ON THE PRIESTHOOD AS A COMPASSIONATING COMMUNITY OF BROTHERS WHO SUFFER WITH CHRIST

As Venerable Archbishop Fulton J Sheen tells us in “The Priest is Not His Own” – we never hear anyone say: “I am studying to be a Victim!” No, what we hear are many generous men, young and older now, saying “I am studying to be a Priest!” But, Sheen goes on to say that unless you actually know that you are studying for both, then you will be prepared for neither.

A Priest who is not intimately bound up in the Passion of Christ – as Victim with Him – is not worthy of Him – and has no fraternity with him – nor with his brother Priest-Victims who are there to support him in his compassionating journey to Calvary and into everlasting life.

It was at the Holy Words of Consecration at that First Mass – at the Last Supper – that Jesus intimately bound not only Himself with us, but also us – as we are with all our brokenness and sinfulness – with Him. When He said: This is my Body! He was also saying at the same time: THIS IS OUR BODY!, Father. And when He said: This is my Blood! He was also saying at the same time: THIS IS OUR BLOOD!, Father. Really, truly and substantially: this is OUR Body, this is OUR Blood! Are you willing to fulfill your ordination duty from now on of compassionating with Him, sharing His very Sacred Passion and are you willing to hang with Him on the Cross? If not, then you are not a real Priest.

A Priest – in imitation of His Lord, His Master, His Savior – is always, at each and every moment: PRIEST-VICTIM. And if you are not willing to accept the “victim” aspect. Then you simply are not a true Priest. Or, you are a priest with many psychological and emotional difficulties because – you have a war going on inside you – the Victimhood of your priesthood trying to let you know that it is there. And if and when you acknowledge it, then the “yoke becomes EASY, and the burden LIGHT” by the working of the Holy Spirit within you.

Being dead to yourself – which you say you are in baptism – but which is magnified exponentially as you lay on the floor during the Litany of Saints at your ordination – your life is hidden with Christ in the heart of God the Father.

The Victim aspect can play out in any number of ways – depending on how the Lord Jesus wants to gift you with a share in his Passion and Death – but always know that the Resurrection follows – it always follows – and it is
the Light – the Light of Christ in the Darkness – and the Light at the end of the Tunnel of earthly struggle.

And so, I ask you, Father, are you willing as I am willing, to say to Christ Crucified: I AM WITH YOU. You may have suffered Calvary ALONE. But, at each and every Mass – when I mean: THIS IS OUR BODY! THIS IS OUR BLOOD – GIVEN FOR THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH! – then at each Mass I say: YOU ARE NOT ALONE, Lord Jesus – I AM WITH YOU – who are always with me, and all of us until the end of time.

This is your vocation, O Priest-Victim of God – may you never sign your name again without printing an invisible “pv” (priest-victim) after it. It is there! It always has been there! This makes you different from every other person on the face of the earth – except of course your brother priest-victims.

The fraternity of the priesthood that is boasted about – is not meant to be a social club, or a therapeutic process. It is meant to be rather a sharing with one another how the Lord is playing out his victimhood and priesthood in each of us – and not over cocktails and drinks, but over a concelebrated Mass of Thanksgiving for the ineffable, providential care for his people, and for us, that the Lord God – our Heavenly Father – provides – daily!

May charity begin at home – in our own local presbyterates!

And always remember, dear Father, that wherever you go – you are not alone by any means: The Father is the Orchestrator and Author of your very life’s purpose and work (your assignment); the Spirit ever leads you forth into the next moment (of your duty to do or to suffer); The Son, Jesus the Priest-Victim is grasping your left hand (gently leading you forth into your duty, your suffering); Mary, his Mother and yours is grasping your right hand – and steadying you (she who knows the struggle of earthly existence); St. Joseph, her Spouse, Foster-father of Jesus, is also your Guardian and Foster-father – he has your back (and as he Protected Jesus and Mary, so will he protect you); and of course, St. Andre Bessette, whose personage is inseparable from St. Joseph, has his back (the “pauper servus et humilis” to be your role model); and you have your own Guardian Angel (who will tell you his name if you simply ask for it in quiet) hovering and inspiring from above all the hours of the day and night. YES, WITH ALL OF THESE: YOU ARE NEVER ALONE: you have a holy entourage to assist you, really and truly, no matter where you go.

Father Willliam Dinga, Jr. (pv) - Given this date:  June 17, 2016