



In the Two Hearts

*Scattering the seeds of Hope *** in the Year for PRIESTS!*

twohearts1@mac.com

48765 Annapolis Rd. Hopedale, OH 43976

www.HeartsOfJesusandMary.com

(740) 946-9000

“THE PRIESTHOOD IS THE LOVE OF THE HEART OF JESUS”

In his letter of June 16, 2009, Benedict XVI draws the attention of his brother priests and of the whole Church to the meaning of the Year for Priests. Using the above quote of St. John Vianney, our Holy Father explains, “This touching expression makes us reflect, first of all, with heartfelt gratitude on the immense gift which priests represent, not only for the Church, but also for humanity itself.”

What better way for our Holy Father to have initiated the Year for Priests than to begin it on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart! He points the Church to Her Source to obtain for priests a year of refreshment and rejuvenation. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the Fountain from which all graces and gifts flow. This year for priests is meant to be an outpouring of heavenly treasures. It is a time for priests to be strengthened, healed, encouraged, revitalized and renewed.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the fountain not only of the graces that priests will be receiving this year, but It is the Source of the priesthood itself: *“The seven sacraments are so many inexhaustible fountains of grace and holiness, which have their source in the immense ocean of the Sacred Heart of our Savior; they are so many flames of a divine furnace from which proceed all spiritual blessings.”* (St. John Eudes)

Certainly, the brightest and most treasured of these flames is the gift of our Lord Himself in the Eucharist, but can we separate this tremendous Gift from that of the priesthood? It was the same Love burning in Christ’s Heart that led Him to institute both the Eucharist and



the priesthood, and these on that same cherished Holy Thursday night. *We cannot have the Eucharist without the priesthood; nor can there be the priesthood without the Eucharist.* Just as there can be no Jesus without His chosen Vessel, Mary, and there would never be Mary but for the sake of bringing Jesus, so too the Eucharist and the priesthood are inseparable. There cannot be one without the other.

As Catholics, and lovers of the Two Hearts, we know the importance of

worthily preparing for Holy Communion. We must ready our hearts to receive our Divine Guest. We pray, confess our sins, fast for the preceding hour and stir up our hearts with holy desire. Having prepared in this way, our meeting with the King is one of joy and blessing. Considering the special union of the Eucharist and the priesthood, should there not be some similar effort to worthily and readily receive this other gift, the priesthood, from the Lord?

This year for priests is a time for us, the religious and faithful, to also be renewed. It is a time for us to examine our hearts and renew our appreciation of this merciful Gift from the Heart of our Savior. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves some probing questions and allow the Holy Spirit to convict us of the ways we need to grow.

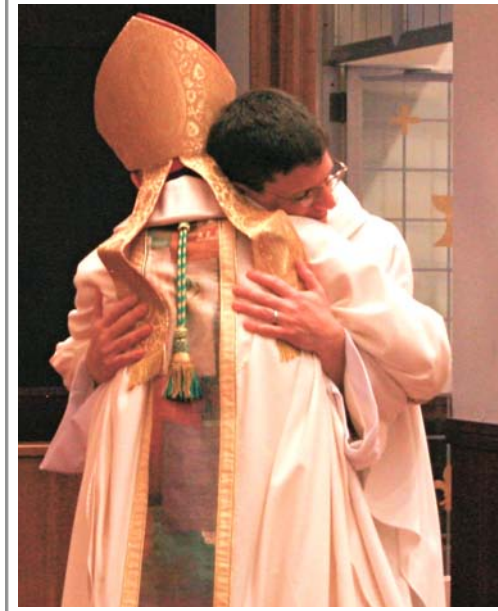
With that disposition, let us consider: how *do* we “receive” the priesthood, and more specifically, our priests? Do we hear and reverence, in the words and person of the priest, Jesus who is giving Himself to us in them?

With what “eyes” do we behold them? Do we look upon them with eyes of faith, those eyes that reveal to us the mystery of the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, causing us to look beyond the external

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THE MYSTERY OF THE PRIESTHOOD

On May 30, 2009, Brother Francis of the Redeemer was ordained a priest of God of the Catholic Church, by the Bishop of Steubenville, Daniel Conlon. After 4 years of intense preparation: studies, prayer, grace, trials and crosses, the moment arrived with all of its glory. The following day we rejoiced with Father Francis and almost 200 friends and family as he offered for the first time the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in thanksgiving to God for the priesthood. Here are some words from Father Francis about these momentous occasions.



