

**NEWS RELEASE \* National Federation of Priests' Councils**

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***“May the family be a sanctuary of life and love!”*** (Angelus Message of Pope St. John Paul II given on the Feast of the Holy Family, December 27, 1982)

***“The family which experiences the joy of faith communicates it naturally. That family is the salt of the earth and the light of the world; it is the leaven of society.”*** (Pope Francis, October 27, 2013)

The upcoming International Ordinary Synod on the Family in October and Pope Francis' highly anticipated September visit to the US for the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia served as a basis for the theme of the National Federation of Priests' Councils 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation and House of Delegates. A presbyteral “family” of 45 priests from 26 dioceses plus guests and exhibitors, gathered at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky from April 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 to pray, reflect and dialogue on their role as “Father Brother Son - The Priest in the Family of God.”

**Father Louis Cameli – “Who Am I Now?”**

The first plenary session of the Convocation featured a presentation by this year's Touchstone Award Recipient, Father Louis Cameli, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Fr. Cameli, who has a licentiate in theology and a doctorate in theology with a specialization in spirituality, serves as the Archbishop's delegate for Christian Formation and Mission in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

In his talk, “Who Am I Now?” he invited the gathered clergy to reflect on the priest in terms of family images, on how they can be understood... and misunderstood, and to do so through the lenses of who we are, what we are about and what our purpose is.

“Priesthood is about relationships, as opposed to power and jurisdiction,” said Fr. Cameli, drawing from the vision of Vatican II, particularly *Lumen Gentium*. Vatican II relocated the priest in terms of relationship fundamentally in three ways: in *persona Christi*, in relation to the presbyterate, and then ordered to the common priesthood of the people of God.

“The language of family for us as priests is metaphorical,” he emphasized. For example, the term “father” carries many positive, life-giving meanings. Yet a danger lies in a “father” who infantilizes the laity, resulting in domination and, at times, exploitation.

Regarding the familial word “brothers,” Fr. Cameli invited reflection on Mark's Gospel where Jesus redefines family as not of blood, but by “whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:35) Fr. Cameli clarified, “The language of family is important for us to embrace, but it is important to understand what we are talking about when we use it in regard to priesthood and presbyteral brotherhood.”

This is brought to even greater depth of meaning in Jesus' words from the cross to his mother Mary and the disciple John. (John 19:26-27) Jesus is giving us to each other in this interchange. In his physical absence, we are given by Christ to one another, responsible for the care of one another.

As priests we act *in persona Christi* most profoundly as we recite the words of institution. Yet, after

doing so, we genuflect as we are one with the body of believers in reverencing Christ's presence with us in the consecrated bread and wine, the Body and Blood of our Savior and brother.

Offering several quotes from *Presbyterorum ordinis*, Vatican II's Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, Fr. Cameli highlighted the various orders of responsibility:

- "In the name of the bishop they gather the family of God as a brotherhood endowed with the spirit of unity and lead it through Christ in the Spirit to God the Father." N. 6
- "On account of this common sharing... bishops are to regard their priests as brothers and friends..." N. 7
- "All priests... are bound together by an intimate sacramental brotherhood; in a special way they form one priestly body to which they are attached under their own bishop." N. 8
- "Priests, in common with all who have been reborn in the font of baptism, are brothers among brothers as members of the same Body of Christ which all are commanded to build up." N. 9
- "...priests have been placed in the midst of the laity so that they may lead them all to the unity of charity... Theirs is the task, then, of bringing about agreement among divergent outlooks in such a way that nobody may feel a stranger in the Christian community." N. 9

Fr. Cameli emphasizes the use of the word "ordered" does not imply a hierarchy that makes one superior to another, but "expresses a priority of relationship over function." "The role of priest and laity is to continue to build the family of life and love."

In family, Fr. Cameli notes, the sharing of wisdom and spiritual formation takes place. It is where we learn to love and to be loved. It is where we learn to sacrifice, to express faithful, generative love. "It is the place where we become more human, less defensive, less selfish, more loving, more available. It is the place where one develops conflict capability. If you can't learn how to fight and not destroy each other, intimacy is not possible."

In closing, he suggested priests ask themselves these questions: "How am I living?" "Are the elements of life and ministry aligned?" "Am I operating well affectively and effectively?" The healthy answer to all of these will help avoid clericalism, isolationism, the "lone ranger syndrome," and minimalism – doing the least possible and resisting being generous. A great example for us of this healthy priesthood, Fr. Cameli observes, is encapsulated in Pope Francis.

### **Mr. Joseph Ollier – "... Yet you do not have many Fathers ...' [1 Corinthians 4:15]: Fatherhood, Priesthood, and the Laity"**

"I come to you today first as a child of God, second as a brother, son, and father myself, and third as a lay person who has worked and ministered in the Church for most of the last quarter century. I bring with me fond memories of the priests who have been my pastors, teachers, mentors and friends." These words of introduction by Mr. Joseph Ollier set the tone for an incredibly affirming and challenging presentation by a lay person about the essential ministry of priests for the laity. Mr. Ollier, is coordinator of Youth Ministry at Ascension Parish in Kettering, Ohio and adjunct professor of Religious Studies at the University of Dayton, with Masters degrees in Theology and Secondary Education. His presentation focused on the spiritual fatherhood that priests – and biological fathers – are called to live.

