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THE JESUS CARITAS FRATERNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES: THE EARLY HISTORY 1963 – 1973

by Father Juan Romero

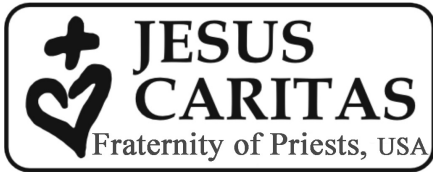
INTRODUCTION

At the national retreat for members of the Jesus Caritas Fraternity of priests, held at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California in July 2010, Father Jerry Devore of Bridgeport, Connecticut asked me, in the name of the National Council, to write an early history of Jesus Caritas in the United States. (For that retreat, almost fifty priests from all over the United States had gathered for a week within the Month of Nazareth, in which a smaller number of priests were participating for the full month.)

This mini-history is to complement *A New Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Msgr. Bryan Karvelis of Brooklyn, New York (RIP), and the *American Experience of Jesus Caritas Fraternities* by Father Dan Danielson of Oakland, California. It proposes to record the beginnings of the Jesus Caritas Fraternities in the USA over its first decade of existence from 1963 to 1973, and it will mark the fifth anniversary of the beatification of the one who inspired them, Little Brother Blessed Charles de Foucauld. It purports to be an “acts of the apostles” of some of the Jesus Caritas Fraternity prophets and apostles in the USA, a collective living memory of this little-known dynamic dimension of the Church in the United States. It is not an evaluation of the Fraternity, much less a road map for its future growth and development. Its immediate purpose is to be a simple report of some of the main facets of the early history of Jesus Caritas in the USA, an “Observe,” if you will, of our beginnings and common roots in this country. Any consequent “Judge” or “Act” is presently outside the purview of this paper, and will be left for future analysis and commentary. It may be used as an organizing tool for potential growth of the Fraternity, and may it be of interest to the presbyterate of the universal church and the People of God. This monograph is dedicated to the glory of God and the service of His people. I dedicate it to the memory of Msgr. Bryan Karvelis of Brooklyn, pioneer promoter of fraternity among priests in the United States of America.

Unlikely Patron: Charles de Foucauld

Charles de Foucauld, an ascetic and monk who became known as Little Brother of Jesus, is an unlikely patron saint for diocesan priests. However, as the one who inspired the International Fraternity of Jesus Caritas,



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he is precisely that. Charles Eugene de Foucauld, at the relatively young age of 58, was assassinated in Tamanrasset, Algeria at the beginning of December 1916. Pope Benedict XVI beatified him on November 13, 2005. Since his beatification, the feast day of Blessed Charles of Jesus is celebrated on December 1, the anniversary of his death. Having been murdered, he is considered a martyr. Although the only group he ever directly founded was a lay fraternity of the Little Brothers of Jesus, Blessed Charles has inspired a multitude of other groups. He is also counted a co-founder of the Little Sisters of Jesus.

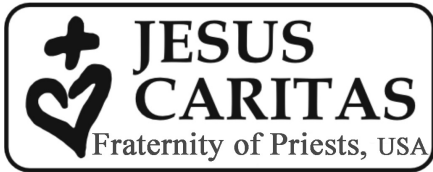
The influence of Brother Charles of Jesus was first felt during the late Nineteenth Century in Africa where he labored as a quasi hermit, and then in the early Twentieth Century at his homeland, France. In the early 1960's, Peter Heinermann brought the story of Brother Charles and the Jesus Caritas Fraternities to places outside of Europe. Canadian priest Jacques LeClerc was the coordinator of the Jesus Caritas Fraternities in Canada, their national "responsible." He brought the fraternities of Brother Charles to the American continent by way of Montreal. With its strong French connection, Montreal was fertile soil for the development of Jesus Caritas Fraternities; others were already established in many places throughout the world. However, they had not yet entered into the United States. By 1963, the beginnings of the Jesus Caritas Fraternities in the United States coincided with the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF *JESUS CARITAS* IN THE UNITED STATES, 1963 TO 1973

Branches of Jesus Caritas Fraternities began to bud in New York and California, and various other places throughout the United States. Msgr. Bryan Karvelis of the Brooklyn Diocese in New York, and Father Dan Danielson of the Oakland Diocese in California were the Peter and Paul of the Jesus Caritas Fraternities in the United States.

