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Living the Gospel
Fraternity Meetings

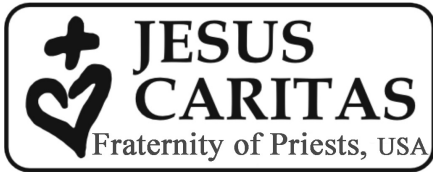
Day in the Desert
Review of Life



Living Simply
Month of Nazareth
Adoration of the
Blessed Sacrament

The commitment is to be brothers for each other in a way that our responsibility to each other will lead us individually and as a group, to grow in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, recognizing Him at the heart of our life and ministry. The purpose of the group, therefore, moves beyond only recreation, socializing, or theological and ministerial discussions to that deep level where the members seek that union with Jesus and His Father's Will in their personal lives. Each person comes to his brothers where he happens to be in his life. The members see themselves committed to Jesus and to one another and not primarily to a set structure that they need to follow. Each fraternity develops according to the needs, hopes and personalities of its members. Growth within the fraternity will look like any human growth with its plateaus and crisis points. Any fraternity will need to be very realistic about and watchful for the dynamics of the group. Two important rules should be kept in mind. The group should give itself an initial period of time commitment, six months to a year, to offer themselves trustingly and faithfully to each other. This is vital for creating the climate needed to lessen our normal tendencies to be guarded or defensive. Secondly, it is not advisable for a fraternity to shift its members constantly, adding or subtracting, because growth in trust can easily be jeopardized. A small steady group can safeguard the intimacy needed for candor, care and confidence. Because time is needed for this gradual growth, joining a fraternity usually cannot provide the help needed by a priest who is at a point of serious crisis, whether he is trying to decide about remaining in active ministry or is under great emotional or psychological stress. While recognizing that each of us has his particular difficulties over which he struggles, a priest should usually consider joining a fraternity when he is committed to priesthood and desires to grow in that ministry.

Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests -- An Overview of Spirituality and Method, (Fifth Edition, April 1987), sometimes called the 'American Experience'



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Fraternity Meetings

We discover the heart of the Fraternity, its spirituality, lived out when a fraternity gathers together. What is shared in common on this day allows the brothers to reflect upon and to celebrate the workings of God in their lives of discipleship and service. Each brother is expected to be present and responsible to the brothers on this day. Practically, this meeting would occur at least once-a-month. Less frequency leads to too little reflection on the part of individuals and the group. More frequency is usually pastorally impractical. In most cases at least two periods of the day would be set aside: a morning-afternoon, afternoon-evening, or evening~overnight-morning. Many groups have found the overnight to offer the best opportunity for prayer, sharing and time together. Some groups choose to begin with time of solitude, others with social or a shared meal.

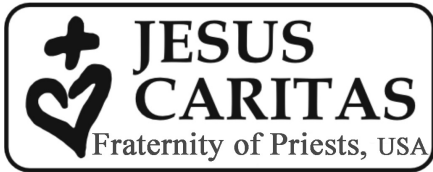
What is most important is that the group shares a common understanding of how essential their presence is to each other. Groups will usually reserve these days for months in advance, giving them the highest priority. Each brother is responsible to come to this gathering having prepared himself in his desert day for this review of life. (Both of these will be explained separately.) This preparation will communicate to the brothers the seriousness with which this quality graced time is taken. The brothers focus their attention on Jesus present among them and for them, who desires to strengthen and encourage them through each other in their love of Him and their service of His Gospel. The fraternity seeks to encounter their brother Jesus in silence. in the Word, in the Eucharistic mystery, and in the life and ministry of one another. The structure of the day is intended to foster the climate within which this can happen.

The ordinary elements of a fraternity day include: —praying with and sharing the Word. —adoration of Jesus in the Eucharistic Mystery, —review of life, —time for friendly, relaxed fellowship.

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Living the Gospel

We approach God's Word as a Word of Love and life, spoken to each of us personally. How the scriptures will be incorporated will vary with each group. Some groups begin by proclaiming a selected passage to one another. Then after going off in silence. Return to share the fruit of that Word in prayerful reflection. This sharing is not intended to be an exegesis of the passage nor a sharing of ideas for a homily, but how the Word interprets our lives, speaks intimately to us as disciples of the Lord. Some will let one scripture passage be the centerpiece of their review of life. In whichever way we might have the Word speak to us,



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we can hear Brother Charles exhorting us, "Let us return to the Gospel; if we are not living the Gospel. Jesus is not living in us."

