



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

# THE VISITATION

A monthly publication of the Fraternity of Priests, Inc.

## Are You Stuck or Moving Forward?

By Fr. William Cosgrove

The journey of life is not always the easy one. Some go through life always moving forward. Others could be best described as "a stick in the mud." A "stick in the mud" is very often a person who is content and satisfied. They stay put doing the same things, eating the same foods, watching the same TV shows. These folks have few friends. However, for most of us our natural instinct is to move on, searching for new experiences, new possibilities, new challenges.

In the gospel Account of the Transfiguration, Peter is heard to say "Lord, it is good that we are here. Let us direct three booths; one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah." Peter, in this gospel, is acting like a "stick in the mud". He wants to stay put. Peter, James, and John had just heard the Father's voice say to them: "this is my beloved son, listen to him."

Listening to Jesus means not staying put, but moving forward into the unknown. The journey is a costly one, but the destiny for us (as it was for Jesus) is Transfiguration. When the voice from heaven announced who Jesus was and commanded the disciples to "listen to him," their mood shifted. They became afraid. Why were they afraid? Why do we become afraid? Moving from the known to the unknown can always

spark fear. Like Abram we must leave behind what we know and love and journey into an unknown future. St. Paul says it slightly different: "leaving behind everything, I press on to what lies ahead." Scripture commentators often remark that Peter, James and John had to experience the glory of the Transfiguration in order to endure the cross of their master Jesus which would loom ever larger in the coming days.

No one goes through life without experiencing their own "cross". Tragedies, tensions and traumas are a part of human existence. It's how we respond to them that makes us stronger and capable of moving forward rather than being a "stick in the mud". As a nation, slow as it may be, we are moving forward from the trauma of 9/11. Likewise, citizens of the Gulf Coast states are moving forward, slow though it may be, from hurricane Katrina. Our Haitian brothers and sisters are moving forward, slow though it may be, from the Haitian earthquake of January, 2010. The Japanese people are choosing to have hope and move forward from the tragedy of the earthquake, tsunami and the nuclear plant disaster. They rose from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they rose from the ashes of a destroyed Tokyo during

World War II and they choose to move forward now.

When you listen to the inner voice of a nation (like Japan), him or the still, small voice of God, you will inevitably hear his voice say move forward. Jesus Christ told Peter, James and John; now was the time for them to descend the mountain and go to Jerusalem where crucifixion would await.

Listening loosens me and pulls me up out of the mud. Listening helps me move forward with a confidence and trust that even though I may not see the promise fulfilled in my time, like Abram I will move forward to that eternal city that awaits me after life on this earth.

Listening to the word of God transfigures sinners into forgiven and redeemed people. Listening to the word of God transfigures sick and disabled bodies into healed and whole beings. It transfigures bread and wine into his Body and Blood; it transfigures suffering and death into resurrected life.

So, are you choosing to play it safe and be an "old stick in the mud" or are you ready to move forward leaving behind the past with all of its certitudes and comforts and press on; moving forward because Christ called you to continue on the journey of faith not knowing where the journey will lead or when it will end?

# Dear Friends of the Priesthood

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One of the titles of our Lady, perhaps a natural development of her title “Queen of the Apostles” is *Queen of Clergy*. Because Jesus Christ gave his mother to the disciple John from the Cross (*Woman, behold your son...Son, behold your mother*, John 19:26-27), a special relationship between the Blessed Virgin Mary and priests has been established.

The final chapter of Archbishop Dolan’s book Priests for the Third Millennium (copyright © 2000 by Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division) is entitled *Devotion to Our Lady*. I found two of his reflections especially striking for priest. The first reflection was Archbishop Dolan’s paraphrase of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

...priests identify most closely with Mary, for the fundamental question posed to them, the answer to which gives them identity, vocation and mission is the same one posed to her at the Annunciation: Will you give flesh to the Son of God? Will the divine become human through you? Will you provide God the Son with a human nature? (pg. 324)

Such is the life of a priest-offering his flesh to the Son of God that the words and deeds of Jesus Christ may be manifest in our world.

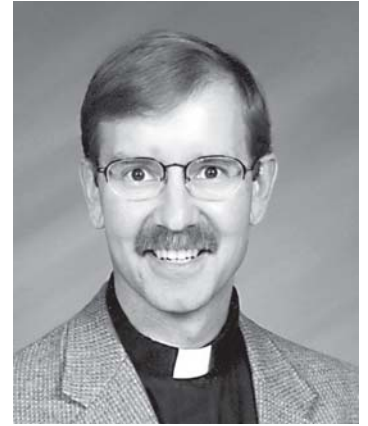
A second point for reflection from Archbishop Dolan’s book comes from Sr. Bridge McKenna, who urged priests to love Mary. Sr. Bridge said,

No wonder you priests are so close to her...for you both look at Jesus—she on earth and now in heaven, you, in the Eucharist. And you both can say, as no one else can, “This is my body; this is my blood.” (pg. 324)

Through the wonder of the Incarnation, Mary brought Jesus Christ into the world. Through the miracle of the Mass, priests continue to bring Jesus Christ in the world through the Eucharist.