Msgr. Bryan Karvelis

Ordained in the late 1950s, Msgr. Bryan Karvelis died in October 2005, after half a century of priestly ministry and just a couple of months before the beatification of Brother Charles of Jesus. Bryan had grown up in St. Boniface Parish in Brooklyn, and served for almost fifty years as pastor of Transfiguration Parish in the same town. Former New York socialite Dorothy Day, turned apostle-to-the-poor, greatly influenced him. He settled homeless people – mostly immigrants from Latin America – in the rectory, the basement of the convent, and in a shelter across the street from the church. He also turned the former convent into a refuge for AIDS patients.



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Charles de Foucauld, like Dorothy Day, was also a powerful influence on the life Msgr. Karvelis who is remembered as an “urban contemplative.” (*National Catholic Reporter*, March 10, 2000) In 1966, Msgr. Karvelis began “mini churches” at Transfiguration Parish in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, as a way for parishioners to develop a deeper relationship with Jesus and his message. “Each ‘fraternity’ consisted of fifteen to twenty members who meet in the church basement for study prayer and reflection,” the *National Catholic Reporter* wrote in the early spring of Jubilee Year 2000. Within his parish, he organized Jesus Caritas-type fraternities akin to the *comunidades de base* of Latin America. They became the organizational basis for the whole parish – a community of small communities – and his parish council practically functioned as a Jesus Caritas Fraternity. Karvelis lit a holy fire in Brooklyn, and it inspired a group of highly enthusiastic social-action type priests with a new zeal. The priests of his parish and others of surrounding parishes came to recognize that they needed more prayerful reflection in order to balance their priestly lives. They were going about doing good, and busy about many things, but perhaps not giving sufficient attention to the one thing necessary.

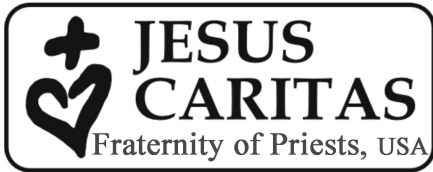
Msgr. Bryan Karvelis wrote about the Eastern USA experiences of Fraternity in *A New Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, a homage to the Broadway play of that title. His option to serve the poor cost him dearly in his later years, as he suffered from hostile non-Catholic elements that literally beat him various times. In spite of illness that included a kidney transplant, Father Karvelis continued to be enthusiastic about having founded Jesus Caritas Fraternities.

Father Dan Danielson

Father Dan Danielson spread the word of the Jesus Caritas Fraternities along the West coast and in other parts of the country. He had been ordained from St. Patrick’s seminary for the Diocese of Oakland in 1963. In 2005, on the feast of the Assumption, a few months before the beatification of Blessed Charles, he wrote his reflections upon on the history of Jesus Caritas in the USA and on his own association with the Fraternities. These are some of the highlights:

Sometime around 1962, while in theology at St. Patrick’s seminary in Menlo Park, a suburb of San Francisco, Danielson came upon a publication called *Apostolic Perspectives*, a small magazine published by Holy Cross Father Louis J. Putz, on the Ave Maria Press.

The article that intrigued Danielson talked about a movement among diocesan clergy for fraternity and spiritual growth although it did not mention either Charles de Foucauld or Jesus Caritas. It seemed that this



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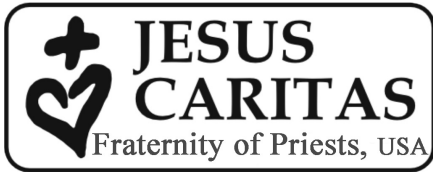
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movement was advancing toward the status of a secular institute, a canonical status recognized by the Church only since 1947. He proceeded to send for further information at a given address in Brooklyn. In due time, a certain Father Bryan Karvelis sent Danielson a copy of the article he requested, but –surprisingly – no bill was enclosed. Danielson sent away for more copies of the article on Jesus Caritas Fraternities to distribute them among fellow seminarians. However, the rector called the seminarian aside to reprimand him for distributing the article, and instructed him to cease proselytizing. After that, Danielson distributed copies sporadically, but only upon the explicit request of a seminarian.

