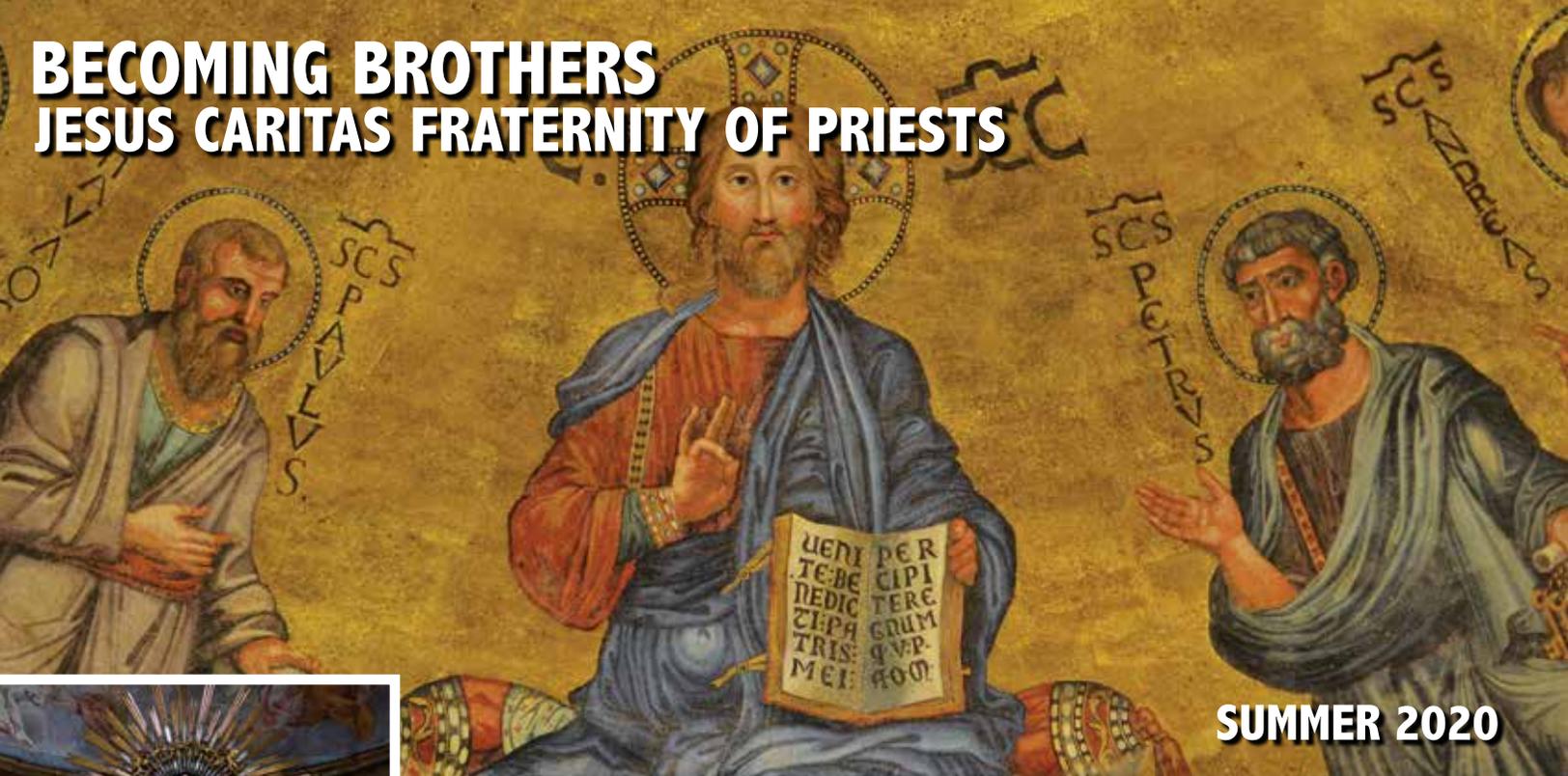


BECOMING BROTHERS JESUS CARITAS FRATERNITY OF PRIESTS



SUMMER 2020



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Farewell from the Responsible

Dear Brothers and Friends of the Fraternity,

It's nesting season for Loggerhead turtles here on Tybee. The female turtles are 200+ pounds and crawl up on the beach during the night to dig a hole into which they lay 100 to 125 eggs before returning to the sea. Sixty days later the nest/hole "erupts" as these tiny, adorable creatures come forth from the nest and very quickly march to the sea. The season begins towards the end of the Easter season and so in a wonderful way nature extends my reflection on the Paschal Mystery with the entombment of the eggs followed by their eruption to new life.