"Fatherhood is a package deal – marriage, employment and shelter are key elements of the package. He cited the work of sociologist Nicholas Townsend. "What Townsend found was that for most men, it is marriage that is the linchpin in their roles as fathers – that their relationship with their children very literally runs through their wives – the mothers of their children. They really can't even envision

fatherhood apart from marriage. It's one of the reasons fathers tend to drift out of the lives of their children if they have those children out of wedlock or even after divorce – being a father and being a husband are so intimately connected that men don't function well as fathers when they become estranged from their wives.”

“What this means for those of us who are dads is that the best thing we can do for our children is to love our wives – their mother. What this means for ‘fathers’ in the priesthood is that it is imperative that you love your bride–the Church–and that you work hard to maintain that relationship with her.”

In marriage, it is easy to get caught up in the children and neglect and even forget the origins of love that brought your family together. It is important for couples to continue to nurture their bond as a couple to strengthen the family.

“So as a lay person, as one of your spiritual children, I urge you to take some time alone with my Mother, the Church. Date her. Court her. Never neglect your prayer life. Take time away from your parish or wherever you minister and go on retreat. Spend time in Adoration. Every once in a while just sit in the pew and remember what it was like to be at Mass before you were ordained – what it was like to long for Holy Orders – for the relationship you have now. Spend time with your brother priests. We need companionship and community. If I need time alone, I have to search for it. Make the time.”

“As husbands, we realize the better we take care of ourselves, the better we can take care of our marriages, and vice versa. And so I encourage you to take care of yourselves. Have a hobby or something you do just for yourself outside of your ministry. Take your vacations – we can handle things without you. Stay in shape – take care of your body and your mind. Develop friendships with both lay people and other priests.”

“We lay people need you to take care of yourselves as a body of priests – cherish and call forth the wide variety of charisms and gifts among you, so that you can cherish and call forth that same variety in us. As Proverbs 27:17 says, “as iron sharpens iron, so man sharpens his fellow man.” Sharpen each other. Make each other stronger. Love each other. And by doing so, you'll make the whole Church stronger.”

Mr. Ollier goes on to point out that Townsend's study suggested that fatherhood itself is really defined by 4 main aspects: Provision, Emotional Closeness, Protection, and Endowment... and each of these do apply to the spiritual fatherhood of priests. “Fatherhood means putting the spiritual roof over our heads and food on the table – it means providing the Sacraments as only an ordained person can do.”

The laity long for an emotional closeness to their priests and, hopefully, vice versa. “You matter a whole lot in the lives of the people under your care. Many lay people mark time and remember important events – and seemingly unimportant events - in their lives by the priests who were there and ministered to them. It's what Pope Francis has talked about that the shepherd should ‘have the smell of the sheep on them.’ Sometimes just being present is enough.”

The third aspect of fatherhood, Protection, is manifested in family by making sure that wives and children are safe from threats, fear, and danger, including shielding children from social and moral threats as well. Priests, in their ministry of teaching and preaching, can provide the protection of good social and moral teaching. But, Ollier adds, it is so important for us first to have protection for ourselves. “As spiritual fathers you must first protect yourselves by standing with each other as brother priests, by carving out time to tend to your own spiritual needs, and remembering that even if you are the only priest for miles around, you are not alone. There are many opportunities to gather as brothers.

And don't forget us lay people. Allow us to provide holy friendship.”

Finally, the aspect of Endowment regards the legacy that fathers want to leave their children. For priest fathers, it means providing lay people with opportunities to grow in holiness and to take a share in Jesus' roles of Priest, Prophet and King. It is a combination of both leading and pushing the flock where it needs to go. Lead us in prayer and the Sacraments, but also empower us to lead with you. “Just like the family is healthiest when everyone chips in and takes responsibility, the Church is healthiest when all of us, lay and cleric, share in the evangelizing mission of the Church and the sanctification of the workaday world. And for that to happen, we need your pastoral leadership. Challenge us. Raise the bar. Set expectations high. Don't be afraid to speak the Truth in love. Don't be afraid of offending people. Don't be afraid to lose parishioners. In Revelation the Lord says to the Church at Laodicea, “I know your deeds; I know you are neither hot nor cold. How I wish you were one or the other – hot or cold. But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth!” (Rev 3:15-16) We laity want something we can chew on. We want to be challenged – to be called to radical discipleship. We want to wrestle with hard questions without easy answers and to know that the Truth of the gospel is higher, deeper, and richer than anything the world has to offer. We want you to preach about the things that smack us every day because we need to know the Truth about how to live out our faith in a world that assaults it constantly. Lead us into fuller participation in the life of the Church, and push us to be the people God calls us to be.”

### **Archbishop Joseph Kurtz – “What does it mean to have a pastoral heart?”**

This question framed a talk given by Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D, Archbishop of Louisville and President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Archbishop Kurtz, who served as Bishop of Knoxville from 1999 to 2007 was originally ordained a priest for the Diocese of Allentown.