the Mystery

Utterly changed, and yet completely the same: that's the mystery of a man ordained a priest. This is the mystery I willingly submitted to as I prostrated myself on the Cathedral floor. As I laid there – the litany of the saints being sung by those I love who had come to join in the celebration – I dedicated my priesthood explicitly to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, begging for the graces needed to be faithful and humble of heart, and inviting Them to use me as They please.

an earthen Vessel

I am aware that I am a "clay pot." Yes, I'm a mere "earthen vessel"...very fragile... and yet, by God's design, filled now with a treasure beyond compare. Even the Bishop reminded me of this when, in his homily he referred to the first reading from St. Paul: *"We hold this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us." 2 Corinthians 4:7*

the treasure contained

As a priest, I still *feel* the same as I did before the ordination; so much so that I still have to remind myself, at times, that I'm a priest! But the man ordained to the priesthood is changed – *utterly changed* – as what once was bread is changed, when it becomes the Eucharist: the very Body of Christ. My anointed hands have now held high the Mystery for all to see. Christ has used me as a vessel of His Mercy to forgive sins, and as a channel to spread the balm of His healing Love. What a humbling experience! I am allowed an intimate glimpse into the soul of another, that sometimes even those closest to that person are not privileged to have. I will never be the same again.

more than words

How, though, am I to put into words what happened to me that Saturday morning, when Heaven was wedded to earth in such a marvelous way? How would you explain, if asked, what it's like to be a human being? Not such an easy task. Neither is it so simple to describe such an overwhelming reality as the priesthood, especially when experienced from the "inside". What happened to me, as I was ordained, is something so intimate and personal, and yet something so transcendent and not of myself. I'm unable to find words to describe this wondrous gift, at least not this side of Heaven. As I continue to offer Our Lord the free use of my humanity, so that He may bring His Divinity into this world once more, I hope that the fruit which will be borne through my priestly ministry will eloquently express all that needs to be said, and will greatly glorify the Father.

"One kneels in the consciousness of one's nothingness and rises a priest forever." St. John Marie Vianney

The Vocation of Father Matthias to the PRIESTHOOD: to be a Beacon of Hope in Africa's darkness

During the month of June, the Order was blessed by the visit of our dear friend and fellow "extended" external member, Father Matthias Nsamba from South Africa.

Born and raised in Uganda, he generously serves the peoples of South Africa in the name and love of the Two Hearts. He serves several parishes, the poor, and also the youth, promoting chastity for the prevention of AIDS through conversion and embracing the faith.

He has seen many tragedies in his short but full life as a priest. As we watched the video of his ordination, he pointed to this and that young man or woman, singing and dancing for joy, and said, "This one I buried. This one is sick with HIV. This one passed away." During his stay with us he shared many stories of his work and ministry. He taught us about the lively and jubilant way in which the peoples of South Africa express their faith. He shared with us about the challenges that deeply embedded superstitions, prejudices and traditions of the culture create for missionaries. He made more real for us the poverty that so many people face each day, not even knowing where that day's food will come from; and how such poverty leads many to promiscuity, crime and despair.

*We are truly astounded at the gift of faith and truly indefatigable joy with which the Hearts of Jesus and Mary have blessed our dear Father Matthias, as well as all the people to whom he ministers. In a world of darkness, he is one of our Lord's **beacons of hope**.*



Why did you become a priest?

I became a priest to serve God and His people, to exist for others. My parish priest in Uganda was an exemplary man, and he encouraged my vocation. He always spent himself for the sake of others. I saw him always around the village spending his time serving the poor, visiting the sick and helping the needy; so that touched me a lot. I went to him for advice when I was still young, and asked him what one does to become a priest, and he advised me what to do and where to go. I was fourteen years old.

How did your family react to your vocation?

My whole family was supportive of my vocation. I'm not the only priest in the family—there are some others in the extended family—and so it is not something new to them. Sometimes in the African culture, families look down upon priests because they don't marry and they don't have children, and children are looked upon as a treasure, because without children the family cannot grow. The encouragement my family gave was a great support so that I could prepare well for seminary studies.

How did you become a member of the Order?

I was in a chapel in Nairobi, Kenya praying and I came across a prayer card which touched my heart in a way that I'll never, never forget. That prayer card had a very beautiful prayer called "Prayer In Union With Jesus". At the bottom of that prayer, there was address of the Order of the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary. I wrote for more prayer cards because that prayer meant a lot to me. Then one of the members replied with more material about the Two Hearts, and that is how my relationship with the Order started. I remember even for my priestly ordination I used an image of the Two Hearts. I continued communicating with the Order until my first visit in the summer of 2004. At that time, I spent two weeks praying with the members and learning more about the Order of the Two Hearts. On the 16th of September 2006, during a pilgrimage to a shrine of Our Lady in Italy, Dr. Mark Miravalle, the director of the External Members, received my first vows as an External Member of the Order.

