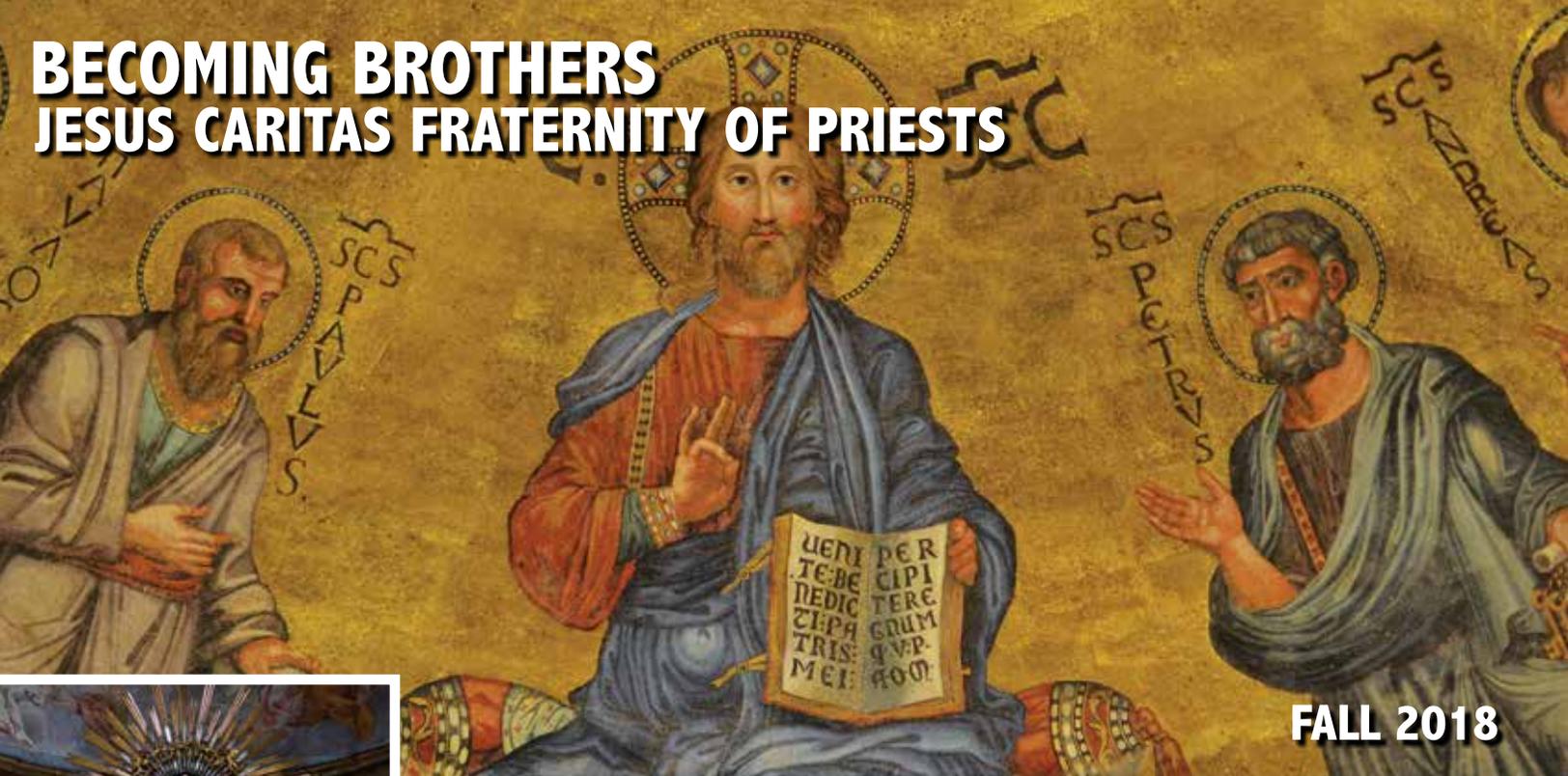


BECOMING BROTHERS JESUS CARITAS FRATERNITY OF PRIESTS



FALL 2018



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From the Responsible

Dear Brothers,

In early July while in Detroit for the Jesus Caritas Vacation Days, I met a “prophetess” who spent much of her days in prayer at the Blessed Solanus Casey Center. She counseled that I should be cautious in the use of my sharp tongue. Given all the recent revelations of the pettiness and failures of our Church leaders, I have to admit that I haven’t done a very good job of following the counsel of the “prophetess”. I’ve spoken out in anger.