The Mystery of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is played out time and again as we experience the joys, sorrows, and renewed life in our individual journeys – experiences which reveal the presence of Jesus in new ways. I've no doubt that the Paschal experience of the Coronavirus Pandemic will lead us to new life in Christ. It may take a little longer than a 60-day incubation period and yet in some ways I think many of us are already experiencing new life.

I am absolutely certain that I'll be experiencing new life as I step down from my service to the Fraternity as National Responsible at the end of my term on July 24, 2020. Not being able to gather for our National Assembly during this pandemic put my "retirement" in doubt. So, I am so very grateful to the National Assembly for the coming up with a plan that will allow me to pass on the joys of leadership at the end of my term.

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WHAT YOUR BROTHER PRIESTS ARE READING

Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor by Leonardo Boff — Orbis Books, Maryknoll NY

The Holy Father has asked us after the Pan-Amazon Synod to give attention to his teachings in *Laudato Si*. Not wishing to ignore his invitation, but not able to do much retirement, I pulled a book off my shelf to read by Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*.

Boff is a Franciscan priest and Brazilian theologian and sees the threatened Amazon of his native country as a shadow throughout. “The Earth is in an advanced stage of exhaustion; labor and creativity are being bypassed through the technological revolution... land and workers both are perilously wounded and bleeding.” (p.9)

But his writing surfaced in me a childhood fear of science which made me feel that I was shrinking as I worked my way through the pages, becoming ever smaller and insignificant in this vast universe with tiny Gaia a blue speck from outer space. But simultaneously it struck me that God was increasing in size and majesty, in power and wisdom. It convinced me that I am only a steward on this planet, and I better live up to my obligation.

— Ron Belisle, ronbelisle@hctc.com

Modern Physics and Ancient Faith by Stephen Barr -- University of Notre Dame Press (2013)

I have read several books over the years which synthesize faith with science, but recently came across this one, which has become my favorite by a professor at the University of Delaware. I hesitated to open it – looked so daunting – but once I read the preface and first couple of short chapters, I could see it was right up my alley. Dr Barr explores why many scientists are actually believers and what has led them to it. He makes the strongest argument yet to say that the latest (20th century) developments in science actually open more possibilities (than close) to see the universe as “designed.” Now, he’s not talking about “intelligent design,”

which is a Biblically-fundamentalist view, but applying the discipline and logic of modern science answers the objections of atheists – including Darwin, Dawkins, and others.

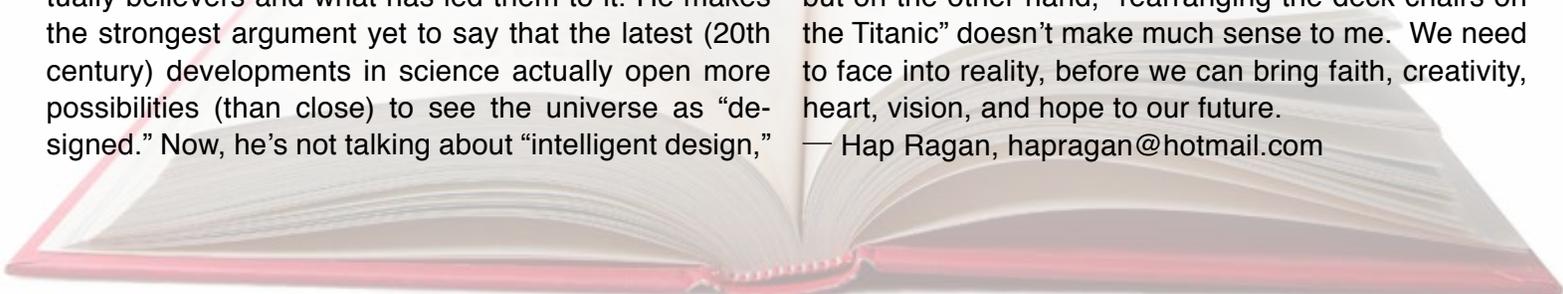
I’m currently reading Andrew Roberts’ *Napoleon: A Life*, Penguin Books (2014). The author more recently penned “*Churchill*,” but this subject matter interested me more. You could say that Napoleon was not only a military strategist, but a brilliant leader interested in a wide breadth of disciplines including law, physics, human behavior – he was the penultimate micromanager, also – with his fingers in essentially every aspect of government and discourse. He was no friend of the Church, of course, which motivates my interest as well. His love letters to Josephine are breathtaking! You know he was only marginally French, right?