Another seminary professor, quite different from the rector, Sulpician priest Father Frank Norris, attended a meeting in Montreal, and brought back some information on Jesus Caritas Fraternities. After ordination in 1963, Danielson began a Jesus Caritas Fraternity within his Diocese of Oakland. Members of his group soon attempted to start up other groups, but then realized that was a mistake. They returned to their original group that became Dan’s core priest-support group, and it remained so for the next forty-plus years until the present.

The custom of post-Christmas Retreats began in 1964, and these gatherings nourished his group as well as other groups. The same kind of retreats soon spread to Southern California for new Jesus Caritas groups that were also springing up there. Besides these shorter retreats, the Month of Nazareth was introduced to the United States by Father Jacques LeClerc at Holy Cross Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut. Father LeClerc was national “responsible,” i.e. coordinator, of the Jesus Caritas fraternities in Canada. Among the Month of Nazareth attendees in Connecticut were Fathers Dan Danielson of Oakland and Father Bryan Karvelis of Brooklyn. This was the first time these two met face-to-face.

That Month of Nazareth became an encounter among several future prophets, apostles and evangelists of Jesus Caritas Fraternities. Also present there were Fathers Ed Farrell of Detroit, author of books on priestly spirituality, Winus Roeten of New Orleans, and Fred Voorhees of the Diocese of Buffalo. Each was a pioneer in the spread of Fraternities within his own area throughout the United States. These “four evangelists” saw the need for some structure within the U.S., independent of Canada. As a result, they selected Dan Danielson as the first National Responsible for the still-fledgling Jesus Caritas national priests’ association in the United States. The Fraternities grew, but in an American style.



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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

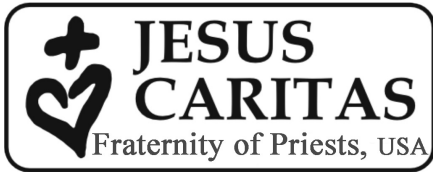
The years when Jesus Caritas Fraternities of priests were growing in the United States were tumultuous. The spirit of the sixties went from hope at the beginning to dissent, conflict and turmoil at the end. The March on Washington in August 1963 ushered in hope to the country and the world that maybe we could overcome divisions of race, and the opening of the Second Vatican Council in October gave great hope that God's Spirit would breathe new life into the Church. Many of those hopes and dreams were dashed during the tumult that followed, especially toward the end of decade. The assassinations of Rev. Martin Luther King and of Robert Kennedy in 1968, the stormy convention of the Democratic Party in Chicago that summer, Woodstock and what it symbolized, and widespread disorders in cities were signs of the times in civil society. In the Church, discord followed the publication of Paul VI's encyclical on the regulation of births.

Meanwhile, the Church as a whole was becoming more socially conscious. Many Catholic clergy, women religious and lay people followed the non-violent leadership of Rev. Martin Luther King. Cesar Chavez, the unapologetically Catholic charismatic leader and founder of the United Farm Workers Union, challenged Catholic priests and bishops to support with more than words the right of farm workers to organize their own union. In the spring of 1969, Mexican American clergy, led by Chicano priests in Texas, organized themselves into a national organization of PADRES, an acronym that translates into Priests Associated for Religious, Educational and Social Rights. The PADRES were claiming that a significant "sign of the times" for the Church in the United States was that over 25% of Catholics in the United States were Spanish speaking.

IMPACT AND RESPONSE

Turmoil and conflict in the United States and throughout the world certainly had its impact upon Catholic clergy. Their worlds had been rocked. As a result, many were deciding to leave active ministry, and some married. Father Danielson was concerned about the growing fallout among American clergy, and was convinced that Jesus Caritas Fraternities could help the priests hold on to their priesthood through emotional and psychological support of one another within the fraternities. He thought elements of "sensitivity sessions," after the fashion popular on the West Coast, might be a helpful adaptation to the fraternities while keeping the general structure and emphasis of international Jesus Caritas: the Gospel, Eucharist, and the Review of Life.

Msgr. Karvelis, on the other hand, was convinced that the way for priests to hold on to priesthood was to cling to Jesus Christ Himself in the manner exemplified by Charles de Foucauld. Karvelis emphasized the



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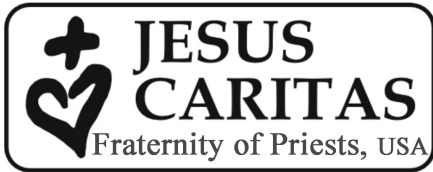
central importance of love for Jesus and fidelity to the Gospel mandate of serving the poor. This was the great example Jesus gave to diocesan priests and to all, and it was well exemplified by Brother Charles.

