

September 10, 2021

Dear YMI Council Presidents, Council Chaplains and Council Brothers,

It is my hope and prayer that you, your family and friends are keeping well and safe.

As the Grand Chaplain for the Young Men's Institute, I wish to congratulate each of you for your generous efforts to maintain your Council in working order during these difficult times. I understand, you have taken your unique personable approach to learn to adapt to the challenges and adopt ways to continue operations in a manner fitting and proper in each case.

The Pandemic and the Y.M.I.:

With the assistance of technology in Zoom meetings, conference calls and in-person meetings following all the health guidelines, we have done our best to move forward with the business of our Councils.

Our Grand Council Officers have been able to successfully conduct the work of Grand Council. Once again with the technology based Grand Council Session and regularly bi-monthly meetings of the Board of Grand Directors, we have elected a new slate of Grand Council Officers and met our responsibilities.

Our Commitment to Faith:

Needless to say, our commitment to faith has also been challenged. Mass attendance has also required many to use our televisions, I-pads, computers, etc. to attend Mass and keep our faith up to date. It has not been easy, and we are not out of the woods yet. I pray for each of you each and every day.

Our Council Chaplains:

Reverend Fathers, and ministers who serve as our Council Chaplains, please know that we recognize, your apostolic precious role among us. When you visit and guide us, and show that you care, you 'feed the sheep' and 'tend the lambs' of His flock, you mirror Jesus Himself to us. You invest your time in your priestly life and ministry to support our council Y.M.I. brothers and their families during these pandemic times. May the Lord bless you and enrich your lives with his love. Your selfless sacrifice and hard work are not forgotten. We shall never take them for granted. We shall remember you in prayer and thanksgiving to God for you.

Thanks be to God and prayerful support of all, we survived thus far. God has watched over the 'Order' and we will respond in like manner. Pro Deo – Pro Patria

Nine-Eleven 20th anniversary:

On the eve of the 20th anniversary of the "9/11" I send these words of prayerful reflection to you. We reminisce the 'ache of 9/11' wrenched from the ashes of human misery. Images of lives snuffed out and obliterated in death and destruction from crashes and fallen buildings, will never fade.

The names of our innocent loved ones are imprinted around the Towers and in the National Memorial in Shanksville. We can touch them, feel them, imagine the broken hearts and lives of their inconsolable mourning families, and try to assimilate that their sacrifices were not in vain.

The painful memory of fear and terror etched in our hearts must not fade in our struggle to find hope and resilience. Hopefully, it will direct us to discern what we might recognize the grace filled 'slow work of God' and discover the healing hand of our God gently guiding us to opt to choose something magnanimous: to dig deep, resist the temptation to be vengeful and violent, seemingly justified by grief and indignation. Lay it to rest at the feet of the Merciful Lord, the judge of the living and the dead.

Something 'New' awaits to be born that will surprisingly balm our pain and heal our wounds of hurt and direct us to embrace one another as brothers and sisters in the same spirit as it mirrors in Jesus.

Interior Healing & Creative Courage:

We await interior healing, repairing of our whole self, and mend the broken humanity. In all true interior healing, we learn to accept our personal history and embrace even the things in life that we did not choose.

We must now add another element to it: Creative Courage. This emerges especially in the way we deal with difficulties, of fear and anxiety. In the face of difficulty, we can either give up and walk away, or somehow engage with it. Amazingly with Creative Courage, we will encounter the wonder of God and discover resources we did not even think we had.

Prayer, Fidelity, Commitment & Service to God and neighbor:

All our successes have been guided by prayer, fidelity, and commitment to our families and to our fellow brothers and the Church. We must continue our efforts for the love of the Young Men's Institute. As the Grand Chaplain, I am available to all Councils. I urge all of you to continue your good work on behalf of the YMI and most importantly to pray for your fellow members.

If you need to contact me for anything, please do not hesitate. You can reach me by e-mail (fragnel55@gmail.com) or by calling the parish office at (415) 334-4646.

I wish all of you continued good health and pray that as a Catholic men's group we will always be in the presence of the Lord.

Pro Deo, Pro Patria

Rev. Agnel De Heredia, #32, GC