



Priestly People

WE ALL ARE THE PRIESTLY PEOPLE OF GOD. TOGETHER, WE ARE LEADERS IN RESPONDING TO THE EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF PRIESTS AND BROTHERS.

June 2013 - Vol. 29 No. 6

Important Catholic feast days begin with the end of the Easter season and imbue the church with celebrations from the Ascension to Pentecost to the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

The Servants of the Paraclete community celebrates Pentecost in a very special way. As their title feast day, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit take on deeper meanings for each member. Committed to the work of their founder, Father Gerald Fitzgerald, the Servants of the Paraclete continue to labor in the field and dedicate their ministry to the Holy Spirit – THE PARACLETE.

A message from Father David sP to his community members on the occasion of their title feast day – Pentecost.

Dear Brothers

As we conclude our novena to the Holy Spirit in preparation for the celebration of Pentecost let us take some time to pray in gratitude for God's bountiful blessings. Throughout our history we can trace the movement of the Holy Spirit inviting us to deepen our relationships with almighty God and one another and to ever greater fidelity in service for Christ in His Priests.

The **SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** - wisdom, understanding, wonder and awe (fear of the Lord), counsel, knowledge, fortitude, and piety (reverence) which we received in the Sacrament of Confirmation are continually being poured out upon us in abundance. When a confirmed person cooperates with the graces that the Holy Spirit provides, that person makes spiritual headway with regard to each of these qualities or traits, and becomes progressively more willing to listen to and obey the promptings of the Spirit.

As professed and/or ordained religious we know that these gifts not only assist us on our own spiritual journeys but also in the exercise of our congregational ministry to priests and religious brothers. So this Pentecost, like all those before, there is much to hope for and much to celebrate!

The **FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** are also clearly evident in our congregation. In the Holy Scriptures there are nine biblically-based fruits of the Holy Spirit as given by St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

For Roman Catholics there are 12 traditional fruits of the Holy Spirit, some of which overlap the biblical list: charity, joy, peace, patience, (benignity) or kindness, goodness, (longanimity) or long-suffering, humility or gentleness, fidelity or faithfulness, modesty, continence or self-control and chastity.

The gifts given by the Holy Spirit are meant to be used to bear fruit. All who are confirmed, professed or ordained are equipped with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to live a virtuous and holy life, and sent forth to bear much fruit, something that is possible only when one stays firmly attached to Jesus, the vine (see John 15:1-8). The graces of the Spirit strengthen us to carry out our vocations for the good of others and the benefit of the Church and the world. These graces are what we rely upon in the face of scandal, threats, abuse, temptation, sin, failure, persecution, trial and every sort of difficulty - so that we might fight the good fight, run the race and persevere with faith, hope, trust and confidence until God speaks the words we all long to hear: "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*"



1st Year of Priesthood... looking back to a life filled with grace

FR. ANTHONY VO VAN TAM SP

ONE YEAR AGO, on June 22, 2012, I was ordained a priest for the Servants of the Paraclete by Cardinal Louis Antonio-Tagle in the Philippines.

I am Vietnamese born into a Christian family with five children. My home diocese is Vinh. Many young people in Vietnam seek a religious vocation and I am one that found the Servants of the Paraclete in their very early years of exploring vocations in Asia in 2002.

I would like to share my journey with you... A life filled with graces!

Traveling from Vietnam to the Philippines, I began my pilgrimage to Holy Orders 10 years ago when I became a candidate along with four other men who were interested in the Servants of the Paraclete. There was no permanent home, just a small rented house from the Canossian Sisters and two Servants of the Paraclete; Father Ray and Father Benedict.

At this point, my vocation is being run by faith in God more than by reasonable choices.

After one year as a candidate and one year as a novice, I professed temporary vows in 2005 and final vows in 2008. Still a long way to the priesthood. I studied at LaSalette University and Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay, Philippines. After three months as a deacon, I was ordained in June 2012. This first year has been a very special time for me as I celebrate liturgy, pray the office, attend adoration and give thanks to God for the gifts that he has given to me.

The journey to a priestly life and vocation is based on special events to fulfill the will of God. I would like to offer what I have experienced that has been a part of my first year as a priest.

I am the first born son in my family and it is said by ancestral believers in my village in Vietnam that the first son born of the family is of importance and he has particular duties; he keeps his kin and is responsible for his clan. But in my vocation, my mother willingly said to me that I had been offered to God already. Why did she say that?