“To have a pastoral heart is to adopt a spirit of accompaniment as we enter into the lives of those we serve. It requires of us an openness and desire to cultivate the gift of the family to our churches and to our world.” Archbishop Kurtz encouraged priests to (re) read both Pope St. John Paul II's and Pope Francis' apostolic exhortations respectively; *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel).

In terms of his own observations and input derived from his own consultation on the upcoming Ordinary Synod, Archbishop Kurtz said that he would raise up three areas of focus:

- 1) “Our world is hungry for beauty!” People hunger for something, Someone who draws them out of themselves to offer their gifts to a greater reality, to adding life and beauty to the world.
- 2) “We need to raise up and allow families to inspire one another.” He observed that when married couples were asked about the church's ongoing outreach to them, that they commented, “After we got married, we thought the church felt that we were a finished product... We need to explore what it means to raise up mentors for families.”
- (3) “We need to nurture and develop the art of accompaniment.” How do we encourage people's sharing of faith and living out that faith?”

Archbishop Kurtz commented that the consultations thus far have suggested a great consensus for streamlining annulments; a greater discussion on spiritual communion; and same sex relationships, a discussion on what it means to treat people with dignity and (for everyone) to live a chaste life.

In a question and answer session following his talk, a number of priests brought up the need for helping presbyteral councils, as a consultative body for their bishops, be more effective. Archbishop Kurtz was clear that a body such as the NFPC is essential to continue to push this question and help

dioceses build those relationships among priests and with their bishop.

Also representing the US bishops' conference was Rev. Ralph O'Donnell, currently Associate Director of the USCCB Secretariat Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. Fr. O'Donnell is a priest of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Neb. and on July 1, 2015, will assume the role of Executive Director of the Secretariat which focuses on Priestly Life and Ministry, the Diaconate, Consecrated Life, and Vocations and Priestly Formation.

Fr. O'Donnell highlighted CCLV's recent collaborative Projects: "Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States" and "Preaching the Mystery of Faith." The Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers addresses the welcoming and integration of priest/missionaries from other countries seeking to minister in US dioceses. He encouraged attendance at two upcoming workshops on the document in Chicago (Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>) and Baltimore (Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup>). He also encouraged us to spread the word about the resources available on the USCCB website, in particular the homiletics website.

"A high priority is being given to the promotion of a culture of vocations," Fr. O'Donnell emphasized. Results of recent surveys regarding age, ethnic origin and who encouraged (or discouraged) the vocation of priests are included in the slides found on the NFPC website at <http://nfpc.org/annual-convocation/2015-talks-and-resources/> Also included are seminary enrollment trends and other useful data. Of note was the observation that college debt and immigration status are growing factors in preventing candidates from entering seminary.

In his President's Address, Fr. Tony Cutcher, a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, highlighted the need to find ways to engage more priests and priests' councils in collaborative work within their respective dioceses. He emphasized the programs offered by NFPC for Priest Councils and for individual priests. There are a number of factors affecting the decrease in membership, some related to lack of knowledge about the NFPC, some related to a particular bishop or presbyteral council choosing to disassociate for economic or ideological reasons. "It seems like a new bishop would welcome the workshop that NFPC offers for building effective presbyteral councils," Fr. Cutcher said. "We need to find more ways to reach out to encourage dioceses and individual priests to utilize the quality resources we have developed."

Following a Mass at Louisville's Cathedral of the Assumption, the annual Awards Dinner was held. The NFPC *Mandatum* Award is presented to an individual or organization whose service in the Gospel of Jesus Christ exemplifies the purpose and goals of the Federation, enhancing the ministry of presbyteral councils and seeking to expound on the issues and concerns affecting priests. The 2015 NFPC *Mandatum* Award was presented to Dolores J. Orzel, Creative Director of the National Vocation Awareness Division (NVAD) of J.S. Paluch Company, Inc. For 22 years Ms. Orzel has coordinated and hosted the NVAD's premier annual event, the Paluch Vocation Seminar, drawing together Vocation Directors from across the US as well as representatives from many church ministry organizations from the US and Canada.

This year's Touchstone Award was presented to Rev. Louis J. Cameli, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, an author, presenter, retreat director for priests, and mentor. He has served as director of ongoing formation under Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and most recently as delegate for Christian Formation and Mission under Cardinal Francis George. His monographs in collaboration with the USCCB include *Spiritual Direction for Priests: The Rediscovery of a Resource*, 1976; *Spiritual Formation in the Catholic Seminary*, 1984. In 2001, Fr. Cameli was principal writer and general editor of *The Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*. The Touchstone Award is presented to a priest who, in the view of the NFPC, is one whose service in the Gospel of Jesus Christ exemplifies

the purpose and goals of the Federation, whose leadership enhances the ministry of others and his words and deeds support the life and ministry of priests, thus a touchstone for genuine, quality priesthood.

The 2016 NFPC Annual Convocation will be held **April 18–21**, in Indianapolis, Indiana

*Prepared by Father Larry Dowling, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and pastor of St. Agatha Parish.*