In 1970, after the Month of Nazareth at Connecticut, Father Danielson attended a Jesus Caritas International Assembly in Valmont, France—near Lourdes. He went with one question in mind: Were we in the U.S. “schismatics” among the Jesus Caritas Fraternities of the world? He asked himself the question because most priests in many of the Jesus Caritas groups with which he was familiar were negligent about paying dues, and lacked explicit long-term commitment (a “covenant”) to the ideals of the international fraternity. He found that the representatives of the international Jesus Caritas not only welcomed their brother priests of the United States as members, but they fully embraced them as fellow diocesan priests who were also serious about living the Gospel. The international brothers saw their American counterparts also committed to spiritual growth, especially in their love for Jesus, regular prayer, and devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. At that meeting in France, Peter Hienermann was elected as International Responsible.

Father Danielson realized that one of the first things that he needed to do – now that the right hand of fellowship had been extended to the American brothers – was to develop a presentation about the Jesus-Caritas Fraternities for the priests of the United States. It had to be, he determined, “realistic, and true to the experience of the existing groups in the United States.” About twenty priests of the USA Fraternity produced a twenty-paged mimeograph publication called *The Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests, the American Experience*. Eventually, it was printed in booklet form, has been revised extensively twice and is still the main booklet used to communicate the Fraternity to priests in the United States. During the ‘70s, Danielson promoted two Months of Nazareth at the Franciscan Seminary in Santa Barbara.

The basics of Jesus Caritas fraternities were catching on throughout the country: daily holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament, meditation on the scriptures with a predilection for the Gospels, simplicity of life, loving solidarity with the impoverished, commitment to one’s own fraternity, and monthly (or at least occasional) Day in the Desert in preparation for Review of Life within the monthly meeting of the Fraternity.

An insight into the review of life was contributed by Father Tony Leuer, a member of the Fraternity in Los Angeles, who had long been familiar with the observe-judge-act method of the Jocist movements. With its emphasis on concrete facts from the members’ lives, it is somewhat akin to the methodology used in Liberation Theology and in broad-based Community Organizing that some Jesus Caritas priests like Father Dan Finn of Boston have used as a pastoral tool. Such an approach is firmly based on the virtue of Prudence as expounded



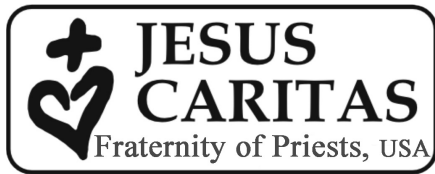
by St. Thomas in *Quaestio* 42 of his *Summa Theologica*. Prudence is directed to action for a good result, and is based on reflection. The virtue, rightly understood, echoes the well-known formula OBSERVE-JUDGE-ACT. Evaluation follows, and deepest learning takes place within the evaluation phase, the review of life. Canon Joseph Cadijn had used that method to develop the Young Christian Workers in Europe. All of this is part of the virtue of Prudence, and the theological basis for the Review of Life.

BRANCHES SPREAD

Within a relatively brief time, Jesus Caritas Fraternities spread through the eastern corridor, to the Midwest, and into the south. Msgr. Bryan Karvalis passed the baton, a branch of the new Jesus Caritas tree, to Father Fred Voorhees of the Diocese of Buffalo. Father Fred transplanted onto the good ground of New York and then Detroit where it bore savory fruit for the East Coast and Midwest. The powerful charism of Blessed Charles of Jesus independently touched Father Winus Roeten of New Orleans who planted the seed of Jesus Caritas in his diocese. Father Roeten, in turn, influenced Father Doug Brougher, also of New Orleans, and they facilitated the development of other Fraternities throughout Louisiana.

Only a few years after his ordination toward the end of the sixties, Father Howard Calkins of New York, experienced the turmoil of the times through very unpleasant changes in assignment. That experience – a “happy fault” – provided the catalyst for beginning a new fraternity. By 1970, Father Calkins, together with three or four others, made an “*engagement*” (pronounced the French way) or commitment to live the charism of Brother Charles through a Jesus Caritas Fraternity. He followed this up with a “consecration” at TABOR, New York in 1971. This commitment-*engagement*-was somewhat analogous to a religious profession, but that is not the custom today in Jesus Caritas Fraternities.