Because when I was a child I became very sick. It was very difficult to raise and nourish me. Hopelessly, she could not see my life with a future. So she consecrated her first born son to God. My father had said to me that I would find out God's will. My cousins constantly encouraged me. I believe I was set apart for a vocation to the priesthood early on in my life. Now that I am a priest, I feel that the offering of the first born son by my mother is somehow connected to the prophet Isaiah words *"The LORD called me from birth; from my mother's womb he gave me my name."*(Is 49.1).

Secondly God has chosen me to belong to the first group of new Vietnamese candidates seeking a Servant of the Paraclete vocation in the Philippines. If I had not gone to the Philippines, I would not be a priest today.

As the first Vietnamese candidates to arrive in Tagaytay City, Philippines; we did not see anything that belonged to the congregation. We had nothing, so we had to build up everything from the start - from staying to living to studying - all at first seemed difficult but it was preparing me for my vocation.

We rented a simple house to live together as a small and poor community. Constantly, I believe that all things do not necessarily seem reasonable, but by faith in God, my journey to the priesthood continued.

In this way, I wonder if God was letting me know clearly the costs of my priestly vocation; not necessarily the dollars but the living of poverty and the sacrifices needed to begin! I believe the words of Matthew, the apostle. *"For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible."*(Mt.19:26).

Thirdly God has blessed me in a very a special way. I am the first priest from my Du Loc Parish in Vietnam; the parish was established over 200 years ago but in that time there had not been a vocation to the priesthood. So when I become a priest, my parish gave its first born, a first son and rejoices in this wonderful blessed event.

When I took a journey from the Philippines to Ho Chi Minh City, I called my parish priest. I wanted to let him to know about my arrival in Vietnam in peace and safety. I requested to celebrate my first mass of thanksgiving at my home parish on July 20, 2012.

When the pastor found out I was coming, he wanted me to know that the parish was waiting to celebrate. A solemn welcome. The people in the parish had a procession with drums, trumpets, dancing and singing... All on motorbikes. That is our way.

I imagined that I was in a dream. It was beautiful. I ask God to bless my parish and me in my first mass of thanksgiving. I had received a great gift. My life had become a series of days of thanks to God for what I had been given.

I would like to describe some of the special graces that God has given to me. It is not that I want to be proud of myself or what I have, but really I am very proud of the great blessings God has handed to me step by step. Even in my life with many storms, I believe that God, the Heavenly Father always accompanies me, in my priestly life. In which, I remember **Psalm 116:13: "I will raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD."**



What I received in Ordination, the sacrament of Holy Orders are wonderful graces which have helped and strengthened me in this first year as a priest.

One of the greatest memories of ordination day is when I lay down on the floor, in front of the Bishop, in the church of at *Our Lady of Perpetual*

Help Parish Tagaytay City. At that moment, the choir was singing the *Litany of Saints*, which rose up in wonderful voices and gave me a deeper understanding of divine love and holy unity in God among his peoples.

At that moment, my tears of joy poured out. I felt the wonderful love of God for me and for his people. Now I remember that in all He had set me apart for Him and that he had been preparing me for this moment for a long time.

A priest lays his life down for Christ. I have been called to follow Him, to serve his people. Let my life be a consecrated life, a life that belongs totally to God. I believe in Him and I hand over my entire life to Him to use me as an instrument in His work. Let Christ be and reign in the heart of His new priest. As St. Paul said: ***"I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me"***(Gl. 2:20).

The symbolism of lying on the floor during ordination, just as during first and final vows, means that I become a subject to my ordinary – that is in my case – to my Superior General and his successors. I can serve his people and community in whatever assignment is given to me and wherever the church needs me to proclaim the Good News to her children. This serving in love is following in Jesus' footsteps, and for Jesus who teaches his disciples that: ***"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends"***(Jn.15:13).

In the ordination ceremony, the Bishop as a Representative of Christ and of the Church invited me to drink the cup with Christ every day when celebrating mass. Jesus wants me to share with Him in the roles of service to the faithful and to build up the Church and the Body of Christ.

Being a priest is not simply one occupation among many. It is a special way of life through which God invites a man to enter more deeply into a relationship with Him. When the Bishop has given the chalice to the new priest, it has a special meaning as he must now accept all that is granted and happens in his earthly life as nothing, but he only serves Christ and the people of God.



