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Taste and See the Goodness of the Lord in Jesus Caritas Fraternity

by Msgr. Desmond Dillon
Vieux Frere

This invitation and brief are primarily for Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests and relatively for the 24 branches of the family of Brother Charles de Foucauld. All religious communities have their own particular method of spiritual life and development. This spirituality is very usable in all Catholic and non-Catholic communities. This spirituality of universal brother emphasizes sanctifying friendships. Most religious communities follow an objective rule of life like the Benedictine "prayer, work and reverence for the Abbot."

The end vision of Brother Charles is universal brotherhood and total abandonment to God. It begins with the local brotherhood of small group fraternities. It is much more social and fluid. It encapsulates Nouen's social psychology of spirituality - moving from destructive loneliness to solitude, from anger to hospitality and from fantasy to contemplation. There is a minimum of rules and regulations and a maximum of social and spiritual development. Basically, it is giving and receiving sanctifying friendship with one another and especially with Christ Jesus who is our universal brother.

We invite and welcome you to join and contribute your efforts and prayers in helping others and yourself to grow in universal brotherhood in Christ Jesus.

*Des Dillon, Vieux Frere
Diocese of Yakima*

FORWARD

All religions seek to find a transcendental absolute. All peoples of all times have used their reason to find a God, their transcendental absolute. Christianity with revelation not only finds an eternal God but a loving Redeemer. By loving God as our Loving Father, and loving our neighbor as a creature of God, we reach the highest human value. It also endows us with the highest value of ourselves. The multifaceted family of Jesus Caritas with its quality of sanctifying friendship is a current movement in a church that has seen movements from the beginning. The third century catechetical schools of North Africa through the present-day movements like Cursillo, Marriage Encounter and Couples for Christ are other examples of movements that have brought life to the Church.



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Because many movements have gone astray, either functionally or dogmatically, it is necessary that Jesus Caritas be solidly grounded in the horizontal foundation of the institutional Church. Movements like the Guild or Masons (first in England), which became Masonic guilds and anti-Catholic and the Jocist's movement (in France) which became communistic and sort of anti-church are examples of movements which went awry and did not maintain authenticity and the Gospel. Basically, Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests and its spirituality must remain solidly connected with Rome and the institutional Church if it is to remain Catholic and authentic. Rome has a right and a need to moderate movements in the Church and bishops have that right in their dioceses and Jesus Caritas has a need to ensure its authenticity.

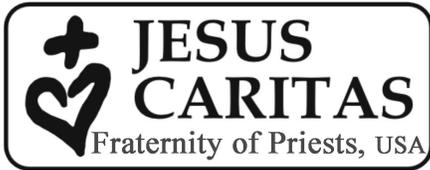
We offer this seven-step Ladder of Spirituality to Jesus Caritas Fraternity as a way to reach contemplation of our transcendental absolute who is our loving Father. It is important to note that the Ladder, which offers seven ||j steps, does not put these steps in any sequential order but rather as seven paths that lead to total abandonment of self and to contemplation of God. Where self will ends, God begins. The number seven is also used in a scriptural sense as in the seven days of creation and so on. More important is to see each step as a necessary means of advancing into contemplation.

The sanctifying friendship in Jesus Caritas Fraternity encapsulates Nouen's social psychology of spiritual growth, i.e., from destructive loneliness to solitude, from negative anger to hospitality, and from fantasy to contemplation.

St. John tell us that the ultimate end of contemplation is knowing as I am known and loving as I am loved. Anthropomorphically, St. John's description leads us to developing one's ability to be a true friend and develop a sanctifying friendship. Developing friendship leads us to increasing ability to be a universal brother. Different members of the Foucauld family emphasize different practices of Brother Charles like the poverty of the Little Sisters of Jesus or Brothers of the Gospel, etc. Essentially, the spirituality of Jesus Caritas is not so much in the way of a rule of life but rather in the social, psychological practice of service and sanctifying friendship and universal brother.

SPIRITUALITY LADDER

The seven-step Spirituality Ladder of Jesus Caritas is simply a visual aid. The seven steps themselves are also non-sequential. They are simply the general practices of Jesus Caritas that lead us all the way through from sanctifying friendship to friendship with Jesus, our Brother and finally the total immersing into contemplation of God by surrendering ourselves and our wills to God. The subject matter of each step is treated elsewhere and at greater length. These are just placed there so they are recognized as a necessary means of making progress towards contemplation, the ultimate end of all spirituality, of all Christian spirituality,



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particularly As in religious communities, in various ways and styles, the gathering together and discussion, self-revelations or communications are key to solidarity of that community. In Jesus Caritas the serious gathering together and sharing and the review of life above all, are the epitome of Jesus Caritas spirituality. It is well to remember that all spiritualities, including that of Jesus Caritas, not only rest on the foundation of the institutional Church but out of necessity should communicate and be governed by its decisions. The Church has a need and right to monitor all movements just as the Bishop has a need and right to monitor all spiritual movements in the local church. Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests has a need to be authenticated and affirmed in the diocese, region, nation and in the whole world. Within these perimeters, Fraternity, like all religious orders and institutes, maintains a maximum of freedom and decision. This is the freedom of Christ in which He has set us free.