In August at the Atlanta Provincial Assembly, a courageous priest pointed out that at a gathering of 120 priests and six bishops, it would be immoral not to talk honestly about the crisis in the Church. Archbishop Gregory responded by vowing to take whatever next steps “are necessary to ensure vigilance and accountability and to foster healing.” He said that there have been enough words; it is time for action.

I was grateful for Archbishop Gregory’s words and for his leadership in

establishing the Dallas Charter. But I spoke of the anger I’ve been nursing towards the Bishops since 2002 because in that Charter they called on everyone to be responsible for protecting children from abuse, but they never held themselves accountable for covering up the abuse. I agree with former Gov. Frank Keating of Oklahoma who was Chairperson of the Board overseeing the Dallas Charter. When Gov. Keating resigned in frustration, he compared some of the Bishops to the Mafia. He said, “To resist grand jury subpoenas, to suppress the names of offending clerics, to deny, to obfuscate, to explain away; that is the model of a criminal organization, not my church.”

I do not regret speaking out at the Provincial Assembly or in my recent homilies about the cancer that is plaguing us, but I could have followed the suggestion of the prophetess and done it a little less sharply. I regret being a bit sanctimonious and self-righteous with

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THE MONTH OF NAZARETH

September 23 — October 18, 2019

Tybee Island, Georgia (Adjacent to Savannah, GA)
Director for the Month is Msgr. Bob Amundsen (Archdiocese of Denver)

Sometime in your life as a priest in Jesus Caritas it is important to set aside an extended time to pray, study, and devote oneself to the charisms of the Fraternity. The Month of Nazareth presents an excellent opportunity to step back, evaluate, and prioritize anew the practices and principles to which we have all made a commitment.

The daily rhythm of fraternity life deepens our appreciation for the:

- Spirituality of Nazareth
- Life and Faith Journey of Brother Charles
- The spirit and structures of Jesus Caritas Priests' Fraternity and other relevant themes.
- The gifts of the Fraternity.

Such an endeavor takes time and freedom from the distractions, preoccupations, and energy draining tasks with which we are bombarded in our everyday ministry.

For some, the Month of Nazareth has been a life-changing event. For others, it has been a month of much-needed rest. For many, it is an immersion in the mystery of their own priesthood and the priesthood of Jesus Christ. For all, it is an opportunity to grow more deeply in the experience and in an understanding of Fraternity and supports our successfully living out the particular charisms of Jesus Caritas.

The Month of Nazareth is a sharing of the fraternal life at every level: prayer, reflection, manual work, leisure,

etc. There is a deepening shared spiritual awareness of the great original values of the Fraternity, with an attempt to confront the conflicting appeals of the Church and the world, the situations in which priests have to live. For three weeks, the participants live by supporting each other not only in prayer and faith sharing, but also in service, e.g., manual labor and food preparation. One day a week is given over to the Day in the Desert. There is also the challenge of living with and valuing the disparate personalities, temperaments, ages and experiences, strengths and weaknesses which such close living affords. Forming a fraternity for these weeks is critical in order to experience the benefits that can be received by living out the Jesus Caritas way of life. The fourth week will be a five-day retreat to be held at Marywood Retreat Center in St. Johns, Florida. The retreat week is open to Caritas priests from throughout the country.

Now is the time to plan for the Month of Nazareth. It may seem very challenging to take an entire month away from our everyday duties. And finding someone to cover while you are away may be difficult. There are Caritas priests around the country who would be willing to help out. And many times, our brother priests are willing to give us support when they know what we are doing. For more information about this or any aspect of the Month, please email Shannon at jesus.caritas.usa@gmail.com. Sign-up early. The Month will be limited to 8 priests.



Day of Prayer

by National Council members, John Jacquel, secretary

At our National Council meeting in Tybee Island, GA, October 9-10, 2018, one of our priorities was to promote a day of prayer which could be offered in our local dioceses as a response to the tough days and heartaches and challenges we've all felt.