One of the most important moments during the ordination ceremony is when the Bishop anoints the new priest and gives him the seal of the Spirit, allowing him the right to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. My hands are purified by the Holy Oil, sanctified by the Holy Spirit for forgiveness of sins. This is a special sacrament only given to priests to celebrate the reconciliation sacrament.

I am very proud to have been given that right, but only the Lamb of God takes away the sins of the world.(cf. Jn. 1:29). It is not me; I am just called to collaborate with Him, and to unite with Him in works of salvation. This grace that I have received is handed down to me by the hands of the Bishop- Louis Antonio - Tagle on the 22nd of June, 2012.

Finally, I would like to conclude that there are two necessary elements for priestly life; mass and prayer. For me, I have been living my priestly life for one year with mass and prayer. They are like two wings which lead me to see and relate to God intimately. I consider that the mass is in prayer, and the prayer in the mass.

For me, the mass and prayer both have to be united together in the priest. A priest cannot celebrate the mass and not pray. He is to live the life of prayer day by day to fulfill the celebration of the mystery of Calvary; the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. If a priest is without prayer it is like salt without its taste. And a priest without mass is as a candle without light.

I take great care and deliberation in offering the holy sacrifice of the mass. I want to glorify God and give praise. It is the heart and center of priestly life. In addition I consider a priest to be a minister chosen by God to come to the table – the holy altar with Jesus Christ every day. Whenever I celebrate the mass, I am really a representative of Christ, a Presider of the holy celebration. I am His minister who does what is required by His Word.

As God calls me to be His priest, I keep in my mind and heart, that I am a speaker of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the Word of God to everyone everywhere as well as a person who will always defend the Word of God: Christ is the Way, Truth and Light to take people out of the desert of darkness into the world to gain eternal life.

New Testament Reflection

The Welsh writer Henry Vaughan begins his mystic poem, *The World*, with these lines:

I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm, as it was bright;

What a beautiful and attractive image of God! A great ring of light, pure and unfading, and although bright, it is ever at peace. Who wouldn't be drawn to that God?

However, there's another image of God, which we might hesitate about approaching. It appears in the famous mystic poem, *The Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross. This verse is central to the poem:

On that blessed night
Alone with no one watching,
Nor could I see anything,
No light, no guide,
Only what burned within my heart.

He is caught in pitch black night, alone and without seeing where he is going, moving forward but not knowing how, only trusting what is burning unseen within his heart! Can one trust that much in order to find God?

These two images of God—one as God seen and desired, the other as God hidden but trusted—form the background of Jesus's prayer in the Gospel today.

He prays to the Father for those who, like us, become believers on the witness of the disciples. As part of his prayer he asks:

Father, that they may be one, as we are one,
I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to
perfection as one,
that the world may know that you sent me.

It sounds attractive enough, that we should be one in Jesus as Jesus is in his Father, and the world may come to believe. There is, however, a catch.

When we think of being one in Jesus what comes to mind is receiving basket loads of bread and gallons of wine; being healed of our illnesses and having our demons cast out; seeing him walk on water and watch as he commands the sea. I would say that Christians would love to be united with that Jesus. But if they stopped there, they would end up short of being united to him as he is to the Father. That's where the dark night comes in.

There is no doubt, especially in John's gospel, that Jesus is united to his Father. But the greatest manifestation of Jesus's bonded love to his Father will come in his passion and death—abandoned, alone, powerless, shamed. And yet he remains steadfastly trusting of his Father, even to his last breath. Would we choose to be united to this Jesus? And yet, only hours before his death, Jesus had prayed that we would.

We all glow with the thought of the power and the glory. However, there's a lump in our throats when we consider the abandonment and the shame. Yet, Jesus prays that we may share that as well. Could we do that? Maybe I can offer a few reflections to help us hold firm to that Jesus.

First, Jesus would never pray to the Father for something which is impossible. Grace descends from the Father. It's like a thread so fine as to seem invisible, but it holds us with a strength that nothing on this earth could break. It's like that fire burning in John of the Cross's heart, and it leads him through the darkness but he doesn't know how. In sharing Jesus's passion and death we trust that he who leads us will not fail us. That, too, is union with the Father.

