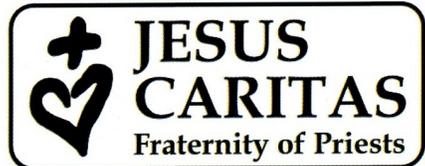


7. Forming Fraternity



ORIGIN OF JESUS CARITAS FRATERNITY

7. It takes its inspiration from the life and charisms of Charles de Foucauld. While some of our local groups still find Brother Charles to be a strange and distant person whom they have yet to meet in depth, they find themselves united in heart with this man who sought to know and imitate Jesus, to encounter Jesus loved for His own sake as the source of his ministry.- Above all. each priest finds these words of Charles resonating within him. helping to focus his Christian and priestly vocation: "I love our Lord. Jesus Christ, although with a heart that wants to love more and better. But nonetheless, I love Him and cannot bear another life than that which leads to Him.

WHAT IT IS

8. As concretely experienced, the Fraternity is a brotherhood formed by five to seven priests who agree to meet once every month: a) for Scripture sharing, b) contemplative prayer before the Eucharist, c) and a shared review of life d) with ample time for some friendly conversation and fellowship usually over a meal.

WHAT IT ASKS

9. 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. Any structure or spiritual practice fostered within the group is meant to facilitate this commitment and growth. As Rene Voillaume puts it, the fraternity is based simply "on our love for one another and the presence of Jesus in our midst." The purpose of the group, therefore, moves beyond only recreation, socializing, or theological and ministerial discussions to that deep level where the

PILGRIM NATURE OF FRATERNITY

10. 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.

DYNAMICS OF THE GROUP

11. Two important rules should be kept in mind. a) 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. b) 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.

WHAT IT IS NOT

12. 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. for the gradual growth in trust. Counseling or some other form of therapy would be more suitable at this time of their lives. ..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.

a) The Fraternity is not a 'program' which is introduced to a diocese as the Ministry to Priests or the Emmaus program. ...Jesus Caritas fraternity is a simpler ministry of priest-to-priest, and does not entail waiting for a diocesan initiative towards priestly growth in spirituality.

15. b) While Fraternity is a small group of priests committed to one another, it is not meant to be in any way a clique or secret organization. Learning how to be brothers to one another in the small group is meant to help us become better brothers to all our fellow priests, to our Bishop, and to help us minister in a more fraternal and collegial way overall.

NEW MEMBERS & SIZE

16. A fraternity needs to be a relatively small, consistent group for trust to develop. However, a new member can enter at the group's discretion. The group must be ready to invest adequate time to help all members come to know and trust each other so that all can share again at the same depth and with the same concern that they enjoyed before the new person entered.. Normally, experienced members of fraternity should assume the responsibility of helping priests form new fraternities, rather than have a fraternity constantly trying to take on new members.

REQUIRES NOTHING NEW ...BUT ADDS ALL!

17. Members of Jesus-Caritas do not see the fraternity adding anything to the call which the Church addresses to all her priests. It simply offers some priests a way of answering that call. As diocesan priests we are called to sanctify ourselves with the people of our diocese, in and through our ministry. Jesus-Caritas offers certain emphases, practices and a focus to that call to help us respond more authentically and faithfully to our vocation as

GETTING STARTED

If you want to start a Jesus Caritas Group, begin with a few friends in an hour before the Blessed Sacrament, then gather as a support group and gradually work in the values and charisms of the Jesus Caritas fraternity.

Your diocesan Responsible can coach you in your first couple meetings. If you and your friends can provide living accommodations with kitchen & meeting space, someone from the National Council would be delighted to come and lead your nascent fraternity through a Week of Nazareth so that you will not only learn about the charisms of a Jesus Caritas fraternity but actually experience them

ELEMENTS OF A FRATERNITY DAY

• Sharing the Word

“Learn of me”, Jesus said, “for I am meek and humble of heart.”

• Adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist

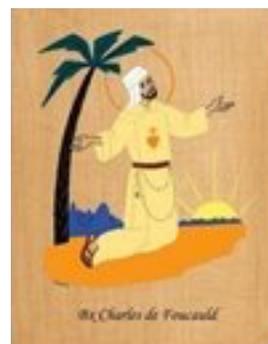
The Fraternity encourages a prolonged period of an hour each day spent in the presence of the Eucharistic Presence, as Charles said, a prayer in which a person “looks wordlessly on God, solely occupied with contemplating Him, telling Him with looks that he loves Him, while uttering no words, even in thought.”

• Review of life

The Review of Life is a central practice in the life of Fraternities. The Review of Life rests on two fundamental facts:

1. God acts through the events, or at least more forcefully through certain elements of our lives, to become present to us, to manifest His love and to bring us to renew and deepen our relationship with Him;
2. the Holy Spirit is truly among us, especially as we seek Jesus together as brothers. We are speaking of prayerful awareness 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 ideas, in the light of the Gospel and in the presence of our brothers.

• Time for friendly, relaxed companionship



*I love Our Lord, Jesus Christ,
although with a heart that wants
to love more and better.
But nonetheless,
I love Him, and cannot bear
another life than that which
leads to Him.”*

Charles de Foucauld

For additional information contact:

Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests

jesuscaritasusa.org