California was an important focal point for the propagation of Jesus Caritas on the West coast and in the entire nation. The seminary at Menlo Park, for the Diocese of San Francisco as well other dioceses, was a true “seminary” for seedlings of new fraternities. Father Jim Flynn of the San Francisco Archdiocese tended the garden of new vines there, and influenced Bay area priests to become members of Jesus Caritas Fraternities. They included Fathers Harmon Skilin, John Armisted of Stockton, and Tony McGuire of San Francisco. Father Flynn used to send many young priests, such as Jack McCarthy, for higher studies at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He strongly influenced them, and they in turn became multipliers of Jesus Caritas Fraternities.



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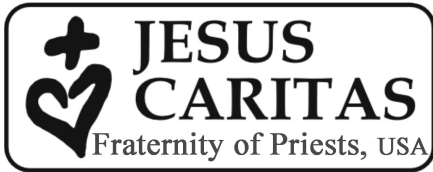
In Southern California during the mid sixties, through the inspiration of Msgr. John Coffield and others, Father Frank Colborn began a support group of “Young Christian Priests” based on the Jocist Movement. The YCP quickly morphed into a Jesus Caritas Fraternity, one of the earliest and longest lasting in the Los Angeles Archdiocese. Among other early pioneers of Jesus Caritas in Southern California were Father Peter Nugent and future Bishop Joseph Sartoris. Msgr. Wilbur Davis, originally of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, who had been a member of Jesus Caritas, is credited with building the House of Prayer for Priests in the Diocese of Orange, a favorite meeting place of Fraternities.

Father Dan Danielson was the original inspiration to Father Larry Clark of St. Cecilia’s parish in Los Angeles, and he became one of the earliest members of the Jesus Caritas Fraternity in Southern California. In the years 1968-69, Father Clark hosted various groups of priests, and later lessened his connection with Danielson. Tony Leuer and Peter Beaman picked up the Danielson connection, and spread it to others by promoting other Fraternities within the Archdiocese.

In 1972, Father Juan Romero--having been in Frank Colborn’s Fraternity for about six years-- was released from the Los Angeles Archdiocese to work with PADRES, the national organization of priests working with the Spanish speaking. Making inroads into the greater Southwest, Romero began a Jesus Caritas group in San Antonio where the headquarters of PADRES was located. Father David Garcia, a former national board member of the Fraternity, credits Romero with being godfather of Jesus Caritas in the San Antonio Archdiocese. From there, Fraternities spread to others parts of Texas.

The Fraternities specifically targeted diocesan priests since religious order priests already had “fraternity” built within their structure as religious. Nevertheless, several religious order priests joined Jesus Caritas fraternities in partnership with their diocesan brothers. The sense of priestly fraternity grew during the decade of the ‘70s as Jesus Caritas Fraternities continued to spread on both coasts as well as throughout the United States. In principle, the spiritual focus of Jesus Caritas remained the priority, but sometimes emotional and psychological support of a priest trumped the specifically spiritual dimension of his fraternity. During the 1970’s, Father Dan Danielson had a national bully pulpit as an officer in the National Federation of Priests Councils, and as a popular retreat master for priests. He used it effectively to make presentations about the Jesus Caritas Fraternity as a source of supportive community life in diocesan priesthood.

“There is no question in my mind,” Father Dan Danielson testifies, “that the Jesus-Caritas Fraternity has been the single more important structural part of my priesthood in terms of what it means to be a priest.”



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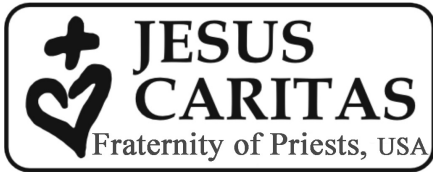
Most of the critical decisions in my priestly ministry of forty-two years, would not have been well made without the support and discernment provided by my Fraternity. I find myself continually challenged by the life and charism of Brother Charles, a challenge that is filled with encouragement most of the time, with only occasional feelings of “I’ll never get it.”

