



# Contemplate, and Share the Fruit

The Annual CL Priest Retreat continues to grow in size and has become a multi-national event, where priests gather for companionship so that they can go forth to bear fruit in their ministries. Preparing to enter the Year of the Priest 2009.

BY FR. JOHN C. CARRETT

One of the lessons that I took away from my brief time as a novice with the Dominicans was their motto: “Contemplate, and share the fruit of your contemplation.” What drew 50 priests, including one archbishop, to Malvern,

PA, for several days of contemplation at the annual spring Priests’ Retreat sponsored by Communion and Liberation? Certainly it was much more than the canonical requirement that priests make a yearly retreat. Fr. Tufaro, of Stamford, CT, had been given Msgr. Albacete’s Priest Retreat

addresses by his friend Fr. Peter Cameron, and he “resonated with his unabashed presentation of the Incarnational life.” Fr. John O’Connor, who came all the way from Christchurch, New Zealand, said that he had read several of Msgr. Giussani’s works as well as *Traces*

magazine, and he “wanted to hear more, and to meet other priests who had been moved by the same attraction.”

This past spring, on the cusp of Pope Benedict XVI’s initiation of the Year for Priests begun in June, Msgr. Albacete used two texts as the basis

of his talks: The Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI given to the Collège des Bernardins, in Paris, on September 12, 2008, and “Something that Comes Before,” notes from a talk by Luigi Giussani from the Assembly of CL Responsibles in 1993. Msgr. Albacete told the gath-

ered priests that “without the Resurrection, nothing makes sense.” The Resurrection not only defines the content of our faith, but it defines our very lives. It is in the light of the Resurrection that we become aware of our *existing*, and with that awareness, comes our awareness of the Mystery

Fr. Tufaro noticed at times a gap between his life as a priest and his life as a human being. He found Msgr. Albacete’s reflection that our first vocation is the call “to be a human being” liberating, and something that creates the possibility for experiencing community. Archbishop Prendergast of Ottawa, Canada, values Giussani’s belief that the quest for happiness is what unites all of us as human beings, and our encounter with Christ frees us for true happiness, for He is “the One who is Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.”

**THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES.** Fr. Lee Fangmeyer of Derwood, MD, was particularly moved by the emphasis on the reality of the Resurrection. An annual attendee, this year he came with a heavy heart because his best friend, Fr. Bill Finch, had just died on Holy Thursday. Fr. Lee said that, instinctively, he wanted to allow his grief to take over, but the coincidence of having to celebrate the Passion and Resurrection made him ask Christ for understanding of the Resurrection in light of his recent loss. After preaching at his friend’s funeral, Fr. Lee joined the retreat. In less than 48 hours, he encountered a sign of Christ’s love for him—through the synthesis by Msgr. Albacete. Monsignor said that Jesus seduces us through the circumstances of life, and not always through attractive things, as seen in the Old Testament, where God says that He will take us into the desert to seduce us. Fr. Lee recognized God’s action in his own life: ➤

Retreat participants after celebrating Mass at the Basilica Cathedral of Ss. Peter & Paul in Philadelphia.

CARL ANDERSON

## HISTORY IN THE RE-MAKING

A friendship among CL friends and priests and Knights of Columbus' Carl Anderson has blossomed into a continuing collaboration in the U.S. and at the August cultural Meeting in Rimini, where Mr. Anderson will again participate—a tangible sign of the universal unity of the Church.

BY FR. PETER JOHN CAMERON, O.P.

Earlier this year, over 200 people gathered in the basement of Saint Mary's Church in New Haven, CT, to focus on the 2008 Synod of Bishops on the Word of God. In that very basement, some 127 years earlier, the Venerable Michael J. McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus—a society reaching out to oppressed immigrant Catholics. The first speaker was the Supreme Knight of that organization, Mr. Carl A. Anderson. The second speaker was Fr. Julián Carrón, leader of Communion and Liberation.

The event, organized by the Connecticut CL group, was entitled, "The Word's Face: The Word of God in the Life and Mission of Every Believer." The Synodal Fathers emphasized this theme in the Message to the People of God that they issued on October 24th: "The eternal and divine Word enters time and takes on a human face. Words without a face are not perfect; they do not fully complete the encounter." This moved us to ask: What does this claim mean concretely for our lives?

Mr. Anderson synthesized the Vatican II document on divine revelation, *Dei Verbum*. He then spoke about "the problem of pervading secularism" that "makes a distinctively Christian way of life impossible." Mr. Anderson underscored Pope Benedict's efforts at recovering a Christian way of thinking by turning to Sacred Scripture to rescue key concepts from secularism. He highlighted a major point in Pope Benedict's book *Jesus of Nazareth*: the importance for Christians to develop an intimate friendship with Jesus Christ on which everything depends. He indicated that the intention of the Synod was to encourage believers to draw closer to the Lord through Sacred Scripture.

Fr. Carrón began by stating that hungering to hear God's Word is what con-


stitutes the human being. The term "Word of God" cannot be reduced to the Bible for it means the Event of Jesus Christ Himself made flesh. The Word of God transcends Sacred Scripture, even if Sacred Scripture contains the Word in a truly unique way. Christian revelation implies the primacy of God's initiative which calls man to share His own life. The way that the Word of God continues as an event in the flesh is through the life of the Church, to the point that we can exclaim, "What happened to the Apostles is happening to us!"

The speakers then moved on to suggest some steps for incorporating these insights into daily life. Fr. Carrón used the analogy of a love poem—without the experience of falling in love, it is impossible to understand the real meaning of a love poem. The same is true in our desire to enter into the Bible. And we have this experience in the relationship with something real: the Church. The only way of communicating Christianity is through *attraction*—a new humanity makes us want to be human.