Second, Jesus would never challenge us to something if we could not achieve it. I don't know why Jesus had to die on the cross. Maybe in his humanness he didn't either. He prayed, "Father, take this cup from me," but he finished up by saying, "Not my will, but yours be done." Do we know why we're going through what we have to? I don't. Jesus prays that we can persevere to the end holding on to, "Not my will, but yours be done"?

In the Acts of the Apostle, the story of Stephen gives witness to his union with Jesus. Discussion on Jesus turned to argument, and from there escalated to violence. Something changed in Stephen. He could see into heaven, Jesus at the right hand of the Father. Stephen the witness was pushed outside the city. His body was being battered, his bones broken, his skull crushed. It was in accepting this that he was transformed. He seemed a different person, and he was. Strangely enough, even his words became those of Jesus: "Father, forgive them."

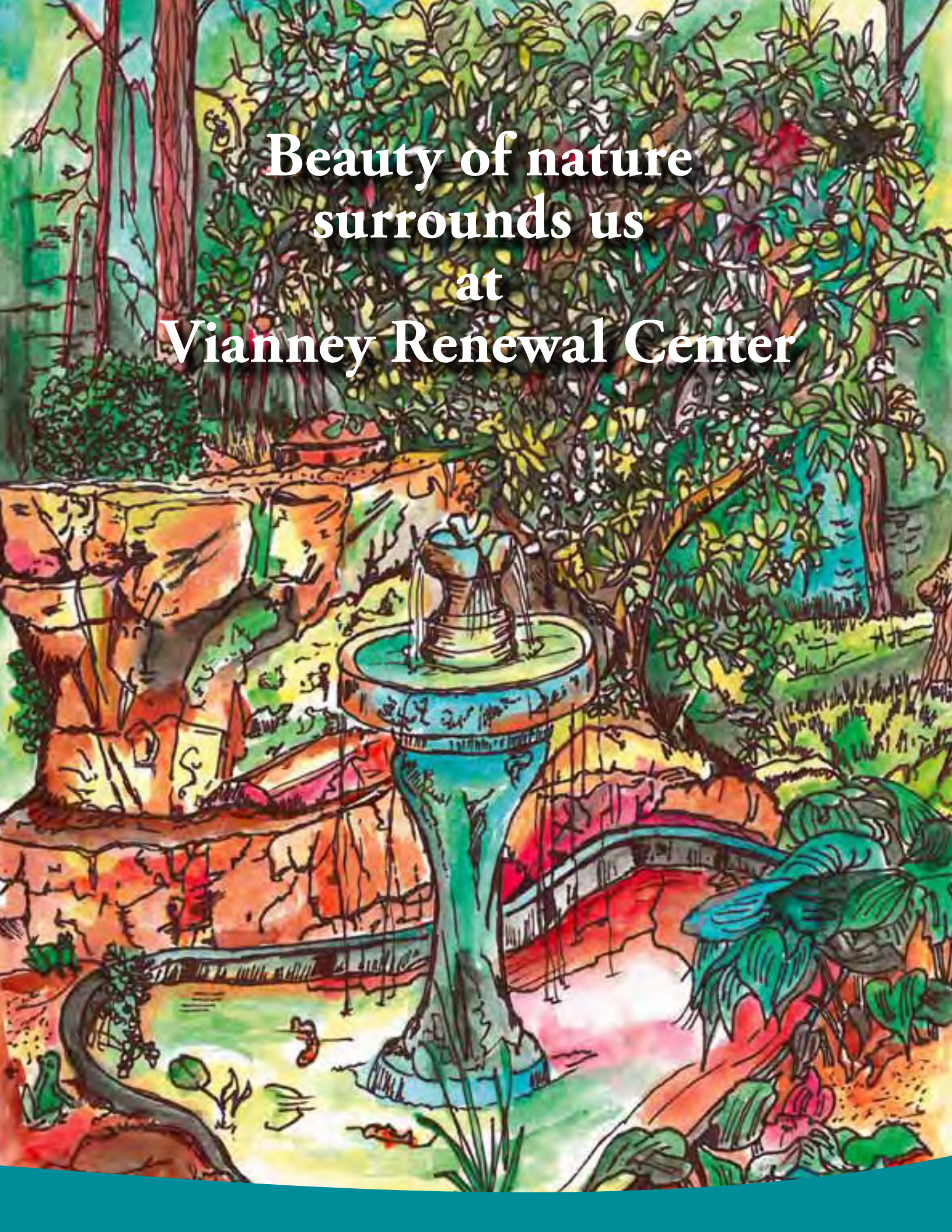
The great mystic who wrote the book of Revelation employs countless oriental and apocalyptic images, often quite incomprehensible for us. Some we understand and many just confuse us. It's somewhat like the events of our own lives—some we understand, others just perplex us. Yet, the overall message is clear: From the beginning, through the middle where we are today, and up to the very end the will of God WILL BE DONE.