The focus of this presentation has been Jesus Caritas Fraternities for Catholic clergy in the United States from 1963 to 1973. With the selection of Father Thomas McCormick as successor of Father Dan Danielson as new National Responsible in 1974, the first decade of Jesus Caritas Fraternities in the United States ended. McCormick, originally of the Midwest and later of Denver, served in that position until 1979. As a young priest studying at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. during the mid-sixties, Father McCormick encountered the Little Sisters of Jesus. He noticed that one of their menial jobs was to clean toilets at the University. Father Tom was curious about this humble and self-effacing group that was so faithful to their spirituality inspired by Brother Charles de Foucauld. They lived it out, communicated it, and developed themselves in it. These Little Sisters of Jesus were becoming catholic in their vision and mission. They were dedicating themselves totally to humbly living the Gospel as practiced by Charles de Foucauld. From very early on, the Little Sisters of Jesus served as a kind of powerful underground, promoting the spirit of Charles in a very simple, yet immeasurable manner.

Several National Responsibles representing every corner of the nation have well served the Fraternity of Jesus Caritas over the years. A number of members of Jesus Caritas have become bishops in the American hierarchy, and more than a few fraternities of bishops exist in the nation.

NEW PHASE

In the Jubilee Year 2000, The “Rocky Mountain Roundup” inaugurated the Third Christian Millennium for Jesus Caritas priest fraternities in the United States. At the International Assembly held in Cairo in 2001, an American priest gave a report on the state of the Jesus Caritas Priest Fraternities in the United States. The American character of individualism tends to be eclectic, and it resists what some priests may perceive as an imposition of outside rules. “Some fraternities are vibrant, some just social, and some suffer from *rigor mortis*,” Father Greg candidly reported. The Review of Life is “a central practice in the life of the fraternity... a means of accountability... a kind of litmus test for living the fraternity and priesthood in our lives,” he continued. Hospitality, love of Scripture, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, simplicity of life and a love for the poor are some of the charisms that marked the life of Brother Charles, and that are attractive to many American diocesan priests. However, other practices that Charles inspired or advocated, such as a monthly Day in the



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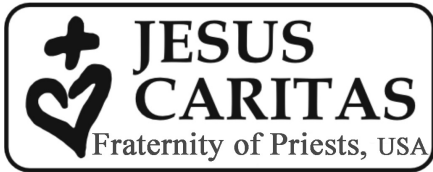
Desert and giving an account of the use of one's economic resources (a form of evangelical poverty) are observed "with more difficulty" or in the breach.

He reported that there were about four hundred Fraternities in the United States, totaling over fourteen hundred members. The structure consisted of a National Responsible that is considered "Regional" within the organization of the International Jesus Caritas. The Responsible has six district Council Members to be co-responsibles with him, each representing various regions of the expansive country. Father Greg further reported that some bishops encouraged their priests to join Jesus Caritas Fraternities, and that Fraternities were being introduced into seminaries. Although there was constant growth of Jesus Caritas priest Fraternities during the nineties, their number did not double in that decade prior to the closing of the millennium.

The life and death of Charles de Foucauld has had great impact throughout the world during the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. His impact upon clergy throughout the world has been immense, and his influence has reached the lay faithful as well. The International Assembly of the Secular Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld from twenty-four countries was held at Araruama, Brazil in 2000, and took as its theme "To Live Nazareth." Participants were called to live simply and encouraged to "pursue solidarity with all those excluded, individually and collectively, in order to counter all the negative effects of globalization. Speakers encouraged listeners to adopt definite positions on issues in order to join with those groups—such as Amnesty International and other Justice and Peace networks--that advocate for human dignity.

At a time that many Westerners see every Arab as a militant Islamic fundamentalist, the life of Brother Charles of Jesus is a counter-cultural witness to a secular society polarized by multicultural and inter-religious conflicts. His words—echoing Jesus—exhort us to "Be patient...loving as God...reject harshness, condescension, the militant spirit that sees those who differ as enemies...[and to] see in every human being a beloved brother/sister, friend."

Little Brother, Blessed Charles of Jesus, pray for us!



