonar technician in the Navy. I actually did not like it for I found it too much connected to the old fire and brimstone way of preaching, a way for which St. Louis gained much renown. However that was over thirty years ago and I decided, maybe it is time to take another look at it.

While reading and praying my morning meditation, I was, suddenly, struck by how impossible it is for us as humans, and especially priests to go it alone without great prayer. It is no secret that all of Hell

is against our most minute successes and the devil rejoices at each one of our failures so, how obvious it is that we cannot do this on our own. Trying to be the priest who goes it alone is to take the road to trouble as Bishop Christopher Coyne warned the Boston priests in their most recent convocation. Fortunately, we have the fraternity, but, this alone is not enough. We need also to see the importance of our daily prayer as another support. Jesus relied on his relationship with the Father in His mission here on Earth. Mary relied on Jesus. To whom do we rely? Hopefully not ourselves.

This is why our daily prayer time in meditation before the Blessed Sacrament is absolutely essential. We need all the help we can for our task is quite huge.

Many years ago, I was stationed at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston, which was ground zero for the crisis in the Church. There, every Sunday, protesters gathered to rally against the abuse that had happened in the Church. Some were quite sincere in seeking to purify her, others were not sincere, but were there to exact punishment for the sins of leaders of the Church in their interest in getting the Catholics out of American life. The faithful seeking to do nothing more than attend mass on Sunday became caught in verbal crossfire as men with bullhorns

screamed out "Children keep hands on your privates, there are priests in there." It was a horrible experience that more than one person labeled demonic. It was there I learned a powerful principle. Just as Jesus gave even His life for the salvation of each soul, the devil will give up to his life (for he cannot give his life) for the damnation of each soul. This is the spiritual battle that we fight as ambassadors for the kingdom. If you think for a minute that you can fight that battle alone, you are not only a fool, you are the devil's fool.

We must be humble before the Lord and His mother seeking their protection and guidance in this battle for it is one where much is at stake, and maybe we do not have a handle on that reality. Each and every soul is as precious to Jesus as it is prized by the devil. The soul was won by Christ, but the devil seeks to trick each one into changing allegiances to his kingdom.

We learn in the fraternity our devotion to pray, to read and meditate on the Bible, to engage in a form of journaling and to seek the guidance of our brothers in Christ. These tools strengthen us for our ministry and lead us to know better how to accomplish the mission.

The greatest failure begins with our letting go of prayer and deciding we have it all figured out how to do

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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.

Fraternity of Priests, Inc.
PO Box 422
Steubenville, OH 43952-9671
Phone: (740) 283-4400
Fax: (740) 283-3622
Email: contact@fraternityofpriests.org
<http://www.fraternityofpriests.org>

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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!

I remember from my high school and college days what was known as the "required reading list". In my high school years there would be a required summer reading list and perhaps an exam in September. In the seminary college and during the four years of theology each professor had "the list". At exam time we would be responsible for the course material and also the required readings.

If I were to make up a list of "required readings" for the Fraternity of Priests and our Friends of the Priesthood, after the scriptures and the Catechism of the Catholic Church I would place *Evangelii Gaudium/The Joy of the Gospel* by Pope Francis. In fact, in our Boston Fraternity Group we are presently going through *The Joy of the Gospel* during our time for teaching.

The *Joy of the Gospel* is termed a Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation. That is quite a mouthful. It simply means a document issued by the Holy Father following a worldwide synod or gathering of bishops. A Synod of Bishops gathered in Rome from October 7 – 28, 2012 to discuss the theme: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith. Pope Francis has simply taken the work of the synod and summarized it in his own unique way to make it accessible to Catholics and in fact to all the Christian faithful.

There is so much that is wonderful in this document that you need to read it for yourselves and perhaps discuss and share it with others. I will simply share several themes that struck me.

First of all there is the theme of joy. Joy is at the heart of the gospel. In fact, the gospel is the "Good News" that should bring us joy. In spite of the difficulties in the world and in the Church today, Jesus is actively present continuing His redeeming work to bring us to the perfect joy of life eternal. Pope Francis writes about this joy, but it is also clearly evident in his life, in his ministry, and in his smile.