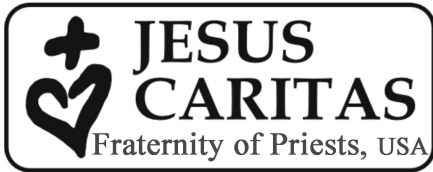
Praying the Scripture

Scripture plays a very important role in Fraternity. Again, the goal is to know Jesus alive in our midst and to appropriate His mind and heart. Brother Charles approached the Word of God with simplicity and expectation. Before praying over the Word, Charles would ask, "What do you want to say to me, O God?" In the silence he would listen. Often writing the message that would come to him He would then respond. For my part, this is what I want to tell you.' This was followed by silent adoration. "Saying nothing else, gazing on the Beloved." That word would guide his day. The individual members of Fraternity ~3row toward the time when they spend about fifteen minutes a day in meditative reading of the scriptures, either the readings of the day or the Sunday. This contact with Jesus in the Gospel naturally leads to contemplation and adoration and in fact is often included in the 'hour' by many brothers. There is a natural preference for the Gospels in Jesus-Caritas. But the rest of the scriptures are not to be neglected because of that. While this praying with scriptures becomes a part of each person's personal prayer life, a sharing of the Gospel is always a part of each day of review. We hear the Word of God addressed to us. Especially when discussed together. This Word challenges us if we allow it to speak to us, if we do not just pick those passages to which we always relate well and skip over the less desired or familiar. This meditative reading is not an exercise in intellectual understanding alone, nor a matter of exegesis primarily ~though at times this may be necessary). But it is standing under the Word of God addressed to us and being ourselves analyzed and interpreted by it. In discussing the Gospel together the effort is not to arrive at a definitive exegesis of the text nor to discover good ideas for next week's homily. But to ask what Christ is saying to us personally, not just intellectually. The danger is that otherwise we will fall into the clerical habit of treating the scriptures as our possession instead of being possessed by them. All this stems from a desire to take the Gospel seriously. Especially its message of love, simplicity and poverty. The Fraternity is a great help in this effort to live the Gospel day to day. It is a great encouragement to be together with brothers who are striving in faith to understand and live the Gospel more perfectly. Even when we fail (and for the most of us, that is often) the Fraternity helps us to see that failure too is part of the Gospel message provided we have faith in the God who saves us. Again, Only gradually does a fraternity grow in appreciation of the place of scriptures in its life and in the lives of its individual members.

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In Real Life

Dave Mayovsky of Federal Way, WA explains that in his fraternity the group begins the meeting with Morning Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, but substitutes the "forgotten reading", i.e. the epistle from the following Sunday, for the reading. They read it in collatio form, the first time for meaning in which the members explain what they understand it to mean (but strenuously avoiding any homily



preparation approach,) then a second reading for the personal impact that it provokes, and the final reading it is turned into shared prayer. Do you have an observation, comment, or bon mot to share with the brothers?

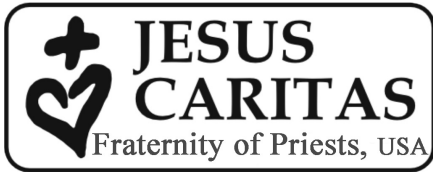
Day in the Desert

Perhaps one of the directions-of-growth in Jesus-Caritas hardest to appreciate is the concept of the desert. The term comes from the spirituality of Brother Charles and is a classic theme within the history of Christian spirituality. Perhaps, for the American priest the day could be called the "day of solitude" or the "day of simplicity". Specifically, the fraternity member is expected to spend one full day (of at least six hours) each month, completely apart by himself, alone with the Lord, ideally without materials to read or other spiritual props. It is a great help if one can get away the night before and spend the next day in solitude.