APPENDIX

Lay Fraternities

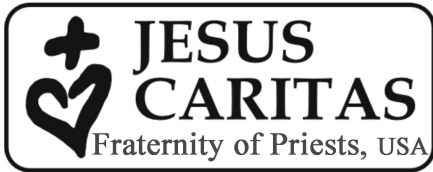
The charism of Blessed Charles de Foucauld has deeply touched many lay people throughout the world including the United States. The disciples of Brother Charles of Jesus have an impact outside of the household of our Catholic faith. A Methodist Pastor in 1979 spoke of his great admiration for Little Sister Francesca who worked as a model of discipleship and love in Roxbury, one of the poorest sections of Boston.

The charism of Little Brother of Jesus Charles de Foucauld has touched secular institutes as well as lay fraternities. Lennie Tigh of Boston is in contact with about 200 persons associated with lay fraternities of Jesus Caritas in Transfiguration, NY. Yvonne Keith is also a promoter of lay fraternities among women in Colorado and beyond.

In Cleveland during the mid 1970s, Joe Conrad and others formed Lay Groups, six to eight to a group. Three “concentric” groups, with as many as forty members each, quickly developed. However, the number settled down to sixteen committed members comprising two Review-of-Life groups that live in a Core Community house whose focal point is Eucharist. Their Thursday evening Mass is open to other people, and over a period of decades, this has led to the formation of other Jesus Caritas communities bonded by monthly adoration and Review of Life, as well as by an Annual Retreat together.

Laypersons attracted to the way of life of Brother Charles de Foucauld were simply invited to gatherings for three consecutive months. They were expected to participate in the Gospel Sharing and Review of Life, and eventually invited to make a commitment. Within a year and a half to two years, they were furthermore invited to formally commit to the group for a year. The commitment is to live a simple life of prayer in the spirit of Brother Charles. The “Act of Commitment,” analogous to a public vow before God and the community, is renewed annually for ten years, and then for life.

A few years ago, the Cleveland Fraternities held a “Community Day” to examine their history with an intention to deepen connection with Brother Charles. Organizers of the Day made available books and writings about Brother Charles that have inspired many to live more closely in accord to his example. Among these are materials by Father Voillaume and Little Sister Magdeline.



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International Lay Groups

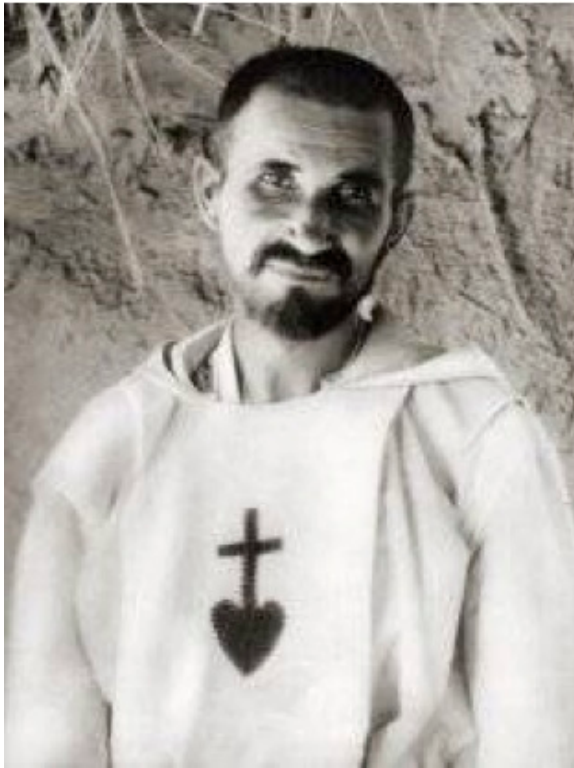
In 1991, the original Jesus Caritas Fraternity split into two groups. One became a secular institute recognized by Rome. The larger group took the name of Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld and drew up statutes to be recognized as an Association of the Faithful. Rome granted this recognition on December 1, 1998, the seventy-second anniversary of Brother Charles' death. In mid August of the new millennium, laywomen of Jesus Caritas Groups held their own International General Assembly at Essen, Germany. Thirty-three of them represented twenty-one countries. For the first time, three members of Groups from Rwanda represented their forty-one members. Main themes discussed were Identity as single laywomen following the spirit of Charles de Foucauld, Co-responsibility and Celibacy.

