

# GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



This month I celebrate the 31st anniversary of my presbyteral ordination. I am often asked what the highlights of my priesthood over these years have been. I have met and ministered to many people. I have celebrated the sacraments for too many people to remember each event. I have witnessed the power of the Lord's mercy and love every day in both extraordinary and ordinary ways. If there is one highlight that captures my priestly ministry, it has been the graced moments of witnessing people draw closer to Jesus. For a variety of reasons so many feel disconnected to Jesus. Just the opposite of what the Lord desires.



## CALLED TO SERVE

### ORDER OF FRIAR SERVANTS OF MARY

#### Vocation Newsletter

Jesus proclaims that we are the beloved of God. His life, ministry, suffering, death and resurrection solidify this fact. He emptied himself that we can be rich in the grace of God. He died that we can have life. The truth of God's abiding and unconditional love for us is the reason that Jesus was incarnated into human history. The signs of God's love are all around us. From the profound mystery of the Eucharist, the majestic beauty of nature, to the love from family and friends, the experience of God's love bathes our lives in abundance. Yet, with all of these realities, events and personages that bring the reality of God's love into our lives, many people feel alone, abandoned, marginalized or worthless. Many feel disconnected from others and from themselves as well. Even feeling God close is non-existent or strained. This brings the priestly ministry into greater focus which is to proclaim to all that God is always close to us and nothing we can say or do will drive God from us. The work of the spiritual life, indeed that work of being a disciple of Jesus, is to draw close to God, to let God be close to us. A priest must work on his spiritual life as well for from the priest's encounter with God

comes the ability to assist others in being close to God. The spiritual life is work, but work with a great purpose which is to stop and let God catch us. As a Servite friar, there are four tools of the Order's tradition that I use daily which helps me to encounter God that I can help others do so as well. These tools are the Conventual Life, Prayer, Study and Meditation.

The consecrated religious life has always been built around the conventual life. This life is not simply living with others but forming a community of one mind and one heart in, for and around the Lord Jesus. In the example of the apostolic community as written of in the Acts of the Apostles, the communal life is one where the friars share all things in common, pray and share the Eucharist together, share meals together, and form relationships of mutual support to walk together in the way of the Lord. For me, the life I share with my Servite brothers gives me the hope, support and encouragement I need to grow as a disciple of the Lord and to serve well God's people in my ministry. In the brothers of my community I have people who accompany me in my walk with the



Lord as I accompany them. In the lives of my brothers I have the example of how to follow the Lord. The conventual life calls me to deeper personal prayer.

Prayer is a conversation with God. In prayer, we commune with God and this encounter reminds us of the deep love that God has for us. In prayer, we are honest with God about the joys and hopes of our lives; we express our concerns, doubts and fears to the Lord; and we acknowledge our sin and ask for courage in our work of on-going conversion as

our understanding of the working of God that we may be informed for community life and for ministry. We study to seek a deeper understanding of how the world and humanity works. We study to better understand our faith that we can educate others in the ways of the Lord. The topics of our study can be theology, scripture, liturgy, the sacraments, psychology, the physical science and other disciplines that awaken our minds and hearts to how and what we can do to respond to the Lord's movement in life. Study assists us in doing better ministry because we are

**At the end of April Mr. Ed Murphy transitioned off the Servite Vocation Team. We are grateful for his work and ministry and wish him well. For all correspondence with the Vocation Office please e-mail me [donaldsiple@servitesusa.org](mailto:donaldsiple@servitesusa.org) OR call at 773-533-0360; ext. 210. I look forward to speaking and praying with you. God bless.**

we strive to be better disciples of Jesus. No matter where we are on life's journey, no matter what we have done, we are always loved and prayer is the place to experience this in the Lord. Daily prayer is not an option for the disciple of Jesus. Prayer is a must if we are to grow into the person that the Lord desires us to be. As a priest, my prayer moments with the Lord give me hope because whatever I am working through or need help with or are celebrating, God's faithfulness is the hope from which I encourage others in ministry to trust the Lord. Closely related to prayer is meditation.

informed in the best ideas and techniques for working with God's people. For a priest, sturdy is an intellectual encounter with God who imparts knowledge that in understanding ourselves and humanity we better can minister well and help people draw closer to God.

Christian meditation is always focused on Christ. Meditation is allowing one's entire being; especially one's mind and heart to focus on the Lord letting Him move our hearts and minds closer to His. Meditation uses a word or phrase from the scriptures as the focus, letting God's word become the dialogue with God. As disciples, we are invited to become Jesus' reflection in the world. Meditation allows our thoughts, words and actions to be purified and strengthened that we can better reflect the Lord to others. What helps meditation is making time for study.

The greatest joy of priesthood is helping God's people draw near to God that His love fills them with hope in all the moments and episodes of their lives. Using the tools of the spiritual life helps the priest encounter God that he in turn can help others encounter God in their lives. As you discern the Lord's call for your life, what tools do you use to draw near to God? What tools might you want to learn to assist you in being a good disciple of Jesus? Being a Servite priest has blessed my life because the Order's spiritual tradition are the tools I use to be a better disciple of Jesus and to best minister to His people. Whatever way you pray and whatever spiritual tools you use, let your encounter with the Lord be your hope for the life you live with Him. We Servites are praying for you. The Lord bless you and may Our Lady watch over you.

For many of us, study is something that we do or have done in a formal classroom setting. It involves a teacher, books, tests, grades, etc. Study for Servites is something different. Study is an encounter with knowledge to deepen

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