It takes time for members to realize the purpose and to feel the need for this day. Many members in the U.S. have not yet really tried the Desert Day. Those who are faithful to it, even in its difficulty will discover its immense benefit for their Christian and priestly lives. Most experience their own radical poverty and total dependence on the Lord and His love. The prayer of the day is simply setting aside the time for the Lord and giving Him a chance to yet through to us. In devoting our time solely to Him, we cease all those human activities which can often cover or veil our radical need for God. We come to experience our creature hood. Our fragility and our deepest desire to live in Him and for Him. The "desert" is frequently a place of temptation. Some brothers are beset by melancholy, interior desolation, or aridity in the day: others by discouragement. Here one also acutely feels the need for the Holy Spirit in order to persevere in his weakness and to remain faithful.

The desert is an intensive stripping down to essentials, coupled with a strong sense of the Lord's presence and adoration of Him. It is an experience of emptying oneself and experiencing that God alone is the Absolute of one's life. Perhaps the greatest temptation, humanly speaking is to look for certain results from the Day itself. Rather than to be disposed to whatever the Lord might give or not give on that day! For the day, many go into the countryside, to the ocean, or for long walks. Others may simply go to an empty room and spend the day there.

During this day, the review of life should be prepared prayerfully, reflecting upon and interpreting in faith the present understanding of our spiritual life. The desert is not primarily a physical place. but the place where God meets us. Usually the more simple and undistracting the surroundings, the more favorable the conditions in which to wait on the Lord and listen to Him. We find it so important that each person approach the day with a generous and open spirit. When one begins to attempt the Desert Day, he might discern with his brothers how he should enter the day. He might initially need some materials or the Word. He might need to vary the length or frequency of the Day. What does each one need to experience his own finiteness and God's abundant love for Him? Faithfulness and prayerful discretion will lead him to God on this Day.



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In Real Life

"It took two Months of Nazareth before the Desert Day sunk in," claims Dick Rossman of Tualatin, OR. It is one of the more difficult practices of Fraternity, but a day of prayer and fasting and solitude has a mighty powerful way of making a difference in our spiritual lives. Do you have an observation, comment, or bon m6t to share with the brothers? Forward your tips so that another fraternity may benefit from it too.

Review of Life

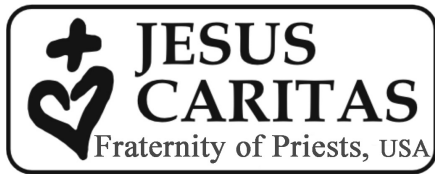
(to download "The Review of Life" please go back to our website and click next to Review of Life, under the 'Fraternity Life' section)

Purpose

The review of life is a central practice in the life of fraternity. It fosters a disciplined and deliberate discernment upon the call of God addressed to each of us individually and, when reflected upon in fraternity, it leads to an appreciation of the group's ecclesial vocation. Its fundamental theological principle is well articulated in Chapter 11 of the Vatican II Document, *Gaudium et Spes*: The People of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord, who fills the earth. Motivated by this faith it labors to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings. Needs and desires in which this People have a part along with other people of our age. For faith throws a new light on everything. It manifests God's design for total vocation and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human. We recognize that Brother Charles understood and lived by this dynamic of faith when we find him writing, "the soul who lives by faith is full of fresh thoughts, fresh tastes, fresh judgments: fresh horizons open up before him..." The Review of Life rests on two fundamental facts: (1) God acts through the events, or at least more forcefully through certain events of our lives to become present, to manifest his love and to bring us to renew and deepen our union with Him. (2) The Holy Spirit is truly among us, especially as we seek Jesus together as brothers. It is the Holy Spirit who in some way is heard through the fraternity members and through their reflections on the "event" presented.

Nazareth

When we regard the importance of all the happenings of our lives, we can appreciate Brother Charles' love for Jesus of Nazareth. For Charles, Nazareth is where we meet Jesus in the "ordinariness" and "hiddenness" of all that makes up our days. Each event is potentiality religious in importance. Our



