

BULLETIN -- AUGUST 6

Congratulations to parishioner Mary Lindgren, who was recently presented with the D.J. Zarnosky Life Leadership Award and a \$1,000 scholarship from Grand Rapids Right to Life for exemplifying outstanding leadership in the prolife movement. Mary has been involved with Grand Rapids Students for Life for four years. She has prayed outside the abortion clinic, attended protests against Planned Parenthood, made baby blankets, attended a baby shower for a woman who ultimately chose life, and volunteered at the Women's Expo and the Memorial Service for the Unborn.

Mary is planning to enter Benedictine College in Atchison, KS, this fall to study biochemistry. She is thankful that her prolife beliefs will help her to "never use medical knowledge or training to end someone's life, but instead focus on giving people facts, options, resources, and solutions to support life." We are proud of you, Mary, and assure you of the prayers of your parish as you go forth to proclaim the Gospel of Life! (Cf. St. John Paul II, encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, March 25, 1995.)

Faith and reason. The young man, in his mid-20's, sat in my office angry and sullen. "There's no in-between," he said. "You either believe in that fairy-tale God stuff or you accept reality and reason. You can't prove the existence of God by reasoning, so it's clear that it's just nonsense, along with everything that goes with it. Jesus, Church, hocus pocus, sin, you name it. It's all made up by people who can't explain stuff any other way."

Priest: "Well, considering that you and people who think like you are among a tiny minority of all the people who have ever lived on earth, I'd say that your last statement could be called 'The Minority Report.' If you were on a Supreme Court with a fair representation of all the people who ever lived, you'd be outvoted 8-1."

Friend: "But that represents people who lived with all kinds of taboos and magic and all that stuff. We ought to be beyond all that. Religion is just a holdover from a non-scientific age. And it doesn't matter how many people vote for it. If they're wrong, they're wrong, even if people who are right are outvoted."

Priest: "You have a pretty severe judgment of most of humanity. No wonder you're so angry. You really are not a happy person, are you?"

Friend: "What's to be happy about?"

Priest: "Well, I agree. If I believed that life has no purpose and no destiny, I'd be unhappy, too."

Friend: "So you delude yourself into thinking that life makes a difference just so you can be happy. You ignore all the signs that you're wrong and refuse to admit reality. That's childish. That's like still believing in Santa Claus after you catch your dad eating the milk and cookies."

Priest: "Do you believe in right and wrong?"

Friend: "Sure, I'm right and you're wrong."

Priest: "No, I mean certain actions being right or wrong. Is there an objective truth? Is there really such a thing as love, or do people just perform apparently selfless actions with an ulterior motive of getting something for themselves?"

Friend: "I think people do what makes them feel good."

Priest: “And what if what makes THEM feel good makes someone else feel bad?”

Friend: “Well, that’s why we have laws.”

Priest: “Ah, so there IS an objective truth. There ARE things that are right or wrong, it’s just that we quibble about the applicability or the degree.”

Friend: “Well, as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone else, I think anything goes.”

Priest: “Ah, so there IS that condition, that it must not hurt or injure anyone else. That’s very thoughtful. That’s certainly the beginning of some kind of morality.”

Friend: “But that’s got to be very limited. That’s why I wrote off the Church long ago, it’s just ‘no this’ and ‘no that.’ ‘No, no, no,’ the Church and religion are all just one big ‘NO!’”

Priest: “It might seem like that sometimes, but actually the Church and Christ are the biggest explosion of ‘YES’ that the world has ever seen. We want life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for EVERYBODY, and not just for here, but forever.”

Friend: “But then you put all those restrictions on everything. No this, no that, no going too far here, no doing too little there. It’s all mind-control. You guys are control freaks.”

Priest: “If that were the case, we’re not doing a very good job. Ex-Catholics are the second biggest religious affiliation in the United States. We even lost YOU! How’s that workin’ for you? You don’t seem a whole lot happier now than you were before. No, I don’t think we’re good at control at all. Truth is, we promote freedom. People don’t like what we say, they’re free to leave, and they do it all the time. The attrition rate is horrible.”

Friend: “Well, see, they’re leaving childish faith behind and turning to reason and science, stuff that can be proved.”

Priest: “Many of them are just turning to drugs. I think the challenge of being radically open to life and truth, with all their possibilities, is just overwhelming for many people in our culture today. And there are plenty of people, for sure, who just keep going to church because they’ve always done it and they don’t think much about doing anything else. But for those who are seriously joyful about pursuing it, there’s much to be gained from living a virtuous life, both for oneself and for the benefit of others. Someone once said, ‘There’s no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.’ And he did it himself, the next day. I suspect you remember the story.”

I haven’t seen our friend since, but his objections to faith are not new. They have been countered by Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and so many men and women before and since. Thousands continue to suffer persecution “for the sake of the Name” of Jesus, even choosing to die rather than surrender to the spirit or the arguments of the age. This is one reason we examine some of the vexing moral problems of our era. So many people just accept as truth and good anything they find promoted on the Internet or in other media, and they act upon it. For instance, just hearing casual discussion at a recent family reunion informed me that many people have simply given up on funerals and cemeteries, choosing instead to fashion the remains of their deceased relatives into jewelry, mantel decorations, or even Christmas ornaments. How did we get THERE in just 30 years or so? The culture badly needs someone to speak truth to it, because, as the saying goes, “If you don’t stand for

SOMETHING, you'll fall for ANYTHING.” Christ and his Church give us the truths to stand for. Our job as disciples is to provide accurate information to the culture in which we live. Let's do so with joy and confidence in his Holy Spirit. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: “People today know the price of everything and the value of nothing” (Oscar Wilde, 1854-1900, Irish playwright and essayist).