

**LETTER FROM TYBEE ISLAND, GA
NATIONAL COUNCIL
JESUS CARITAS FRATERNITY OF PRIESTS
OCTOBER 9-10, 2016**

Dear Brothers,

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

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

Our meeting began with the naming of the many challenges that the Fraternity was facing. The majority of priests who support the Fraternity have been ordained 45 years or more. We are very much an aging group. Given the current cancer that troubles the Church, we believe we have a remedy to offer. Our spirituality can provide the Church with a holy and healthy presbyterate. How do we share this gift? How do we invite new members into our fraternities? We have not had much success with a younger generation of priests. But we have had some success in reaching out to seminarians. Hap Ragan last year talked to Spiritual Directors from many of our North American seminaries at their meeting in Toronto. Other members of our leadership have given talks at seminaries around the country. We hope these efforts will ultimately bear fruit. We believe if we reach out to Bishops, Vocation Directors, and programs like the Institute for Priestly Formation at Creighton University, we could form partnerships interested in encouraging a solid interior life among diocesan priests.

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

During our time together we started a process that we hope to continue. We took time to call or email those brothers who so generously support our work through donations and dues. There was a certain frustration with not being able to connect as many as we would have liked. But we left messages and were delighted to receive a good number of return

calls. Our basic message was one of gratitude to those of you who support our work and the request that you help us promote the Month of Nazareth which will be held on Tybee Island from September 23rd through October 13th. The Month will conclude with a retreat open to all priests, from the evening of October 14th to noon on October 18th of 2019, to be held at Marywood Retreat Center near Jacksonville, FL.

We broke up into two working groups. One was led by John Jacquell and was tasked with creating an outline for a Day of Prayer that fraternities could host for the presbyterate of their Diocese. The Day of Prayer is humbly offered as a response to the tough days and heartaches and challenges we've all felt with the most recent revelations in the Church. The other working group was led by Bob Amundsen and tasked with creating a promotional brochure for the Month of Nazareth in be held in September of 2019. The work of both these groups will be featured in the Fall Newsletter, BECOMING BROTHERS.

Our greatest challenge is finding a pathway that will lead our brothers to a deeper formation in the spirituality of Blessed Charles de Foucauld. While the Month of Nazareth is the best way to achieve this formation, in recent years for a variety of reasons, we've not had great success in promoting the Month. One of the reasons is that the spiritual formation of recently ordained priests and present seminarians is vastly improved from that which most of us received. Many of them have already made 30-day Ignatian Retreats and so perhaps to not see a need for another month-long retreat so early in their priesthood. The gift we have to offer is a "platform", an accountability, a fraternity, in and through which a diocesan priest can live out a healthy spirituality. We must explore creative ways of connecting priests and seminarians to this fraternal spirituality.

So, we reviewed Ron Belisle's wonderfully detailed proposal for a Week of Nazareth. We see this week as a way for seminarians and priests who have already formed fraternities to take some time away as a fraternity to deepen their awareness and commitment to the spiritual charisms that can be life-giving to their priestly life and ministry. It is one thing to read about these charisms, but much better to experience them within fraternity. Moving forward we will be promoting and facilitating the Week of Nazareth for fraternities that are already established.

Finally, as a National Fraternity we decided to take a leap of faith and do away with dues. In thanksgiving for the blessings we have received, often the members of the National Team have used their own financial resources for the work of the Fraternity. We are grateful that so many of you support this ministry of promoting a solid priestly spirituality. So, in the spirit of good stewardship and realizing that so many of our dues paying members also made generous donations, we have decided to continue sending out BECOMING BROTHERS to all on our mailing list; to continue supporting those fraternities in parts of the world with far less resources; to continue providing materials and opportunities to promote the Fraternity, solely on the free will offerings of our brothers.

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