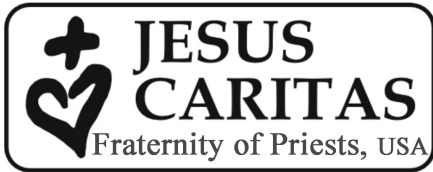
Christian faith has revealed to us the central event of Salvation - the Paschal Mystery. Our whole life, therefore, is lived within this dying and rising of the Risen Lord in our lives. By our baptism we know that we are immersed in this saving reality. Our vocation is to come to live out the mystery, meaning and movement of Jesus in our lives, to throw on every cross the light of the resurrection. In the light of Jesus' Word to us, each event of our lives can lead us to put on the mind and heart of Jesus, our brother, to make his attitude ours. In every event, therefore, God is calling us to discover him, to walk with Him often not knowing where we are going. He is calling us to see him, though an event may be all confused and full of contradictions, mixed with our selfishness, doubts, pride and fears. The effort on our part is to respond to the God who is calling us to break through these barriers. Frequently we find new barriers or go back behind old ones. As much as we search on our own to discover this calling. At times we are more aware of the help we need to see the God who is present. To see how he might be present. and to walk with him This help in part comes from the Holy Spirit through our brothers in fraternity. The fraternity can assist us in discovering in all the events and associations of our daily life the many spiritual guideposts that Jesus places along our path in order to bind us to himself. We do not share a review of life by talking about general problems, general concerns, either of the Church or of ourselves and the world, by offering psychological analysis of a situation, nor by theorizing on ministry. The dialogue with our brothers on one particular "fact" of our lives must be grounded, incarnated, in something real. The review of life helps us truly live in the full light of faith. In the review of life we are not speaking of a detailed examination of conscience, but rather of a prayerful examination of Christ's working in us. It is really a corporate effort at the "discernment of spirits," examining the impulses of our hearts and our bright ideals in the light of the Gospel and the presence of Christ and our brothers. The "fact" mentioned may be a specific conversation or occurrence, a decision to be made, an opportunity before us. etc. Above all, the concreteness of the "fact" and the movements of the heart, our feelings and emotions, which accompany it are most important. Perhaps the question we are most trying to answer is: "In the midst of all that I am doing for Christ, what is Christ doing within me?" By narrating the details of the event and listening to what goes on within us as we share, we seek to know whether we are moving toward or away from the Lord. We must be faithful both to revealing the humanness of the event in all its detail and to discovering our Living God present there.

Preparation

Because of the deeply spiritual quality of the review of life. one must prepare well in prayer and with scripture. He should prepare first of all on the desert day and immediately by the "hour" of adoration which precedes the review of life. To think up 'facts" and blurt them out in a fraternity meeting without prayerful preparation in the light of Christ's Word will not lead to a very fruitful realization of the possibilities of renewal offered by the review of life. For here two or three are gathered together" in the name of the Lord, looking in faith at events of salvation.

Practice

How is the "event" communicated in the group? The earliest process goes back to Canon Cardijn and his work in Belgium. The procedure. as it was adapted in Jesus-Caritas. is quite simple. It is designed to facilitate communication. While each group has tailored the process to its specific style, it is usually



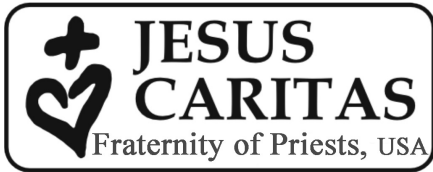
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expected that each person in no special order, submit briefly and succinctly to his brothers in fraternity the concrete event which has been previously prepared on the desert day or during some other prayer time. Another way of putting it might be that each brother presents to his brothers the concrete situation within which he has sensed God's presence and wherein he has been searching for God's Will. The group respects each person's faith sharing, offering support and being willing to explore and to challenge as invited to do so by the brother sharing. It is important that the brother presenting express to the group what he needs most from the group at that time. Each person should have the time to share, although on a given day one brother might need more help to explore his life situation and how God is calling him. While each brother might not need his faith reflection explored, each one needs to be acknowledged for what he has shared. Experience has shown that fifteen to thirty minutes for each brother usually is sufficient. If we are committed to be present to and be open with one another in the review, honesty usually grows the longer the fraternity is together. Then we learn to listen better, and gradually grow in intimacy and honesty to the point where we are drawn to take more personal responsibility before God for each other. Some brothers have expressed the experience as coming to reverence and adore Jesus present in the brothers as He is present in the Eucharist. Of course, we might feel anxious at first. We can fear being accepted for who we are. being thought of differently. We may think we have nothing to offer our brothers. In times of sharing we might also fear offending our brothers, coming on too strong, asking our brother to do something that we ourselves are not doing. or pointing out our brother's excuses or self-deception. We fear all these things might separate us from each other. All these can gradually be overcome. We must be very respectful of what or how much a brother chooses to share in any review. With this regard and reverence for one another. we assist one another to approach the Lord with our lives.