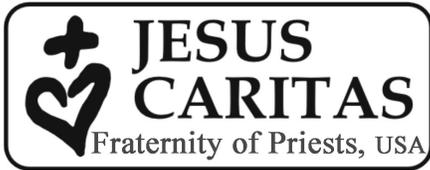
JESUS CARITAS FRATERNITY SEVEN STEPS TO YAHWEH

- VII Abandonment to the Will of God
 - VI The Simple Life
 - V Desert Day and Scripture
 - IV Eucharistic Adoration
 - III Month of Nazareth
 - II Review of Life
 - I Small group Meetings
- Catholic Foundation
Canonical Spirituality
Cooperation with and in the Institutional Church

The foundation of Jesus Caritas spirituality is established on the canonical and liturgical spirituality of the Church. The virtue of humility is the lifeblood that flows and nourishes both the foundation and the Jesus Caritas spirituality. While canonical spirituality is very prosaic and rather rigid, it is still the basis of validity and authenticity of all forms of spiritual movements in the church.

STEP I SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

The steps on the Ladder of Spirituality to the ultimate abandonment to a loving God begin with the monthly meeting of Jesus Caritas. This meeting is the entrance to sanctifying friendship with sharing and prayers. Some fraternities have two meetings per month. Some have two-day meetings every other month. Whatever schedule is followed, the meetings should be six hours or more They should enjoy a priority for the sake of the individual and the small group



fraternity. Above all, regularity and fidelity to the meetings is of basic importance. The small group meetings should enjoy first priority in our schedules. In the following pages a description of a sample day is suggested.

This is the foundation of spirituality in Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests. To relate to one another, to be open to one another, to affirm one another. It is important to note that brothers of the fraternity possess some initial ability to be friends and to make close friends. The purpose of monthly meetings is to seek sanctifying friendships in a small community. These meetings and activities of the small fraternities should be happy and hospitable.

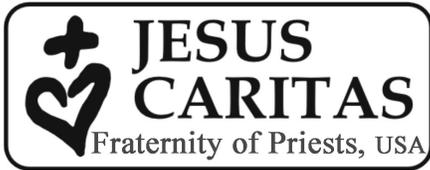
STEP II THE REVIEW OF LIFE

The Review of Life is the acme of our monthly meeting. The Review of Life is the medium of real brotherhood, friendship and prayerful affirmation. It is the most sacred time of our monthly meeting, spiritually, psychologically and socially. Actually, it is the key to real sanctifying friendship in our small community. The common introverted and insular nature of our personality tends to stunt spiritual growth. It is by sharing and caring in confidence with our small fraternity that spirits can let go and let God. Our sharing and caring and hearing the voice of God grows with our trust and empathy, which we have for our brothers.

It is time to share how God has spoken or related to us since the last month or in the past. It is a time to listen carefully and speak our hearts to our brothers' words. It should not be ruined by personal or financial problems, liturgical regulations, updates or world problems.

STEP III MONTH OF NAZARETH

The Month of Nazareth is the necessary means of deepening our understanding and our commitment to fraternity. The month also gives us a broader vision of Jesus Caritas in our diocese, in our country and in the world. It is not only a broadening of visions and commitment, it is often a life changing experience. The Month of Nazareth is truly an initiation into Jesus Caritas. It is an experience de rigueur for all responsables at diocesan, regional and national levels. The weakness of Fraternity is the lack of knowledge and direction. Many small fraternities start with enthusiasm and gradually dissolve for lack of direction. Some groups end up as simple luncheon or dinner meeting groups with some social meaning but no deep spiritual understanding or growth.



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STEP IV EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Eucharistic adoration of an hour each day before the Blessed Sacrament is an affirmation of God's great love for us in His presence. This was a principle practice of Brother Charles who was alone in a Muslim world. We live in a neo-pagan, promiscuous age. Jesus present in the Eucharist is our communication, promise and pledge of our eternal life and total contemplation.

STEP V DESERT DAY AND SCRIPTURE

All methods of spirituality require silence, fasting scripture and desert. We make Desert Day alone and try to move from a sense of loneliness into a sense of solitude. In desert silence the presence and love of God can ooze into our consciousness. We can use the word of God to help change our negative loneliness into a positive presence of God. Desert Days include silence, fasting and self-discipline. It is the sine qua non of all spirituality. The Word of God came to John and comes to us in the desert.

Scripture reading in the desert or at meetings and at other times inspires us with the Word of God. At meetings, three readings of the Sunday Scripture, exegesis, common meaning, and Sunday homily are the usual practices.

STEP VI THE SIMPLE LIFE

The Simple Life or personal poverty frees us unweighted to soar spiritually. For the secular priest, it means putting more faith and trust in God and Church, free from anxieties of Tomorrow. The Simple Life helps us to detach ourselves from worldly things to God's love. Where attachment ends, God begins.

STEP VII ABANDONMENT TO GOD

Abandonment prepares us to accept God's will and love and readies us to plunge into contemplation of God. Then we shall know as we are known and we shall love; we are loved. Our ability to see and love God is increase with each step of the Ladder.