We envision this afternoon of prayer for any priest in your diocese, sponsored by a Jesus Caritas fraternity or the Jesus Caritas fraternities of your diocese. We think there's a need to minister to the needs of weary, discouraged priests and as companions of Christ to renew this relationship with each of his ordained. Healing will not happen until we can strengthen our own spirituality.

Here's a schedule we suggest – 1:00 Intro to the Holy Hour 1:05 Exposition 2:00 Prayer of Abandonment, leading into Lectio Divina (suggested: Matthew 11:28-30) ending with Reposition. 3:00 Snack 3:30 Small Groups formed and discussion 4:00 Large Group sharing 4:30 Closing Prayer 5:00 followed by Dinner together.

We want to listen to each other, thus we begin with an hour of adoration and listening to the Lord. In the small groups, we want priests to articulate the problem and what we would suggest is the cure. This will continue into the large group, gleaning insights and inspirations from the others present and gaining a sense of our response as a diocesan presbyterate. Someone could conclude with elements of the Jesus Caritas spirit and spirituality that ought to move us toward a deeper healing. The closing prayer could be like the Litany of Healing (from the Diocese of Erie: www.eriercd.org click on "Litany of Healing"). We need greatly to share a meal and fellowship before returning home and perhaps a brochure on the Fraternity life (see our website: www.jesus Caritas-usa.org) could be distributed to participants. And perhaps the prayer card "Act of Confidence in the Sacred Heart" (www.charlesdefoucauld.info)

ATLANTA RETREAT

Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests is sponsoring a Retreat for Priests from February 4-6, 2019 at Ignatius House Retreat Center in Atlanta, GA. All priests are welcome. The presenter for these few days is Fr. John Jacquel, a priest of the Diocese of Erie and a member of the National Council. John is well known for his involvement in Jesus Caritas.

The Retreat will cost \$40. The Retreat House asks for \$100 a day which includes all meals and snacks, private room with private bath, easily accessible conference room and chapel all on the first floor. So the total cost will be \$240.

We will begin with dinner at 6 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 4th and conclude with lunch Wednesday on Feb. 6th.

For more information and for reservations please call Hap Ragan before January 10th at 706-267-1073 or e-mail Shannon at jesus.caritas.usa@gmail.com before January 30th.

Arrangements can be made for transportation to and from the Atlanta airport.

Letter from Tybee Island, Jesus Caritas Fraternity October 9

Dear Brothers,

Because of distance, our normal way of gathering as a National Fraternity is via tele-conference. We enjoy spending time with each other at the annual National Gatherings of the Fraternity but every couple of years we find it to be of great value to spend a couple of days working together to advance the cause of priestly fraternity.

So, Joe Greeley of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Bob Amundsen of the Archdiocese of Denver, Greg Pawloski of the Diocese of Lincoln, John Jacquel of the Diocese of Erie, and Jerry Ragan of the Diocese of Savannah gathered at the Fraternity at Tybee on the evening of October 8th to prepare for a two-day meeting. We missed the presence of Ron Belisle who was attending a Jesus Caritas Retreat in Viviers, France. Throughout our time together, we enjoyed beautiful sunsets on the back river; the great hospitality of the people of St. Michael Faith Community; and the support of common prayer and adoration. We also experienced the anxiety of potentially being in the path of Hurricane Michael.

Our meeting began with the naming of the many challenges that the Fraternity was facing. The majority of priests who support the Fraternity have been ordained 45 years or more. We are very much an aging group. Given the current cancer that troubles the Church, we believe

we have a remedy to offer. Our spirituality can provide the Church with a holy and healthy presbyterate. How do we share this gift? How do we invite new members into our fraternities? We have not had much success with a younger generation of priests. But we have had some success in reaching out to seminarians. Hap Ragan last year talked to Spiritual Directors from many of our North American seminaries at their meeting in Toronto. Other members of our leadership have given talks at seminaries around the country. We hope these efforts will ultimately bear fruit. We believe if we reach out to Bishops, Vocation Directors, and programs like the Institute for Priestly Formation at Creighton University, we could form partnerships interested in encouraging a solid interior life among diocesan priests.