Benefits

Brothers have come to appreciate how sharing the review can complement and encourage other relationships of spiritual direction and the sacrament of reconciliation. For many brothers the review itself has given them invaluable spiritual guidance, while others have been led to seek a spiritual director. As the review has brought some to experience in depth God's mercy and tenderness, they have reacquainted themselves with the richness of the Sacrament of Penance. Some have become each other's confessors. Brothers come to recognize what is important to share in the review and what they need to share with their spiritual director or confessor. For each brother, however, the review fosters a growing capacity and desire for noticing more clearly. understanding more profoundly. and choosing more freely and generously God's love for him and Jesus' invitation to follow him. By joining a fraternity. we are saying we need one another and are willing to risk expressing that need. We do not want to present ourselves as being only self-contained. self-assured. or self-confident. thus keeping our brothers from either trusting us or helping us. Our faith in the presence of Christ and his Spirit in our midst helps us to share with our brothers our own feelings and insights. however stale they may seem. We might find it difficult to take responsibility for others, so we must assure each other that we want each other to do so and together seek ways in which this can be done most helpfully. Humility, simplicity. openness. and a real concern for our brothers are all indispensable qualities for growing in sharing the review The goal of the review. therefore, is not to solve our brother's problem directly or to make an infallible statement that "thus and so is clearly the will of Christ for you " Rather we place our



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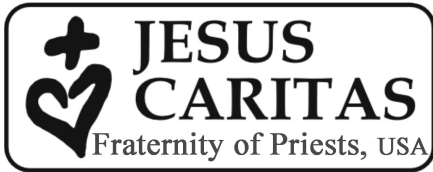
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brother in the presence of Christ and under His Word. In this faith climate we open ourselves to the reality of his situation and help him to deepen his understanding and strengthen his spirit to respond faithfully to the invitation of Christ himself. While this presumes honesty and frankness, it presumes mutual respect and love even more. The review of life might involve, if a brother expresses such a need, going into the background of a situation, questioning him on specific matters, giving practical advice or opinions, restoring the reality of a badly distorted view of a problem, etc.. The aim of such exploration, if requested, would be simply trying together to see Christ and His Will in all the "facts." The fraternity does not make decisions for a member, though it may encourage him strongly in one direction or another. A decision is always up to the individual brother. When asked to enter into such an exploration, we always need to avoid judgementalism or artificial preaching, replacing them with care and confidentiality. What each brother is asking of his brothers in fraternity is to help him live faithfully his commitments as a Christian priest and member of Jesus-Caritas. He is basically entrusting his commitment to his brothers in Christ Jesus. That is a fearful thing to do and comes only gradually under the influence of grace and love. It is in this deepest sense that our commitment in Jesus Caritas is not to the structures of fraternity but to the Lord and the individual members of the fraternity.

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Living in Simplicity

We do not assume poverty or simplicity in any structural form. that is. we take no religious vow of poverty. Nonetheless. we find ourselves daily faced with the Gospel challenge. living in the midst of the wealthiest nation and in a ministry which often provides us with the best and richest. As we are in the world, we must learn to use its goods effectively in serving the people. In our modern technological world, we recognize that material poverty is subordinated to the legitimate obligations of our diocesan ministries. We are convinced that poverty must be an interior freedom, a freedom of heart, which makes us generous servants in the midst of this world's wealth. In recent years. the International Fraternity has challenged the U.S. Fraternities to look at the people and places where all the brothers serve, especially those in third world countries. So many live out the charism of Brother Charles, the way of Jesus of Nazareth, to be one with the poorest people, to be one with all humankind. This is expressed clearly in the statement from the General Assembly of Algiers, 1982. where it says. "...we renew our choice to take the way of the poor. There are many ways to find it. It can be: 'for the poor, with the poor, like the poor' (L. Boff)...." The Fraternity should continue to foster a spirit of commitment to the poor, each one of us having to express clearly this service, in his own situation and following his own vocation." The consciousness of the world's poor in the International Fraternity holds a sensitivity and challenge for every U.S. brother. For some members, the Fraternity has helped them discern very difficult choices as to where God might be calling them to serve, accepting diocesan sponsored mission parishes, inner-city or poor parishes, or other parochial or non-parochial assignments which have demanded much sacrifice. Each of these choices, as well, reflect the call to live out the concrete concern for