Mr. Anderson observed that the Mystery is much greater than can be comprehended, but one can open himself to it through the witness of other Christians. Entering Sacred Scripture must start within the context of witnesses—family, friends, community. He then demonstrated this by giving his own extemporaneous recount of the story of Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac (*Gen 22:1-14*). Speaking as a husband and a father, with his own son Carl, Jr., in the front row, Mr. Anderson's retelling of the narrative made it sound brand new.

That night, once again, something beautiful was born in that historic basement, which will grow this summer in Rimini and into the future.

» "In the face of nothingness, the loss of a loved one, He came. I didn't even want to look for Him at times, but in His mercy I really had no choice. Thank God. It is true that nothing cancels Him out."

"**SHARE THE FRUITS.** I came back from my first CL Priests' Retreat, three years ago, to a staff eager to know what had happened because I had a new zeal and joy in living—the fruits were obvious and I was asked immediately to share them in my parish. This year again, back in our ministries for a couple of months after the retreat, we reflect on and share the fruit being born. Fr. Lee reports, "Now, as I face my everyday circumstances, I am sure that it is He who is seducing me, whatever the circumstances are." Fr. John from New Zealand noted that the retreat validated his experience that "Christ's encounter with me is constantly expanding my horizons and clarifying my direction." He also reports returning home strengthened by the company of priests he met on the retreat, and "grateful that God continues to provide all that I need to live as a happy, healthy man and priest. The retreat experience opened a new horizon of faith as I realized anew the reality that the Word of God has become flesh, and lives among us today." Archbishop Prendergast said that the retreat reminded him of the centrality of prayer as the grounds of his ministry, "particularly that aspect of prayer that nurtures union with our Risen Lord and puts me in touch with the aspiration of His Sacred Heart." The Archbishop also reports that he took from the retreat an enthusiasm for the Movement and School of Community, "as a way of sharing with others the encounter, and an ongoing relationship, with our Risen Lord." 

## BOOK

### A WEAK MAN WITH A CERTAIN FAITH

He was a bad priest and he knew it; he wanted to run away, yet nevertheless was slave to his people. To be a priest was to be a traitor, as he was and as would become anyone who protected him. This is how Graham Greene describes the circumstances of the protagonist of *The Power and The Glory*.

This novel—the most widely read of the 20th century in the English language—is the fruit of the writer's trip to the region of Tabasco, a trip taken to familiarize himself with the religious persecution that took place in the 1930s in Mexico. The government unleashed a great hatred for the Church, thinking that the people would very soon forget that there had ever been such a thing. For this reason, not so much as

even one Catholic church was left standing in the entire central region of the Gulf of Mexico.

In this context, the book describes the vagaries and the dramas of the only Catholic priest still present in the state, who continues to carry out his ministry clandestinely. He had a price on his head, and the police sought to gun him down.

He was neither a hero nor a saint, and he lived as a fugitive, full of fear, with the consciousness of being a sinner and with remorse for having had a daughter, whom he recognized as more important than the entire continent. He was debilitated by alcohol, though he joked that with a little cognac he was capable of challenging the devil.

The most moving aspect of the novel is how the protagonist's faith is a certainty not determined by his



**The Power and the Glory**  
Graham Greene  
Penguin Classics, 2003  
(1940) 240pages/\$15

misery. In the story, not even the people are scandalized by the weakness of the priest; on the contrary, they ascribe more importance to the eternal life born again through every sacrament, through every man that makes Christ present.

In response to a woman who proposes that he renounce the faith, he says,

"It's impossible. There's no way. I'm a priest. It's out of my power."

Without a doubt, the reading of this book offers a proposal of hope for those who lament how ideologies are marginalizing and persecuting the Church with new methods and new laws. Moreover, it shows how the victory of Christ is stronger than ideologies, even when that victory is witnessed by weak people.

Julián de la Morena

## MUSIC VIDEO

### A GIFT GIVER

It was the most successful music video of its time. When Michael Jackson's *Thriller* debuted in 1983, its playful storyline and high-quality production values drew huge audiences to MTV, changing the way audiences listened to, viewed, and related to pop music. Prior to *Thriller*, videos were seen primarily as marketing tools for albums, but this 13-minute short film showed that the medium had its own artistic integrity and was full of creative possibilities. Working with director John Landis (*The Blues Brothers*),

Jackson crafted *Thriller* into a tongue-in-cheek homage to the horror genre, with a simple but clever story-within-a-story plotline and a climactic dance number packed with energy and fun.

In retrospect, it is tempting to see *Thriller* as an eerie foreshadowing of troubles to come. Jackson's transformation into something monstrous seemed to come true as a series of accidents, addictions, and scandals plagued him over the ensuing years. The beaming entertainer appeared to disintegrate before our eyes as all the things society tells us we should want—fame, wealth, and

influence—appeared to conspire against Jackson, speeding him to an untimely end.

Ultimately though, the most striking fact about Michael Jackson, beyond his dreadful decline and sad demise is the indisputable fact of the man's talent. Seeing the joy of his early performances as the lead singer of The Jackson 5, or his dynamic presence in *Thriller*, it is clear that Michael Jackson was given a great gift. If we stop at that gift, however, and never acknowledge that Jackson's talent is a sign of a Giver, One who loves beyond measure and desires nothing more than to save us in our poverty, Jackson's tragic life and death will never make any sense.

John Touhey



**Michael Jackson's Thriller**  
Directed by John Landis  
Sony BMG Music Entertainment  
13 minutes