— John Jacquel, pastor@sjberie.org

Ken Follett stayed at home with me this Spring. Years ago, I read his *Pillars of the Earth* and loved his writing. *Pillars* is a historical novel set in 12th England about lots and lots of nasty intrigue surrounding the building of a gothic cathedral. Before the Tybee library closed, I was able to take out 7 DVD’s with an eight-part mini-series based on Follett’s novel being one of them. As is usual with many novels brought to the scene, it was quite different from what I remembered of the book, but it was still binge worthy. During the stay at home orders, I also enjoyed on Audible Follett’s *Hornet Flight* which was a very entertaining WWII spy thriller.

I’ve just started reading *Mass Exodus* by Stephen Bullivant, which is advertised as the first serious historical and sociological study of Catholic lapsation and disaffiliation. Perhaps, I should consider reading something a little less depressing during a pandemic, but on the other hand, “rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic” doesn’t make much sense to me. We need to face into reality, before we can bring faith, creativity, heart, vision, and hope to our future.

— Hap Ragan, hapragan@hotmail.com



Blessed Charles De Foucauld is to be CANONIZED A SAINT

As reported by Hannah Brockhaus

On Wednesday, May 27, 2020, Pope Francis advanced the sainthood cause Bl. Charles de Foucauld, a French missionary killed in Algeria in 1916. De Foucauld, also known as Brother Charles of Jesus, was a soldier, explorer, Catholic revert, priest, hermit, and religious brother, who served among the Tuareg people in the Sahara Desert in Algeria. He was assassinated by a band of men at his hermitage in the Sahara on Dec. 1, 1916.

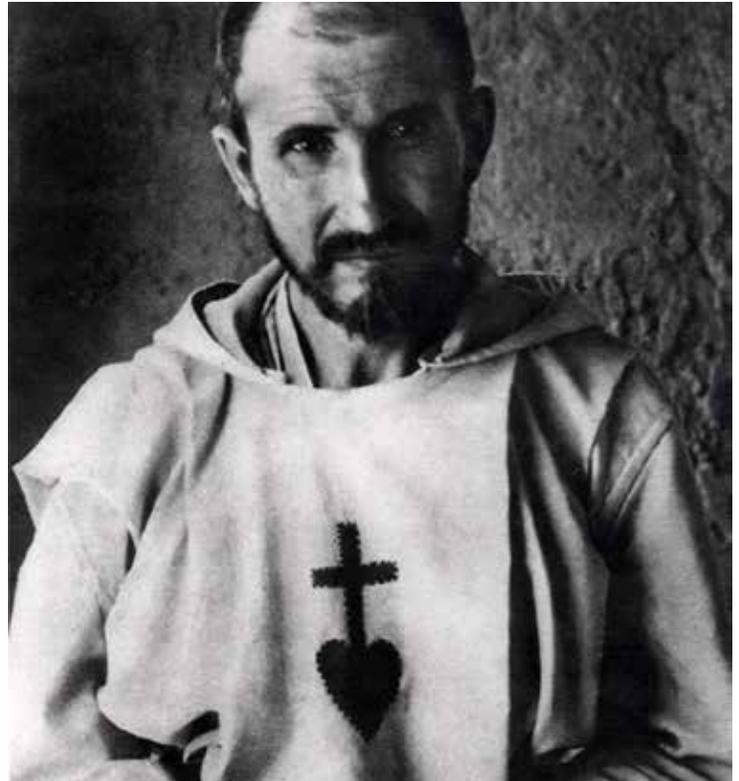
De Foucauld was born in Strasbourg in 1858. He was raised by his wealthy and aristocratic grandfather after being orphaned at the age of six. He joined the French military, following in the footsteps of his grandfather. Having already lost his faith, as a young man he lived a life of indulgence and was known to have an immature sense of humor. De Foucauld resigned from the military at age 23 and set off on a dangerous exploration of Morocco.

Contact with strong Muslim believers there challenged him, and he began to repeat to himself: "My God, if you exist, let me come to know you." He returned to France and, with the guidance of a priest, came back to his Catholic faith in 1886, at the age of 28. The following saying is attributed to him: "As soon as I believed in God, I understood that I could not do otherwise than to live for him alone."

De Foucauld realized a vocation to "follow Jesus in his life at Nazareth" during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He was a Trappist monk in France and Syria for seven years. He also lived as a hermit for a period near a convent of Poor Clares in Nazareth. He was ordained a priest in 1901 at age 43 and left for northern Africa to serve among the Tuareg people, a nomadic ethnic group, saying he wanted to live among "the furthest removed, the most abandoned."

