

We wish to share with you this beautiful poem written by Sue Cavanaugh, O.P.B. It reflects so well the heart of our Founder Father Gerald. Thank you, Sue!

**Heart's Queries
At the Twelfth Station**

Silent lance piercing deeply
Sacred Heart of Jesus,
Did you make sharp echo in
Sorrowful Mother standing there?
Did blood and water bursting forth -
Last measure of Love's mercy -
Drench her flowing mantle?
Penetrate the depth of her?
Did she conceive in new fruitfulness
Precious annunciation of holy Church
In womb of heart all immaculate?
Did fertile seed cling to her,
Quicken its fragile life in her?
Did fiery tongues, rushing winds on
Pentecost's bright morn
Birth most pure Infant Church forth,
Mary's co-redeeming love ever growing
In compassionate care,
Bringing little souls to Eternal Life?

March 6, 2016 A.D.

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**STRENGTHEN
YOUR
BROTHERS**



Oblate Reflection

Spring 2016

**“Behold, Satan has demanded to sift you all like wheat,
but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail;
and once you have turned back,
you must strengthen your brothers.”**

Lk 22:31-32

These striking words to His Apostles and specifically to the one He appointed as His Vicar, the first Pope, Jesus repeats today, not just to His bishops and priests, but to us as well, we who have been called in a special way to strengthen our brothers in their sacerdotal life.

To support and help priests be strong in these very challenging times is a wonderful way we can express our gratitude for the precious and countless gifts of Divine Mercy we receive through them.

How can we strengthen our brothers who are priests? In our last reflection, we spoke about Mary's merciful eyes and how we want to see as she sees. Looking at priests with understanding and compassion can greatly bless and encourage them without saying a word. Think what it meant to Jesus to meet Mary's eyes as He was carrying His cross to Calvary, and how it may have been her loving gaze that gave Dismas the courage to ask Jesus to remember him...

Our lives are offered for *all* priests: for those who are holy and for those who have not lived up to their sacred calling, including those who have acted like *thieves* in their ministry. Our mission is to bring grace and mercy to all.

As we reach out to strengthen our brothers, there is a particular group of priests who need our support more than we may realize. They are ones who are faithful, who have persevered through many trials and have helped make others strong in their suffering and pain. They seem so strong themselves; outwardly who would guess that they are hurting? Yet in their hearts, they are struggling intensely. These are the ones we especially wish to console and encourage in this reflection. What can we say to them? What are some things we can do to help them?

First, by our lives and our Apostolate, we say: **“We are here for you. We are with you in your sorrows and uncertainty, your fears and fatigue. We love you and are praying for you.”** If there is one thing we want priests to know is that they are not alone.

Sometimes our Lord allows priests to go through very difficult trials that leave them wondering: *What happened? Did I do something wrong? Am I being punished? Lord, I have always tried to be faithful. Why am I in such a state?*

They could even find themselves calling out to God in the words of Psalm 44:

“This befell us though we had not forgotten you, though we had not been false to your covenant, though we had not withdrawn our hearts.” (v. 18,19)

strengthen the whole family. Every priest and Bishop needs our love and prayers and this is our primary mission. Pope Francis has specifically and repeatedly asked that we pray for him. Our priests and bishops too, are counting on our prayers. With the grace of God and the help of our Blessed Mother, may we be faithful intercessors all the days of our life, and may we encourage many others to join us in our Apostolate!

Oblate News

Deceased Member

Please pray for the happy repose of the soul of **Mary Inez Lipinski, O.P.B.** from Albuquerque, NM, who was called Home to God on Palm Sunday, March 20th, 2016, her 95th birthday. She came from a family of 12 children, and has been part of our spiritual family since 1983 when she became a Lay Associate of the Priesthood. She made her Solemn Resolution as an Oblate of the Precious Blood on September 21, 1996. Mary was also an auxiliary member of the Legion of Mary, a promoter of the Miraculous Medal, a member of the Living Rosary Association, America Needs Fatima, the People’s Eucharistic League, the Right to Life Committee of New Mexico, an auxiliary member of the Brothers of the Good Shepherd, a spiritual daughter of Padre Pio and a devotee of Saint Philomena. May our dear Oblate continue to intercede for all of us still on our way! She and her husband Vincent “Val” (also deceased), adopted a son who became a priest: Rev. Vincent A. Lipinski. Please keep him and the entire family in your prayers as well.

are helped, inspired, and moved by their homilies. A little note, a sincere word of gratitude can mean so much.

