



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

# THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

November 2012						
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## Vatican II – Has It Really Been Fifty Years?

By Fr. John Kiley

September 25, 1962 was an important and memorable day in my life. It was on that day that along with over eighty-five other young men I entered the seminary to begin four years of college and four years of theology, an eight year journey toward ordination to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Boston. Those were times when faith and practice of the faith were strong. A sure sign of such faith was the fact that so many young men were considering a vocation to the Catholic priesthood and had outstanding and continuing support from their families and friends. At that time I had no idea of the changes that would soon be introduced into the Church through the Second Vatican Council nor did I have any concept of what awaited the Church and the world during the turbulent decade of the sixties and beyond. On this past September 25 a number of us gathered for lunch to share stories and to observe the fiftieth anniversary of our entrance into the seminary.

I find it amazing now to think that after only sixteen days of our seminary experience, the Second Vatican Council opened in Rome. The date was October 11, 1962. I still remember watching the opening session of the Council on a small black and white TV in the seminary auditorium. Many of us had been praying for the Council since Pope

John XXIII had announced his intention to call an Ecumenical Council in January of 1959. The Pope challenged all Catholics to pray for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit "as in a new Pentecost". What we had been praying for was now about to begin. Our particular seminary class had the unique experience of beginning preparation for the priesthood shortly before the Council, living through the exciting and hopeful years of the Council, and being ordained after the Council in 1970.

The joy of witnessing the opening of the Council was suddenly and drastically interrupted within a few short days with the onset of the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. The world had come very close to nuclear war. Anxiety and fear were tangible. It was reported that the Franciscans at the St. Anthony Shrine in downtown Boston witnessed an unprecedented increase in confessions during the crisis as many people realized the United States could be "nuked" at any moment. September and October of 1962 were quite the ride for those of us alive and in the seminary at that time.

The Catholic Church is very conscious of the importance of celebrating anniversaries. As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Vatican II Pope Benedict has called us to "a Year of

Faith". On this October 11 we celebrate not only the Vatican II anniversary, but also the twentieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. We are being given a graced opportunity to revisit the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and to deepen our appreciation of and use of the Catechism.

As I have entered into discussion with people over the years I find that there are varied and at times conflicting notions of what was envisioned at Vatican II. I also know that for younger Catholics today Vatican II seems like ancient history, if they have even heard of it. What was the goal of this important council when the bishops of the world in union with the pope gathered in Rome fifty years ago? Actually that question was answered in the very first document of the Council, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, issued on December 4, 1964. In the opening paragraph we learn that the goal of the Council had four important aspects:

- to intensify the daily growth of Catholics in Christian living
- to make more responsive to the requirements of our times those Church observances which are open to adaptation
- to nurture whatever can contribute to the unity of all who believe in Christ
- to strengthen those aspects

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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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Please send articles, comments, and photos to the FOP Newsletter editor, Fr. Bob Franco via e-mail at [editor@fraternityofpriests.org](mailto:editor@fraternityofpriests.org) or fax to 440-327-2204.

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

On October 11th the Holy Father opened the "Year of Faith", marking the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. This "Year of Faith" comes when ordained and lay leaders of the Church in the United States freely admit that the knowledge of the Catholic faith has probably reached an all-time low.

On November 17, 1999, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published a document called *Were Not Our Hearts Burning Within Us*. This document called for a paradigmatic shift. Faith formation for adults, not children, was to be the first priority for the Church in the United States in the 21st century. The response of many parishes was to form adult education committees to implement this document. Transformation, not the mere passing on of information, is the goal. "I will give you a new heart and place my Spirit within you." (Ezekiel 36:26)

Over the past two years my parish has formed an adult faith formation committee that seeks to implement this plan. We are grateful for the many resources that are available to assist parishes in forming their adults. I have personally found some of the resources of Pastor Rick Warren (author of *The Purpose Driven Life*) to be effective in bringing the adults of my parish to a deeper, transformative relationship with the Lord. We seek to grow our faith on many levels: knowledge of what we believe, our experience of liturgical life, living our faith as a community and developing a missionary spirit, to name a few.

It is by no accident that the opening of the "Year of Faith" comes five days after the opening of the Synod on the New Evangelization. Evangelization, faith formation (catechesis) and the celebration of our sacramental life are all woven together as a trinity of graced moments.

The goal of this "Year of Faith" is that many people will experience the gentle touch of the Spirit moving them forward in their faith. We hope this year will be an opportunity for many to deepen their life of faith and for others to rediscover their faith.

Teaching has always been a component of a Fraternity of Priests meeting. Here is

what some fraternities are already doing: scripture studies, corporate homily preparation, the study of Papal Encyclicals, spiritual books and solid DVD materials.