We realize many of the fraternities that already exist have little understanding of the life of Blessed Charles de Foucauld and the elements of his spirituality that can be so enriching to the diocesan priesthood. Contemplative prayer, simplicity of life, a sense of universal brotherhood are spiritual charisms that can be difficult to live out in daily life without the support of our brothers in the priesthood. The National Fraternity is committed to updating and distributing, especially through social media, resource materials

that will help our brothers better understand the spirituality that is foundational to our fraternal life.

During our time together we started a process that we hope to continue. We took time to call or email those brothers who so generously support our work through donations and dues. There was a certain frustration with not being able to connect as many as we would have liked. But we left messages and were delighted to receive a good number of return calls. Our basic message was one of gratitude to those of you who support our work and the request that you help us promote the Month of Nazareth which will be held on Tybee Island from September 23rd through October 13th. The Month will conclude with a retreat open to all priests, from the evening of October 14th to noon on October 18th of 2019, to be held at Marywood Retreat Center near Jacksonville, FL.

We broke up into two working groups. One was led by John Jacquel and was tasked with creating an outline for a Day of Prayer that fraternities could host for the presbyterate of their Diocese. The Day of Prayer is humbly offered as a response to the tough days and heartaches and challenges we've all felt with the most recent revelations in the Church.

The other working group was led by Bob Amundsen and tasked

Ga., — National Council Fraternity Of Priests 9-10, 2016



with creating a promotional brochure for the Month of Nazareth to be held in September of 2019. The work of both these groups will be featured in the Fall Newsletter, *BECOMING BROTHERS*.

Our greatest challenge is finding a pathway that will lead our brothers to a deeper formation in the spirituality of Blessed Charles de Foucauld. While the Month of Nazareth is the best way to achieve this formation, in recent years for a variety of reasons, we've not had great success in promoting the Month. One of the reasons is that the spiritual formation of recently ordained priests and present seminarians is vastly improved from that which most of us received. Many of them have already made 30-day Ignatian Re-

treats and so perhaps to not see a need for another month-long retreat so early in their priesthood. The gift we have to offer is a "platform", an accountability, a fraternity, in and through which a diocesan priest can live out a healthy spirituality. We must explore creative ways of connecting priests and seminarians to this fraternal spirituality.

So, we reviewed Ron Belisle's wonderfully detailed proposal for a Week of Nazareth. We see this week as a way for seminarians and priests who have already formed fraternities to take some time away as a fraternity to deepen their awareness and commitment to the spiritual charisms that can be life-giving to their priestly life and ministry. It is one

thing to read about these charisms, but much better to experience them within fraternity. Moving forward we will be promoting and facilitating the Week of Nazareth for fraternities that are already established.

Finally, as a National Fraternity we decided to take a leap of faith and do away with dues. In thanksgiving for the blessings we have received, often the members of the National Team have used their own financial resources for the work of the Fraternity. We are grateful that so many of you support this ministry of promot-

ing a solid priestly spirituality. So, in the spirit of good stewardship and realizing that so many of our dues paying members also made generous donations, we have decided to continue sending out *BECOMING BROTHERS* to all on our mailing list; to continue supporting those fraternities in parts of the world with far less resources; to continue providing materials and opportunities to promote the Fraternity, solely on the free will offerings of our brothers.

Praise God, we got some good work done in just a couple of days and certainly enjoyed some great fraternity. Hurricane Michael passed to our west. We continue to pray for all who suffered loss in the wake of this terrible Hurricane.

Pope Francis on **PRIESTLY FRATERNITY**

“A thing I should like to share with you is the beauty of fraternity: of being priests together, of following the Lord not alone, not one by one, but together, and also in the great variety of gifts and personalities. Indeed, this is precisely what enriches the presbyterate, this variety of background, of age, of talents.... And all lived in communion, in fraternity.