“Take time, quality time. This means being ready to listen patiently and attentively to everything the other person wants to say. It requires the self-discipline of not speaking until the time is right. Instead of offering an opinion or advice, we need to be sure that we have heard everything the other person has to say. This means cultivating an interior silence that makes it possible to listen to the other person without mental or emotional distractions. Do not be rushed, put aside all your own needs and worries, and make space. Often the other... does not need a solution to his or her problems, but simply to be heard, to feel that someone has acknowledged their pain, their disappointment, their fear, their anger, their hopes and their dreams. (AL, 137)

We can strengthen our priests by seeking to bring out the very best in them and by helping them to grow to their greatest potential. The priesthood, like all family life -

“is a ‘shepherding’ in mercy. Each of us [and every priest], by our love and care, leaves a mark on the life of others...Each of us is a ‘fisher of men’ (Lk 5:10) who in Jesus’ name ‘casts the nets’ to others, or a farmer who tills the fresh soil of those whom he or she loves, seeking to bring out the best in them...” (AL, 322)

These are just a few passages from “The Joy of Love,” that we have considered in the light of our Apostolate of prayer for priests. There are many more! It is our hope that you are inspired to prayerfully read the entire Exhortation for it is a loving message from the pastoral heart of our Holy Father. How blessed we are to be members of the family of God. As we grow in our love for one another, we

If we want to know how best to help and support our bishops and priests, let us turn to our Blessed Mother. Imagine her listening with Jesus to the anguished prayers of her priestly sons, and in her tender love speaking to Jesus in the wisdom of the same Psalm 44:

“[Son], their own strength can not save them; it is your strength and the light of your face.”

“No arm of their own will bring them victory. It is your right hand, your arm and the light of your face for you love them.” (v.4)

Mary reminds us how much we need Jesus and to keep our gaze on the light of His face, particularly in the midst of persecution, attacks from the media, and sufferings of all kinds. She especially wants us to remember that priests are members of our universal family: our spiritual fathers, brothers, and sons in Christ. The love and strength of our Lord Jesus Christ is what priests need to fulfill their sacred calling: they need to know the love that Jesus has for them, and to receive His love, make it present and communicate it as they build up the family of God.

With this in mind, we can find excellent counsel and pastoral guidance for how we can better relate to and care for our priests from what Pope Francis offers about the family. For example, in the priesthood, as in family life, “we need to cultivate that strength of love which can help us [and all priests] fight every evil threatening it.” (*Amoris Laetitia* (AL), 119). We want priests to have a love so strong that “it stands firm in hostile surroundings” and has “a constant readiness to confront any challenge.” Pope Francis, echoing St. Paul, describes it as “a love that never gives up even in the darkest hour.” (AL, 118)

Our vocation is to offer our lives for priests particularly so that they may persevere in love and never give up.

As you read the following excerpts from our Holy Father's recent Apostolic Exhortation "*Amoris Laetitia*" - "*The Joy of Love*," consider how you can apply them in your relationships with your pastors, and how these practices can help strengthen them in their ministry:

"It is a profound spiritual experience to contemplate our loved ones [our priests] with the eyes of God and to see Christ in them. This demands freedom and openness which enable us to appreciate their dignity. We can be fully present to others [priests] only by giving fully of ourselves and forgetting all else. Our loved ones [our priests] merit our complete attention. Jesus is our model for this, for whenever people approached to speak with him, he would meet their gaze, directly and lovingly (cf. Mk 10:21). No one felt overlooked in his presence..." (AL, 323)

Think how much time priests spend being present to their people, attentive to their needs and concerns, comforting them in their sorrows, sharing in their joys, and how this requires them to be good listeners, to give of themselves completely, and to have a "holy self-forgetfulness." One way we can strengthen our pastors and Shepherds is by showing them the same loving kindness. See Christ in your priests. Most of all—and this is very important— pay attention to Jesus. Listen to Him. Console Him. Visit and be present to the Eternal High Priest and entrust all the cares of His priests to Him, for He cares for them.

We can strengthen priests, too, as one of you so beautifully expressed, by our vulnerability: our willingness to be wounded by misunderstandings, anger, and

rejection—the same sufferings priests and bishops undergo—out of love for Jesus and His anointed ones.

Priests and bishops are often highly criticized either explicitly or in the minds of those to whom they minister. Many feel like they are a walking target and are constantly under surveillance and scrutiny. It can be very hard at times for them not to get discouraged and lose their confidence and peace. What a difference it would be if we kept this in mind:

"Far from ingenuously claiming not to see the problems and weaknesses of others [priests], it sees those weaknesses and faults in a wider context. It recognizes that these failings are part of a bigger picture. We have to realize that all of us are a complex mixture of light and shadows. The other person [the priest] is much more than the sum of the little things that annoy me. Love does not have to be perfect for us to value it." (AL, 113)

Let us also recall and help priests to remember the beautiful message of St. John Paul II: "*We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father's love for us and our real capacity to become the image of his Son.*" (*World Youth Day 28 Jul 2002*) When we have this kind of vision then we clearly see that priests, like children, "are a gift. Each one is unique and irreplaceable...We love our [priests] because they are [priests], not because they are beautiful, or look or think as we do, or embody our dreams. We love them because they are [priests]..." (see AL, 170)

We can strengthen our ordained brothers by how we speak to them: with kindness and respect, expressing our appreciation and support. By letting them know when we