Can you tell us about your latest visit to the Order?

I came for the ordination of Father Francis, and to immerse myself in the charism of the Order, having a time of retreat. On the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, June 20th, 2009, I had the great privilege of

becoming a perpetual External Member. This will help me to live up to the charism of the Order as I continue to serve God's people in Africa. You cannot give what you don't have. I have been filled with the Love, Mercy, Peace and Joy of the Two Hearts, and so now I can reach out in acts of mercy with compassion, love, joy, peace, and understanding. I came as an empty vessel. I've been filled by the Two Hearts, so I'm ready to go and nourish God's people.

(To all who contribute to the Just One Dollar for Africa campaign, you will be pleased to know that Father and his work with orphans and AIDS victims is one of the 5 organizations through which your donations are distributed.)



Father Matthias and Father Francis

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Internal and External Members at the Ordination of Father Francis

appearance to what is truly there? Or do we perhaps use other “eyes” that cannot, or will not, see beyond the humanity of the priest, and particularly that “humanity” that may clash with our own?

Is there, at this moment, a priest that I can think of, that I regularly criticize? Are there priests in my life that I have complained about, disliking what they have done or said?

When we are in Adoration or when we receive Holy Communion, it would be a sad and pitiable reception if we thought only about the accidents of the Eucharist, that is the color of the host or the taste of the wine. It would be a miserable waste if we considered the Gift of the Eucharist as only some special bread that does nothing but dissolve in our mouth, and cannot even satisfy physical hunger. Can we not, in all honesty, admit that there are times (perhaps more than we are comfortable confessing) when we do get caught up in examining and reacting to the “accidental qualities” of our priests: this one’s voice, that one’s homilies, this one’s manners, that one’s inability to run the parish, manage finances, etc. etc. Don’t we at times consider the priest merely as one to “fulfill our needs” and conclude that he barely can do even that?

Our Lord and Our Lady over the centuries and throughout the world ceaselessly call us to pray for our priests, do penance for them and above all never, ever judge them. Priests need our respect and support, our prayers and

penance. Jesus and Mary know intimately each and every priest—faithful or unfaithful—and for Them, each one, without exception, is beloved. Certainly They are aware of weaknesses and frailties; painfully They behold the scandals tragically committed by our priests, as well as the loss of faith and lack of love. But it can be confidently asserted that no one more than They support, pray and suffer for the priests. It can seem so easy for us, when we see errors, lack of faith, infidelity and sin, to justify our criticism and judgments of our priests. But this can never be the case; it is never right. We do no service to God, the Church, our neighbors or ourselves when we criticize or condemn priests.

“Without the Sacrament of Holy Orders, we would not have the Lord.

Who put him there in that tabernacle?

The priest.

Who welcomed your soul at the beginning of your life?

The priest.

Who feeds your soul and gives it strength for its journey?

The priest.

Who will prepare it to appear before God, bathing it one last time in the blood of Jesus Christ?

The priest, always the priest.”

St. John Marie Vianney

Pope Benedict XVI as vicar of Christ and head of His Church is calling all priests as well as the faithful to take a renewed and deepened look at the priesthood. Priests are in need of this renewal and they have been given this year for that purpose. Yet, how can our priests be re-enchanted without the support of our prayers, our penance, and above all, *our love*? Our Holy Father has unlocked a treasury of graces and it is our job to help pour them out by begging them from heaven. God never intended for the priests to fulfill their call alone. He wants to give them all they need. He will do so if we but ask.

Let us take advantage of Heaven’s abundance and pray for our priests. Let us be generous and offer penance so that our priests may be lifted up in heart and spirit. Perhaps someone could give up a particular T.V. program or a favored drink . . . for a certain day each week, or for a month, or for the whole year. Maybe it is time to finally give up some bad habit and offer it so that a particular priest can give up his. You are welcome to unite with us spiritually here at the Order on Mondays when there is an optional fast on bread and water for priests. We can also think about ways to support our priests: words of encouragement, service in the rectory or parish, withholding a complaint or criticism, accepting corrections or suggestions with faith and trust. Let us embrace this year as an opportunity to serve and unite with the Two Hearts and all that They desire for Their priests.