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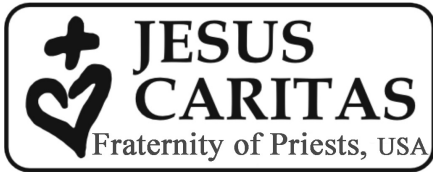
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poverty in their lives. Perhaps, the longer one is with the Fraternity, the more one is drawn into the manifold aspects of Gospel poverty. How poor a means Jesus Caritas itself is to reach the Lord. How poorly equipped each of us is to accomplish the mission of Jesus on earth. Yet, our striving to address the reality of Gospel simplicity concretely and not theoretically leads us to embrace our total dependence upon Jesus in our personal lives. It draws us into a spirit of freedom and detachment regarding our human means for accomplishing God's ministry. Our very acceptance of our ministry and the people we serve allows them to become the very means for pastoral simplicity, our own way of being poor without illusion. As we face failures, accept sometimes very painful sufferings, and live with personal inadequacy or insufficient personnel or resources, we are led to embrace more fully the mystery of Jesus' self-emptying love. Often the Fraternity can help an individual member translate general concerns about lifestyle into concrete choices. in order to keep him from that self-deception which frequently accompanies money matters. For instance, any major expense or general use of our income might be examined together with the fraternity in the spirit of the Gospel. This will always be a sensitive matter for diocesan priests. We should not view this as getting permission to spend our money, but desiring to explore how we might best use our material resources for our wellbeing and for the mission of Jesus with the help of our brothers in Christ. Most U.S. Fraternities have not yet come to terms with nor explored in depth this dimension of pastoral poverty. Overall, this dimension of Brother Charles' spirituality remains for us a source of unease and discomfort. We continue to listen to the Spirit speaking to us through what happens within us, as well as through the mission of our Brothers throughout the world. How can we best be one with them, with Jesus among them?

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In Real Life

John Stattmiller has learned how to reach Appalachian hill folks -- the same way you get to know your neighbor. Gradually, deliberately, over a period of time, with respect and without nosiness. Sitting on the front porch and waving to the neighbor across the road is a good way to begin. His method seems to work; when he was packing to leave for a new assignment the man next door brought him a whiskey bottle from his collection, one in the shape of a cowboy group as a memento. From a population that is suspicious of Catholics, that was a unique tribute says John. Do you have an observation, comment, or bon m6t to share with the brothers? Forward your tips so that another fraternity may benefit from it too.



Month of Nazareth

The primary goal of the Month of Nazareth is to lead the brother to the experience of faith in Jesus of Nazareth as supreme friend who invites him through the Eucharist to take and eat and share all with himself during the brother's entire lifetime.

Component Experiences

1. Experience of prolonged silent prayer, experience of solitude, experience of desert (thus the chapel, surroundings, schedule should all be conducive.)
2. Experience of fraternity, the experience of being loved by brothers who together seek Jesus (sharing meals, review of life, manual work together should all be conducive.)
3. Experience of Universality, both active and passive. The brothers on the Month should experience a crossing over of cultural, national economic and age barriers, which is extremely liberating and highlights the main motive for fraternity, i.e., the common brotherly search for Jesus. (Visiting brothers from overseas, making the Month of Nazareth in common with those overseas should all be conducive.)
4. Experience of Poverty for love of Jesus and the poor (manual labor, modest and poor surroundings all should be conducive.)

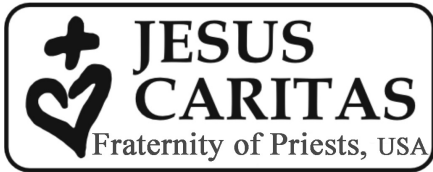
Further Observations

The Month of Nazareth should lead the brother to the point of making his consecration.