No doubt there is great apprehension in our responding to Jesus's prayer. We began by joining the Jesus who taught, who healed, who did amazing things to the wonderment of the people. Then, we have been pushed into the chaotic situation of accusations, abandonment and shame. And yet, this is another step on the way to being one with Jesus, as he is one with the Father.

I don't know that we could ever comprehend it all, but, as the end of the book of Revelation teaches us, our response is deceptively simple: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus..

Guest Priest - Vianney Renewal Center

Beauty of nature
surrounds us
at
Vianney Renewal Center



St. Conrad of Parzham, OFM Cap

1818 to 1894

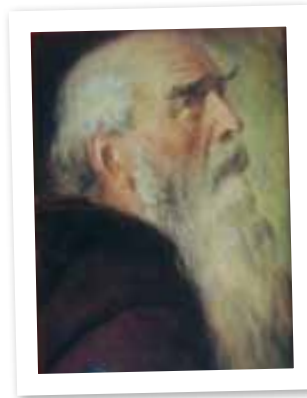
Conrad Birndorfer was born on the family farm in Bad Griesbach, which is now part of the town of Parzham to Gertrude Birndorfer (Nee Niedermayer) the wife of Bartholomew Birndorfer in the Kingdom of Bavaria, now part of Germany. He was baptized with the name of John and was the ninth son in a peasant family. From an early age he helped his father and family on the farm.

John received good training from his parents. He excelled in the virtue of charity and went out of his way to help anyone he could. He grew in the love of God and neighbor and developed or was given the grace of a special devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the Blessed Mother of God. He had a childlike confidence in the Blessed Virgin Mary. He spent many hours in prayer while going about his work.

He was called Hanzel by his family, which is a diminutive of John. From his earliest years he was a very devout and pious child getting up at 4 am in the morning to get to an early Mass in the local Capuchin Church where he served Mass. From his earliest years he gave indications of his future sanctity by his modesty and love of solitude. Nothing would stop him from going to early Mass not even inclement weather. In those days one fasted from midnight if they were going to receive Holy Communion at Mass the following morning. So naturally Hanzel began his growth in sanctity and received many extraordinary graces from God.

At the age of 14 Hanzel lost his mother. He continued helping his father until his father died when Hanzel (John) was 31. After the death of his father John decided to try to join religious life. After the disposal of his farm he was admitted to the Capuchin Order of friars, first as a tertiary and then two years later as a Religious Brother. He was given the name Br. Conrad by which he was known for the rest of his life.

After his profession Br. Conrad was sent to the Friary of St. Ann in the city of Allotting. In this city is a famous Shrine of Our Lady of Allotting, which is the national Shrine of Our Lady in Bavaria. This famous shrine, which dates back to the end of the 10th century, is served by the Capuchin Friars and this is where the Br. Conrad was sent soon after his profession. He had other short assignments after this but was sent back to the shrine and spent most of his religious life as a porter at the door of his monastery.



The Shrine of Our Lady of Allotting in Bavaria is very famous and thousands of miracles were performed through the intercession of Our Lady at this shrine. In the Providence of God Brother Conrad must have been in his element because of his great love of Our Lady. He helped thousands of people throughout the year during his assignment there. Many of

the people were poor and they would flock to the Shrine for help from this very holy Brother. This shrine is famous for its devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows and the Cross of her Divine Son. Because of this Br. Conrad would often say "The Cross is my Book of Life." In other words he looked to Our Lady and the Cross of Christ for his own living of a holy life in her honor.

On Nov 18th 1980 Pope John Paul visited this shrine and on Sept 11th 2006 Pope Benedict the 16th visited this shrine.