In the Sahara he welcomed anyone who passed by, whether Christian, Muslim, Jewish, or pagan.

He was deeply respectful of the faiths and cultures he lived among. During his 13 years in the Sahara he learned about Tuareg culture and language, compiling



a Tuareg-French dictionary, and being a "brother" to the people. The priest said he wanted to "shout the Gospel with his life" and to conduct his life so that people would ask, "if such is the servant, what must the Master be like?"

De Foucauld was the inspiration for the founding of Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests and several lay associations, religious communities, and secular institutes of laity and priests, known collectively as "the spiritual family of Charles de Foucauld."

At his beatification in 2005, Pope Benedict XVI said as a priest, de Foucauld "put the Eucharist and the Gospel at the center of his life. He discovered that Jesus -- who came to unite Himself to us in our humanity -- invites us to that universal brotherhood which he later experienced in the Sahara, and to that love of which Christ set us the example."

A CORONAVIRUS *Survivor*

My name is Alejandro Trejo and I am the pastor at Our Lady of the Desert with the Diocese of Yakima Washington, and it was a difficult lent journey for me. I was diagnosed with coronavirus in early March. After feeling ill for a few days and being given medication by my doctor for what appeared to be a type of flu, I kept getting worse and worse. I started developing Pneumonia and was admitted to Kadlec Medical Hospital in Richland on March 7. I was under isolation in the Intensive Care Unit and my first thought was that I needed to surrender myself to God. I prayed, if You want me to recuperate, this is your will. I also prayed the Prayer of Abandonment...

**Father,
I abandon myself into your hands.
Do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me,
and in all your creatures –
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul:
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands without reserve,
and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father.
Amen.**

— Charles de Foucauld

During the long days I was often alone in the hospital room, with a nurse coming in periodically to check my vital signs. Bishop Joseph Tyson and my brother Cesar Trejo, came to visit several times, bringing inspirational books and motivational company. I started thinking about Lent, I was thinking, this is my Lent, my time to talk to God more. It was the beginning of a new journey with Jesus of Nazareth. I am someone who is very dedicated to Marian devotions, so I also prayed to Blessed Mother for her protection.

I thought about death, that maybe I was going to die. In this journey, this suffering, I was thinking of the suffering Jesus had. My suffering did not compare to the suffering he had, but I shared some of that suffering. I offered this illness for those (others) who are suffering, ill. Amazingly, and thanks to all the prayers and support, I did not panic, despite my very serious condition. I trust in God. I felt okay with God's will.

And now, happily, the tide has turned. I was released from the hospital on March 18. However, I had to recuperate in Yakima before being released by my doctor to go back to my parish in June. Praise God! I am grateful for everyone's prayerful support.



Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests National Assembly

The Spiritual Well-being of the Diocesan Priesthood

July 19 – 23, 2021 in Detroit, Michigan

Unfortunately, the Coronavirus pandemic has turned our triennial National Assembly of Jesus Caritas Fraternities into a quadrennial event. So please mark your calendars! We will gather next summer at the St. Paul of the Cross Retreat Center in Detroit

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A Fraternal Spirituality

As Diocesan priests we are more or less left to find our own path to a solid spiritual life. The Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests has helped many of us to find a spirituality that works; that intimately connects us to Jesus and the Father's will for our lives. The life of an eccentric French priest living among Moslems in the Sahara is not an easy "sell" for many Diocesan priests, but reflecting on the how and the why that led Blessed Charles to live out his deep love for Jesus can give spiritual strength to our priestly ministry.

It would not hurt to review these spiritual charisms of Blessed Charles with your fraternity, which can be explored in greater depths on our web site, <https://jesuscaritasusa.org/>. Jesus Caritas Fraternities should encourage:

- Daily Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament
- Modeling our lives on Jesus in the Gospels
- Simplicity of Life
- Reviewing our life with our brothers in fraternity on a monthly basis
- Becoming a Universal Brother as we reach out to the peripheries.
- Times of Solitude as experienced in a Desert Day
- A Month of Nazareth which forms a priest in these charisms
- Friendship and Fraternity with all our brother priests

Come and See by the Sea

Blessed Charles de Foucauld's home in the North African desert became known as a place of brotherhood, a "fraternity," where everyone – whether rich or poor, Christian, Jew, Muslim, or atheist – was welcome. I'd like to practice the same type of hospitality, so I invite you to spend a few days by the Sea with me, sharing the hour and fraternal companionship.