Francis devotes a good part of the document to the important of preaching. He urges those who are sent to preach to give quality time to prayerful preparation. The preacher

must also know the lives of the people to whom he preaches if the message is to have relevance. Preaching should not be an academic lecture, but a living world that can bring life to God's people.

Our Holy Father Francis also reminds us that evangelization has a necessary social dimension. He makes the needed connection between evangelization and social justice. The two cannot and must not be separated. This also demands that we be close to the poor in our lives and ministries.

There is so much more in the document that while I would not recommend it for light reading at the beach, it should be on that "required reading list" for all of us, clergy and laity, who are committed to serve the Lord and His people in today's Church.

Fraternally



Fr. John



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: **\$ 500.00**

Budget Surplus (shortage): **(\$4,250.00)**

Current as of June 30, 2014.

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good in the world. We become self deceived when we do that, for we believe we are doing God's will, but may discover we were doing nothing of the sort.

Our greatest model of this truth is that Jesus Himself prayed every day early in the morning and alone. He too recognized that He needed to be in prayerful contact with the Father to know His will. This is an important understanding for without doing this, he would have done His own will, which would have put Him in human favor, but not in His Father's.

An Assembly of God minister, with whom I attended the University of Massachusetts in Boston, once taught me a great lesson about this. He asked me if Jesus could have healed all the people He encountered, not just those who asked for healing, but everyone. I said yes, and he further explained that Our Lord could have entered a town and commanded automatically and at that moment that all be healed, however, He did not. Again, he asked me why. Not having even entered the seminary at this point, I had no answer. He responded, "Because, it was not the Father's will."

This great lesson is one I remember always. The devil has great tools and we can succumb to them if we do not root ourselves in God's powerful wisdom through prayer and through our mutual support. The enemy can occupy us in doing good, but not in what God's will is in doing good. We may help others physically in the interest of being charitable which is important, but not seek to lead them to Christ. So we may be doing the benevolent thing, but not seek to

complete the work with the most holy thing. Worse yet, Satan may teach us that good is bad and bad is good. We may be doing what we consider the right thing to do, but in fact is the opposite of God's will.

An example of this is the fascinating story of a man who worked during the week at a nationally known Catholic charitable organization and he spent his weekends volunteering in helping women walk into abortion clinics. He became a great embarrassment to the Catholic organization. However, he saw nothing contradictory between his job and his voluntary work. It is this kind of deception that can befall us when we do not avail ourselves of God's tools.

We need to pray daily not just out of obligation to our priestly office, but out of necessity to our Catholic battle. There is too much at stake and the devil does not like to give up his territory easily. Our prayer also teaches us how to respond. Indeed, we may think in a situation that we should speak out against the poor sinner until he repents, only to learn that our simple presence in our clerics may be enough to change a person's heart, maybe not today, but the seeds are sown. For Christ tells us to correct in charity and to gently be a presence of Christ which is often far more effective many times than being a hammer dressed up as a priest. This too is learned in prayer and the wisdom that is drawn from God.

The Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen taught that this holy hour was an essential element in the life of a priest adding that the priest who does it will not be lost. It is that time where we deepen our ability to do

the work of the Lord and learn of His guidance in our lives. We bring to the Lord our struggles and our ministerial needs, the youth who need to learn of Christ, the adults who have yet to learn the meaning of Catholicism. The families who feel they are too busy to attend mass, the struggling person whom you feel is hopeless. All these and so many other needs we bring to prayer as well as listening to God's wisdom in our lives through reading the Bible and good spiritual books. We sit before the Lord open to His influence in our lives and pray for His guidance in doing His work. We deepen our realization of our labor and recognize that He will supply the tools for us to do it. We approach His Mother in our ministry, through the rosary and prayer asking her guidance in the service we do. We read and pray upon the words of the saints who influence us well and seek their influence in our ministry.

This is a treasure of influence that we cannot lay aside thinking that we already know what God wants of us more than He does.

Do your work without fraternal support and without prayer or even just the minimum and you are guaranteed to fail at least in the sense of the true call of your ministry. However, embrace fraternal support and the prayer time and you will do great things for the Father who called you to this ministry. Then we can seek the greatest of all prizes, the words of Our Lord at the end of our journey "Well done my good and faithful servant."

Father Bob is a member from the Boston Fraternity.

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