They took care of business in six main language groups connected to an International Team that has a non-hierarchical structure. The leadership consists of a General Responsible (Italian), a Deputy (another Italian), Secretary (German), and Treasurer (French). Completing the leadership team is a Representative and Deputy Representative for Latin America, and a Representative from Africa. The plan for Assembly 2004 was to choose a representative from Africa as Responsible for the continent. Each member of a Fraternity is connected to a base community whose members pledge to live important values and practices: unity within the Fraternity and beyond it, listening and mutual respect; daily Eucharist and Morning Prayer.

Besides his macro impact upon the world, Charles de Foucauld continues to have micro impact on the very local level in the many places where a Fraternity inspired by him is located. French speaking African priests from Cameroon belong to a Fraternity. In Umtata, South Africa, a pair of Jesus Caritas sisters – neither by blood nor by religious vocation, but by common commitment – live together. Both work in ministry for two years in the States, and then return to South Africa in order to help without salary in clinics and hospital. They are of European origin, and belong to a Group (not called a fraternity) that numbers seven members. Each has taken a vow of celibacy and they “accompany African peoples in their struggles and hopes.” “There are no miracles in Umtata...We simply walked with the people...accompanying in their struggles and dreams.”

Prior Marc of the Little Brothers of Jesus, in preparation for their Chapter in 2002, noted that “brother and fraternity...define our mission, the task that we have received from the Lord...” Pam made his message inclusive by adding, “Jesus was son of man and of his mother, the Virgin, Mary of Nazareth.” Jesus was not only the son of Mary, but also the son of the women and men that He met who do the will of the Father. “Here

are my mother and my brothers; whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven is my brother, my sister, my mother.” (Mt 28: 8-ff)



PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

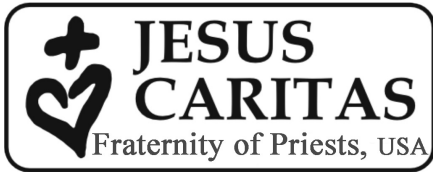
Father, I abandon myself into your hands.
Do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you.
I am ready for all; I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me and in all your
creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands, I commend my soul.
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your
hands, without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Father Juan Romero is a priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, ordained in 1964. He is retired from administration, and currently resides in the Palm Springs area where he works as a supply-priest. Born in Taos, NM, he is the youngest of three boys.

Father Juan served in the four counties of the far-flung Archdiocese of Los Angeles, from Santa Barbara to Orange County before the latter became an independent diocese. Having grown up in northeast Los Angeles, he had three different assignments in the East Los Angeles area. In 1972, he began to specialize in Hispanic Ministry upon becoming the executive director of PADRES, the national association of Mexican American priests that had its headquarters in San Antonio, Texas.



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During his four-year stint with PADRES, he earned a Masters degree in Bilingual-Bicultural Education, and authored two works: *Faith Expressions of Hispanics in the Southwest* and *Reluctant Dawn, A History of Padre Antonio José Martínez, Cura de Taos (1793-1867)*, both were published by the Mexican American Cultural Center. Romero is an active member of CEHILA dedicated to the study of the history of the Church in Latin America and by extension to Spanish-speaking USA. Father Romero has done extensive historical research on Padre Martínez, and maintains a website <thetaosconnection.com>. He was the principal agent responsible for the life-sized bronze memorial of the Padre that was unveiled at the Taos Plaza in 2006. He is currently collaborating on two projects related to Padre Martínez: a film documentary by Espinosa Productions and a scholarly biography to be published by UNM Press.

During 1984-85, Romero worked from Washington, D.C. as national coordinator of the *Tercer Encuentro Nacional* that the United States Catholic Conference sponsored to develop a pastoral plan for Spanish speaking throughout the Country. He has belonged to the same Jesus Caritas Fraternity for over forty-two years, and while in Texas, began a fraternity there.

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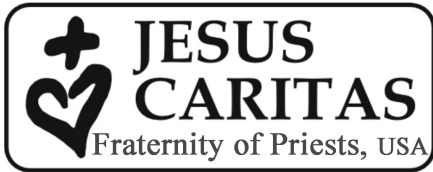
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Multilingual Website hosed by French lay members: www.charlesdefoucauld

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jesuscaritas/layfraternities

wikipedia.org/Charles_de_Foucauld

An Introduction to Jesus Caritas Fraternities for the Laity

A free booklet is available by sending name and address to the following:

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