Tybee is a barrier island on the Georgia coast near Savannah. It is a bit quirky or bohemian where wonderfully friendly people set a slower pace known as "Tybee time." I have two guest rooms that share a bathroom and if you'd like to bring all your fraternity brothers for rest, retreat or vacation that can be arranged. Give me a call – Hap Ragan -706-267-1073.

WEEK OF NAZARETH

The Week of Nazareth is a newly developed Retreat Program that the National Leadership is promoting to help presbyterates and individual fraternities get a deeper sense of the how the spiritual charisms of the Fraternity can enrich the spiritual well-being of Diocesan priests. Greg Pawloski, Mark Mertes, and Richard Reiser are meeting to work on this "pilot" program to be rolled out at a retreat center in the Midwest when such gatherings feel safe again. Alex Trejo has reported that the priests of his Diocese have been directed in this year of the pandemic to do a "retreat by themselves," and perhaps his brothers in Yakima would be open to the Week of Nazareth as a possibility for a good retreat experience. The convent in Wenatchee, WA, is available and Ron Belisle would help.

From the Responsible *continued from front cover*

Msgr. Joe Greeley who retired last year as a pastor in the Archdiocese of Los Angelis will take over leadership as our National Responsible until we can meet for our postponed National Assembly in July of 2021. I am grateful to Joe for giving me the gift of new life. He is the perfect man for the job. Joe has great enthusiasm for our spirituality and has recently been part of the team that is developing on our new formation experience, the Week of Nazareth. He also has overseen the finances of the Fraternity for my entire six-year term and like our spiritual mentor, Blessed Charles de Foucauld, Joe now lives in the desert.

The National Fraternity wisely decided to share in some of the responsibilities of the Responsible.

So, Fr. Alex Trejo from the Diocese of Yakima has been invited to service the Fraternity as the United States representative to the International Fraternities. Alex has already served as a delegate to the International Assembly in the Philippines and the Continental Assembly in the Dominican Republic. Fr. Ron Belisle who has great devotion to Blessed Charles and great enthusiasm for sharing the spirituality of the Fraternity will take on the responsibility of putting out the quarterly newsletter, *Becoming Brothers*.

It has been a privilege to serve in this leadership position for the last six years. I am grateful for the co-operation of Bishop Don Hanchon and the members of the National Fraternity. I thank them for generosity and encouragement. It has been a joy to meet priests from every part of America. Your desire to journey with your brother priests and take responsibility for your each other's spiritual well-being has inspired me, time and time again. I am grateful for your generous financial support of the National Fraternity and above all for the support of your prayers.

I would have been completely overwhelmed as Responsible if our Administrator, Mrs. Shannon Axon, hadn't handle some many of the details and everyday responsibilities of the Fraternity with such grace and diligence. Thank you, Shannon, for your good work. I also want to express my gratitude to Mrs. Lisa McArdle who generously volunteered her amazing talent to make something visibly beautiful out of the chaotic materials I sent her every quarter for the newsletter. Thank you, Lisa, for being so good to the priests of the Fraternity.

So, it is time for me to step down and experience new life in other ways as I journey forward towards the Kingdom. Part of my journey will remain with my companions in the Fraternity as we try this year to promote the Week of Nazareth and celebrate the life of soon to be canonized St. Charles whose insights into priestly spirituality have formed the foundation for our fraternities. As I step down, I am conscious of the many things I failed to do, of many good intentions that were never realized. My deepest desire has always been to be a good parish priest and too often I gave my time and energy to those responsibilities before attending to my duties as Responsible. I know you'll forgive me for this, because that has always been the glory of fraternal life, with the exception of criminal activity, we've always been very good at standing by our brothers in their poverty. Praise God who has so richly blessed our lives with spirituality of priestly fraternity. Continue to pray for me as I will for you.

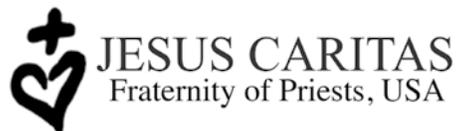
Fraternally in Christ,



Fr. Jerry "Hap" Ragan

JESUS CARITAS FRATERNITY OF PRIESTS

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Upcoming Dates

Week of Nazareth

September 2020 – Shelton, WA
October 2020 – House of Prayer, L.A., CA
January 2021 – Tybee Island, GA
February 2021 – Midwest (*place TBD*)

Jesus Caritas USA Assembly

St. Paul Retreat Center
July 19 – 23, 2021
Detroit, MI