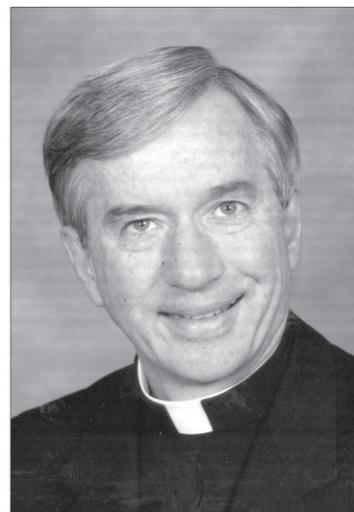
Whatever resources are used, this Year of Faith is to be a time of deepening our transformative knowledge of the Lord. We can only give what we have received from the Lord.

In spite of all of the economic struggles that we have in our world, we are most grateful for your faithful and ongoing prayers and financial support of your parish priests and the priests that are in Fraternities throughout the world. This is what keeps our faith strong in times of testing and struggle. For you and your prayers we are most grateful.

In Christ our High Priest,



Father Bill Cosgrove



## 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: **\$1,970.00**

Budget Surplus (shortage): **(\$2,780.00)**

Current as of August 31, 2012.

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of the Church which can help summon all of mankind into her embrace.

It was the goal and hope of the Council Fathers that all of us as Catholics would lead a more intense life of living faith and love. The Council recognized that there were elements of Church life that were open to adaptation and these should be made more responsive to the needs of our time. There was the hope of helping Christians of various communities to be more united in Christ and to work together toward the full unity that Jesus desires. The Council also recognized and embraced again the mission given to the Church by Christ to reach out to the whole world and bring people to Christ and to His Body the Church, the work of evangelization. Reflecting on these four aspects fifty years later, it is evident that there is still much that has to be accomplished with God's grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are only at the beginning stages in implementing this magnificent vision of the Council.

In recent years we have been hearing about two very different interpretations of Vatican II. Some see the Council as a break with the past and as an event that has set the Church on an entirely new course. What we have to embrace and implement is not the "letter" but rather the so-called "spirit of Vatican II". Others see Vatican II as certainly a most significant development guided by the Holy Spirit but one that is also in continuity with authentic tradition, rejecting the idea that there is a pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II Church. At the Synod of Bishops held in 1985 to commemorate the twentieth

anniversary of the closing of the Council, Pope John Paul II espoused a hermeneutic of continuity, namely that the Council has to be interpreted in continuity with tradition. Pope Benedict has also spoken frequently and strongly in the same vein.

Since these varied and conflicting ideas about Vatican II are so prevalent among many of our people, we priests and pastors have a golden opportunity during this "Year of Faith" to revisit in prayer and study the documents of Vatican II. I would certainly urge that we read at least the four Constitutions and the Council's teaching on the laity.

The Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, is of utmost importance. The concept that God actually speaks to the human race and acts in human history is now very foreign to contemporary thought and even to the thinking of some Catholics. The uniqueness of the Judeo-Christian tradition is lost to many. All religions are looked upon as purely human attempts to reach God or "the divine". Our Christian faith stands or falls on accepting the truth of Divine Revelation.

At a time when there is so much disagreement about liturgy and worship, reviewing what the Council Fathers had in mind for the renewal of the Liturgy can be a blessing in our own lives and hopefully clear up some of the confusion that prevails among our people. Since the majority of our people no longer participate in Mass each weekend, making the Mass the "source and summit" of Catholic life and working towards that "full, active, and conscious" participation called for by the Council is a necessity. The Liturgy Constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, along with

more recent documents on Liturgy can help us evaluate how the Mass and Sacraments are being celebrated for those we serve.

Some Christians and Catholics, influenced by the current thought of religion as something private, are adopting a "Jesus and me" spirituality. Studying *Lumen Gentium* (the Constitution of the Church) and *Gaudium et Spes* (the Constitution of the Church in the Modern World) can give us and our people a richer appreciation of the nature and mission of the Church that Christ founded. Both documents present a very rich biblical theology of the Church and its mission to and in the modern world. This theology is so necessary when people tend to see only the human side of the Church and neglect its divine origin.

Finally along with these four Constitutions reading the Council's teaching on the importance and role of the layperson in the Church and implementing this teaching is essential to effective ministry today, especially in light of the "New Evangelization".

Much has certainly happened in my personal life and ministry, as well as in the Church and the world, since that first day in the seminary fifty years ago. I continue to give thanks to God for the gift of priesthood. I welcome this "Year of Faith" called for by Pope Benedict as I strive to help the people of my parish embrace and continue the renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council. May the Holy Spirit assist each of us and all in the Church during these challenging, graced filled times.

Rev. John Kiley writes from the Boston Fraternity.

Please send us your prayer intentions: \_\_\_\_\_

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