Ergo:

1. Fraternity spirituality must be clearly and forcefully presented (the didactic element in the Month of Nazareth should be predominant)
2. The life of fraternity is a real, clearly defined vocation and as such demands real fidelity and obedience on our part. It demands a real change in the way of life, a real conversion.
3. The essential elements of the consecration should be clearly outlined and several examples (formularies) of consecration should be presented.

Bryan Karvelis



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The Month of Nazareth offers brothers a more extended and deeper experience of Fraternity life. In the U.S., the National Council seeks to organize a month biannually, usually mid-July to mid-August in order to experience living in fraternity with 12-15 other brothers throughout the country. While practicing the core components of fraternity life mentioned above, those participating explore in a contemplative way their lives, ministry, and their relationship with God in the spirit of Nazareth. As the Directory points out, The Month is a sharing of fraternal life at every level: prayer, reflection, manual work, leisure, etc. Formally it becomes a turning point in their ministry and commitment to Jesus and to Fraternity. This Month remains the ideal for all members knowing that individual fraternities and districts can be enriched by the presence of one of its members at the Month. a goal might be to have fraternities sponsor a member yearly, assisting in arranging coverage for that priest's responsibilities at home.

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Why I Made the Month of Nazareth

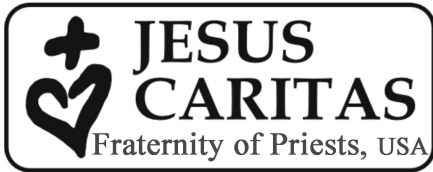
I was very pleased to hear from Ron Belisle that the Month of Nazareth will be here in our own backyard. This will be an opportunity that probably will never be more available in our life times.

Now, why would you want to take a whole month to make the Month of Nazareth? I have made the Month twice. I would have to say that the first time was in Detroit which was for me was more of a third world experience then an experience of deepening fraternity ties and my faith.

My experience the second time in the summer of 1999 at the seminary in Camarillo was wonderful. If I remember correctly there were 10 of us. One of the guys was a Lutheran minister who belonged to a Lutheran JC group. We had people from Denver, Florida, Detroit, California, Georgia and some other places.

One of the things that were emphasized was of being a family or fraternity. Most of us lived alone and so spending close time together was a different way of living life. The areas where we had the most tension had to do with what foods to purchase, how to cook things, who had the TV controls, and how to get the briquettes started. We experienced the same kinds of tensions that would take place in a family and still by our deep sharing and prayer a great love developed between us.

I don't think that we learned that much about the life of Brother Charles but we did learn a great deal about being small and loving the other brothers. So we practiced the chrisms that were present in the life of Charles. We took care of our own needs and so this was not like a usual retreat experience. We divided into teams for cleaning; cooking, shopping and we were surprised at how much time was needed for the usual but simple parts of life.



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If you have any specific questions please feel free to call me at 541-688-1051 or email me at dickr@stpetereugene.org.

Your little brother, Dick Rossman

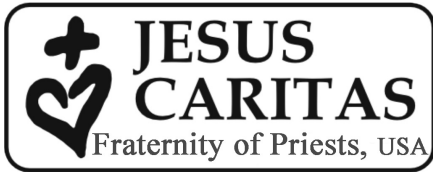
Daily Eucharistic Adoration

Brother Charles experienced the Eucharist as the 'treasure' of the presence of Jesus and the center of his life. As priests, we also have come to experience the Paschal Mystery of Jesus as the rhythm and pulse of our own lives and ministry. While this is predominantly experienced while presiding over the celebration of the Eucharist, the prayer of Christ's Risen Body, and while ministering to God's people, the fraternity also invites us to rest in His Mysterious Presence in a quiet and contemplative way of Adoration. For Brother Charles the central Mystery of the Eucharist was uncomplicated and profound: Jesus handing over his life for His people. This unrepeatable self-offering is powerfully and symbolically entered into and imitated in another simple way by our silent presence to Jesus. When a group spends an hour of watchful centered prayer in the Eucharistic presence, this prayer can radically and richly complement the communal Eucharistic Worship with God's people. As Rene Voillaume describes this reality: "To live by the Eucharist means handing oneself over to people, and becoming for them out of love and out of Eucharistic Contemplation, food that is worth eating." Some groups also choose to celebrate the Eucharist together as part of their day.