Though these theological reflections are very meaningful for me, it was a member of my local Fraternity who helped me understand the role of Mary in a much more

practical way. Fr. Michael Schneid, a founding member of the Cleveland Fraternity of Priests, said to me one day, “Where there is devotion to Mary, there is unity.”



Over the years, my devotion to Mary has grown. I reflect on her openness to the Spirit and seek to imitate her surrender. Like Mary, I want the Word to take flesh through me. I seek her intercession, especially through the Rosary, for personal and general intentions. And I invoke her presence in a regular way with just about every group I serve, whether parochial or diocesan. I believe her motherly intercession is one of the keys to unity in the Church.

As we honor Mary in this month of May and prepare for the great feast of Pentecost, let us remember that Mary was in the Upper Room, interceding for nascent Church.

Mary, Queen of the Clergy and Spouse of the Holy Spirit, pray for us today!

Sincerely in Christ,

*Fr. Bob Franco*

## 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: **\$5,390.00**

Budget Surplus (shortage): **\$640.00**

*Current as of March 31, 2011.*

### Editor’s Box:

Please send articles, comments, and photos to the FOP Newsletter editor, Fr. Michael Roy via e-mail at [editor@fraternityofpriests.org](mailto:editor@fraternityofpriests.org) or fax to 508-943-2213.

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

## From the Editor

Fr. Cosgrove's article for this issue of our monthly publication came in quite short so as editor I had to scramble to "fill the space", but of course in a most worthwhile way. In prayer I kept hearing a call to give recognition to our dearly beloved Pope, John Paul II, just this month beatified. How exciting! One whom we feel we knew personally, has now received so extraordinary on honor and so soon after his death. He who beatified and canonized so many so as to give us compelling examples of holiness to emulate, now has become such and in so exceptional a manner.

I hope you will find these reflections from his last letter to Priests on Holy Thursday as touching and inspiring as I did. The Letter was addressed to us on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March and he died on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April that year.

"I particularly welcome our annual spiritual encounter for Holy Thursday, the day when Christ's love was manifested 'to the end.' My thoughts turn to you, dear priests, as I spend this time recuperating in hospital uniting my sufferings with those of Christ in the Eucharist.

I take my inspiration from the words of Eucharistic consecration, which we say every day *in persona Christi* in order to make present on our altars the sacrifice made once and for all on Calvary. The life of a priest must be shaped by the Eucharist; the words of the institution must be a **formula of life.**"

"He took bread, broke it, he gave thanks"

The first sentiment expressed by Jesus is that of thanksgiving, the very root of the word "Eucharist." How could this thanksgiving fail to shape the life of a priest? Gratitude for the gift of faith, which he is to proclaim; for the gift of priesthood, which consecrates him totally to the service of the Kingdom of God.

"Take and eat, take and drink" Christ's self-giving has its origin in the Trinitarian life of God and reaches its culmination in the sacrifice of the Cross. It's impossible, isn't it, to repeat these words without *feeling oneself caught up in this spiritual movement.* Applying them to ourselves we speak them with generosity and so life takes on its true meaning. This generosity, the gift of self, placing one's self at the disposal of the community is exactly what Jesus expected of his Apostles and what the People of God expect of a priest.

The Pope goes on to say: "If we think about it more fully, the priest's promise of obedience, which he made on the day of his Ordination, is illuminated by this relationship with the Eucharist. Obeying out of love, sacrificing even a certain legitimate freedom when the authoritative discernment of the Bishop so requires, the priest lives out in his own flesh that "take and eat" with which Christ, in the Last Supper, gave himself to the Church."

"Do this in memory of me."

The Eucharist which sacramentally makes present the death and resurrection of the Lord invites the priest to develop a spirituality of remembrance. At a time when rapid social and cultural

changes are weakening the sense of tradition and leading the younger generation to risk losing touch with their roots, the priest is called to be the man who faithfully remembers the entire mystery of Christ.

As guardians of this most sacred mystery the Eucharist challenges us to lead a "sacred life". Many beatified and canonized priests have given an example of their prolonged Eucharistic adoration. These moments of solitude enliven a personal relationship with Christ from whom our life derives its joy and its meaning.

"The priestly vocation is essentially a call to sanctity... Sanctity is intimacy with God; it is the imitation of Christ, poor, chaste and humble; it is unreserved love for souls and self-giving to their true good... The world looks to the priest, because it looks to Jesus! No one can see Christ; but everyone sees the priest, and through him they wish to catch a glimpse of the Lord! Immense is the grandeur of the Lord! Immense is the grandeur and dignity of the priest!"

~ Pope John Paul II

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

# THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

## 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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