For forty years Brother Conrad attended to the pilgrims who came to the door where he helped young and old, polite and impolite and always he was kind and gentle. He had the gift of healing and he could read hearts and minds. By living in union with God he was able to let Christ act through him. He ate little and prayed much and whenever he had a spare moment it was spent before the Blessed Sacrament and he loved looking at the Cross of Christ.

On 21st April 1894 Brother Conrad died in his friary where he had spent 41 years. His heroic virtues and the miracles he performed after his death attributed to his being declared Blessed by Pope Pius XI in 1930 and four years later the same pope approved additional miracles which enabled him to be solemnly inscribed in the list of saints, so he was now St. Conrad. His Feast Day is April 21st – St. Conrad pray for us! Amen.

BR. BERNARD SCOLLON SP

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now on Facebook!***



***and you can always check us out at
www.theservants.org***

Br. Conrad Rydelek, s.P.

Conrad Joseph Rydelek was born in Auburn, New York on 26th of June 1927. His parents were Joseph Rydelek and Sophie Rydelek (nee Golaszewska) and he was baptized on July 17th 1927 in the Church of St. Hyacinth in Auburn, New York. He has two siblings, a younger brother Bernard and a younger sister Constance. His father was a steel worker and his mother was a housewife. He had a happy childhood in a good Catholic Polish American family.

Conrad went to St. Hyacinth Parochial School in Auburn, Auburn East High School and New York State College of Forestry for two years. Conrad served nine years in three different branches of the military – Army, Air Force and Marine. While in the Air Force and Marine he spent some time in Japan as a paratrooper after the Japanese surrender and went on to serve in Germany during the cold war period. After military service Conrad worked as an electro mechanic, roofer, carpenter, steel worker and truck driver, bringing many experiences with him to the community.

Conrad was a family loving man and he helped his father and mother and siblings in many ways and they all had a great love for him. He had an interest in religion and he was a devout Catholic. He liked swimming and picnics with his family. When his siblings got married and had children of their own, Conrad was a special uncle to his nephews and nieces. Before he became a Religious Brother with the Servants of the Paraclete he attended Mass in his parish often, sometimes three times a week. He always had a great love for the Blessed Sacrament and Our Blessed Mother Mary!

In June 1962 at the age of 35, Conrad applied to enter the Servants of the Paraclete and was accepted as a candidate at the Novitiate of Our Lady in Randolph, Vermont. He was very interested in helping to take care of priests and brothers. He made his final profession on Sept. 9th 1968.

Brother Conrad was a wonderful religious man and he had many friends in the congregation. He and Fr. Gregory McCormick sP became staunch friends and remained friends and colleagues until the end.

Br. Conrad was an excellent worker in so many ways and he had a great sense of humor and saw the funny side of many situations. He was an excellent cook and helped out many times in this capacity. He never missed his Holy Hours before the Blessed Sacrament and prayed much for priests and religious men and women. He had an extraordinary devotion to Our Lady of Fatima and indeed his title as a Brother was Br. Conrad of the Sorrowful Virgin.



When suffering came into Br. Conrad's life as a religious – physical or otherwise he looked upon it as a soldier of Christ and always saw the holy will of God in it. He offered all his sufferings to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary for souls, but especially the souls of priests and religious.

Br. Conrad was always welcomed wherever he was appointed by obedience. He spent the last few years of his life at Jemez Springs, New Mexico. He was with his friend Fr. Gregory McCormick again and the rest of the Community of the Servants of the Paraclete. The Handmaids of the Precious Blood who are also in Jemez Springs were very fond of him. The parishioners at the parish Church of the Assumption in Jemez Springs were very happy to have him in their midst. He loved his Holy Hours and Masses in our chapel and lived a productive life.

Gradually his health declined and he moved to St. Agnes Home which is run by the Carmelite Sisters in St. Louis Missouri. His health continued to deteriorate and he died a holy and happy death surrounded by family and his religious community on July 17, 2012. May he rest in peace.

BR. BERNARD SCOLLON



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June
Newsletter

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MASS STIPENDS

We appreciate the many mass stipends that we receive. We thank you for supporting that part of our ministry. The Servants of the Paraclete receive mass stipends from our donors and they look forward to celebrating liturgy with those who offer masses for loved ones, friends and family members.

Name of the person to be remembered in a mass celebrated by a Servant of the Paraclete

living deceased

Please send an acknowledgement card regarding the mass stipend to the following:

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