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CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER AND EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

The Fraternity Life stresses contemplative prayer and time devoted exclusively to it. The life of Fraternity, while not denying other forms of prayer or ruling them out *a priori*, points in the direction of a prolonged period of an hour each day spent in this type of prayer. As mentioned earlier, this prayer of adoration would be spent in the Eucharistic presence. Foucauld would describe it as "that state in which the soul looks wordlessly on God, solely occupied with contemplating Him, telling Him with looks that it loves Him, while uttering no words, even in thought." For Brother Charles it was the experience of love, waiting on and with Jesus. "I live at the feet of my God, pouring out my heart in love of Him, telling Him I love Him, while He tells me I shall never love Him as much as He loves me, however great my love would be. They are hours of incomparable happiness." Members of Fraternity find themselves praying for this grace, allowing themselves to be drawn back to the Mystery of



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Eucharist celebrated in community, now nourishing them in the silence with Jesus given for us.

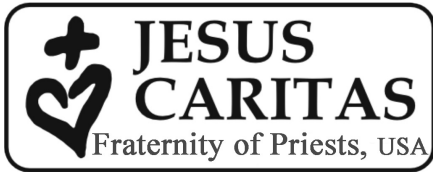
This prayer cannot be simply selfish, an exercise for its own sake, nor for "storing up" grace and energy for ministry. Primarily it is an act of love for Jesus. In the presence of Jesus we need to realize the authenticity of our ministry as we struggle with balancing our prayer and action. Above all we need a personal relationship with Jesus loved for His own sake.

This prayer time will not come easily or immediately to most priests. Often we did not learn to pray in the seminary and we have not prayed very much since. The main struggle in our prayer may well be making ourselves available to Jesus in the Eucharist without any sense of warmth or intimacy at all, "wasting time with Jesus." Perhaps this is the greatest gift we have to give to the Lord in these days. Perseverance has always marked prayer in all circumstances, waiting on Jesus even in the midst of anxiety and darkness. It requires faith and personal love for Jesus in order to pray, as well as a willingness to let Him take a look at our lives. It takes courage to say "no" to an activity or nervous drives. First we must come to a conviction about the need for this prayer in our lives.

The focus of this prayer time is not on "getting in the hour", nor is it even postulating the necessity of making formal prayer the center of our lives. Many priests today seem to find Christ more easily in their parish and in their ministry than in prolonged periods of reflection and prayer. If we develop a fixation about the "requirement" of an hour of adoration, we will become discouraged by the effort required or will react to the observance expected. Much more is at stake than being faithful to a rigid prayer schedule. It is a question of a living faith in Jesus that is difficult (though not impossible) to find by any other means. Because we are imperfect, it is almost impossible for us to live in the spirit of Adoration, seeking and seeing Jesus in that we do, unless we set special time aside for prayer in a daily, weekly, and monthly rhythm. We do need a prolonged time just to calm down and to be open to the Lord, to meet Jesus on personal terms.

We believe that Christ is present to the whole of our lives, in the world around us, in the people with whom we live and work. We know when we are truly present to others, that we likewise encounter Jesus. Yet, this Jesus-in-life we often miss. Prayer and contemplation are needed even to focus our hearts and minds to see Christ revealing and giving Himself to us in the rest of our life. This prayer also helps us detect the obstacles in ourselves which make us hesitate to give ourselves to Christ.

The Fraternity can be of great help in sustaining this practice. We are able to reflect upon our self-deception or excuses, assisting us to see that such prolonged daily prayer is possible for a priest who really desires it. We might explore with our brothers what might be a rhythm of prayer that can be sustained. Sometimes members of Fraternity might try to come together for the "hour" several times during the month if they can, as they find praying in Fraternity to be a great help. The Fraternity can also help in exploring and authenticating other forms of prayer as well. Above all, prayer must be tried to be found fruitful. A theoretical discussion on the appropriateness of one form of prayer or another will hardly convince anyone of it one way or another. The members of Fraternity seek to respond to the invitation of the Lord to come apart for awhile with Him. This too is a matter of growth in conviction and practice. Our starting point is right where we are at the moment. From time to time we allow our



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efforts at prayer to be the subject of our Review of Life so that we may be helped to respond ever more faithfully and generously, without guilt feelings, to the Lord who loves us.

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