“This is neither easy nor immediate, and we cannot take it for granted. First of all because even we priests are immersed in the subjectivistic overlay of today’s culture, this culture which glorifies the ‘I’ to the point of idolizing it. And then due to a certain pastoral individualism which is, unfortunately, widespread in our dioceses. This is why we have to react by choosing fraternity. I am intentionally speaking about ‘choice.’ This cannot just be left to chance, to fortuitous circumstances.... No, it’s a choice, which corresponds to the reality that constitutes us, to the gift that we have received but that must always be heard and cultivated: communion in Christ in the presbytery, around the bishop. This communion demands to be lived by seeking concrete forms adapted to the times and to the reality of the region, but always in an apostolic perspective, with a missionary lifestyle, with fraternity and simplicity of life.”
— Meeting with diocesan priests, June 21, 2014

Helping the newly ordained to find Fraternity

A personal challenge to all who minister in a secular environment is the temptation to feel unwanted, ignored and/or unsupported. Diocesan priests are becoming more akin to missionaries, being sent to largely uncatechized and sometimes unsupportive environments. Being part of a supportive community of faith has been an important part of what helps our priests prosper, especially diocesan priests. It has been an integral part of their very spirituality.

Today there are fewer priests, and they are more isolated from each other, with increasing workloads. Formerly, there were often several priests living in the same rectory. Now one priest may have two or three rectories to himself as he rotates from one parish to the next. The tendency will be to overwork and become isolated. Mixing isolation, overwork and a lack of support is a recipe for personal disaster. Such situations make priests more susceptible to loneliness and separation and sometimes to the temptations all too prevalent in our sexually addicted society. To make matters more difficult, a priest’s celibate commitment is increasingly

viewed with suspicion, and this affords him less external support for his celibate lifestyle. More than ever, the fraternity of priests must be fostered. More than ever, communities of faith must support their priests. A priest is assigned to a parish to love and nourish the faith of the people. But it is also their love and faith that sustains him.

No matter the size of our faith communities, their importance in our society remains. Each becomes an oasis in a spiritually desiccating world. We ought to help our new priests develop the tools and opportunities to build the fraternity of the priesthood. Our new priests must also learn to build and find support from the many committed lay people and religious in these communities of faith.

The lived experience of priesthood is changing dramatically before our eyes. The priesthood for which we are preparing men today is not the priesthood of the past. We as church must form and help the new cohort to thrive in this radically new and challenging reality. Having worked in priestly formation and witnessed their strength, I am confident that these new men, with our support, will be up to the task. — Stephen Rossetti

(Taken from an article under the headline “The First Five Years,” in the January 6-13, 2014 Issue of America Magazine. Used with the permission of the author.)

From the Responsible *continued from front cover*

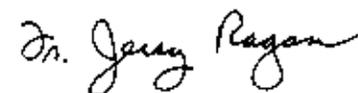
my words. There is a silence and secrecy and blindness that is a huge part of what made these horrible sins possible. It is not only a desire to protect the institution on the part of our church leadership, but it is also a culture of clericalism that I and too many others have been caught up in, which blinds us to our responsibility to protect those who are weak and vulnerable. None of us have done nearly enough to confront the evils in our church. The Church needs reform and all of us must cry out for it. All of us are responsible for rebuild-

ing a more faithful and accountable, healthy and holy church.

I ended my little diatribe at the Provincial Assembly with a pitch to my brother priests to join the Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests. We all need to be accountable for our lives and our ministry. Sharing how God is acting in my life with my brothers in fraternity has been one of the great blessings of my priesthood. Now it is your time to be a blessing to the Church that we love. Now is the time for action. You might do it with a greater gentility and grace than I

but speak out passionately about the need for reform in the church. And gather your brothers to pray. If we have not prayed in sorrow and empathy for the abused and their families; if we have not prayed in hope for needed reforms, we have not done enough. Pray, my brothers, pray.

Fraternally,



Fr. Jerry "Hap" Ragan

National Fraternity

National Responsible

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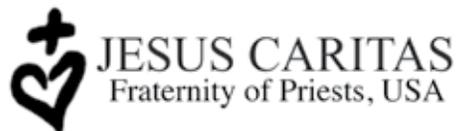
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JESUS CARITAS FRATERNITY OF PRIESTS

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Upcoming Dates

January 15-30, 2019

Jesus Caritas World Assembly, Cebu, the Philippines

February 4-6, 2019

Mini Retreat – Open to all Priests, Atlanta, GA

September 23 – October 13

Month of Nazareth, Tybee Island, GA

October 14-18

Jesus Caritas Retreat, Switzerland, FL

