

BULLETIN – AUGUST 7

Adoration location for Tuesday, August 9, is changed to the **Convent Chapel** due to some interior decoration work and repair being done in the church. All Masses and other services during the week will take place in the church as scheduled. Please use the front door of the convent / parish office. We'll have the air conditioning on for you!

Wedding anniversary? Plan ahead: Bishop Walkowiak invites all couples who are celebrating 25, 30, 40, 50, and 60+ years of marriage to join him for the annual Wedding Anniversary Mass at St. Andrew's on Sunday, October 2, 2016, at 10 a.m. Family members and friends are of course welcome. A simple reception will follow. If you plan to go, please call the parish office at 454-6000 with the approximate number in your party. We shall advise the diocesan office for planning purposes. Congratulations!

How are you supposed to vote when . . . ? When Pope Francis visited Philadelphia in September, 2015, he told us, among other things, "We know that the future of the Church in a rapidly changing society will call, and even now calls, for a much more active engagement on the part of the laity." In the next few months leading up to the national elections in November, our Holy Father's prophetic words will have an even more immediately significant meaning.

In the long term, we ought to understand that the Pope is calling on us, the Catholic people who believe that, though unworthy, we are entrusted by Christ with his message of life and light to be delivered to all people. What better way to do this than to prepare ourselves, spiritually, academically, physically, and emotionally, for the rigors of public office? We have been sadly disappointed in recent decades by people who have professed to be Catholic, but who have run for and been elected to public office only to betray the very truths which we as disciples are committed by baptism to make known to everyone. No, public office is not a bully pulpit to cram our religion down the throats of unwilling fellow citizens. But it does offer the prepared candidate and office holder a forum to set catholic or universal truth before a society which clearly needs the moral leadership it is NOT receiving from so many elected officials, and to propose laws that reflect the light of that truth. Not everyone has the personality to be able to do this, and to achieve the proper balance that will respect both Constitution and Catechism. But those who do should certainly consider running for public office as a possibility, whether at the local, state, or federal level. That's the long term.

The short term imperatives are far more urgent, and seem to grow even more urgent with each general election. Fierce party loyalists might have already made up their minds for whom they will be voting. But many people from each party or all parties, as well as many independents with no party loyalties, are increasingly distressed about the choices with which we are presented. What do we do, how do we vote, when each major party's candidate seems to be hopelessly flawed? (Not necessarily a reference to current affairs, but if the shoe fits . . .) Perhaps, it's been suggested, it's best just to vote for a third-party candidate, or for a write-in, or for no one at all, when such a choice is presented to us. I would suggest that such a position, unless one is a truly committed and regular supporter of an alternate party, is irresponsible.

My reasoning is this: No one other than one of the two major party candidates has a snowball's chance in hell of actually getting elected. God has placed us, you and

me, in this place (the U.S.A.) in this time (2016) for his own very good reasons. We have challenges that are both completely different and yet very similar to those of other places and times. We are called to be realists. Any vote for an alternative candidate, any refusal to exercise the privilege of the vote, will likely result in a *de facto* vote for the greater of the two “evils,” if we must characterize the two candidates in that way. We would be acting a little like Pontius Pilate: “I’m not responsible, I’m washing my hands of it.” But because we’re here, and because we’re God’s people, and because Christ has no other group of disciples on whom to rely in this time and this place, if we do NOT participate *realistically*, we are ultimately responsible for electing whomever it is who winds up going to the White House. Try as you might to escape by posting a bumper sticker saying, “Don’t blame me, I didn’t vote!” you are PRECISELY whom we should blame if and when the more dangerous candidate is elected.

A great deal rests on our vote: Supreme Court appointments, respect for life from conception to natural death, immigration policy, relationships with other governments and economies, justice system and law enforcement reforms, freedoms that we enjoy and hope to spread worldwide, genuine environmental concerns, attention to the role of government and the separation of powers outlined in the Constitution – all these things are weighty matters which will be dealt with differently, depending on who is elected. We might not “win,” no matter who is elected. But we have both the opportunity and the obligation to do our best to make our voices heard, and also to LIVE the way we know we ought, no matter who is elected. The world is watching.

And one final word. There are Catholics who believe, and many people who are *not* Catholic who will tell you, that religion has no place in the voting booth: “You have no right to impose your religious beliefs on others!” Nominal Catholics like many of those who already hold public office believe there’s no contradiction in believing that something that is true for us as Catholics might not be true for others. This is the heresy of moral relativism, right out there for all to see. Truth is truth. Should public policy be based on truth, or is it all right to base it on falsehood and lies if enough people fall for them? If we can’t trust Christ to be telling us the truth about faith and morals through his Church, then we are saying that Christ and the Church are capable of lying about those fundamental things. And if Christ and the Church can lie about one thing, they can lie about *anything*.

Don’t let the issue be confused by specious arguments about, for instance, the failure of the Church’s moral leadership in the sex abuse scandals. The Church never *taught* that priests had a free pass to prey on post-pubescent boys or anyone else. The Church never taught that we should attempt to cover up the truth or endanger others through poor personnel policies. In fact, it was just the opposite! The Church’s own moral theology and canon law clearly indicate that there were innumerable failures to uphold our own moral and canonical principles. That’s a whole different situation than self-righteously proclaiming that the Church has no room to preach morality in the public square. Besides, as we’ve pointed out so often, other “lobbies” have absolutely NO problem foisting their own brands of (im)morality or their own twisted opinions on the rest of us by working to pass laws and amendments that suit their agenda. Why should religious believers be the sole exception to the ability of citizens to form and shape laws in a way they hold to be right and just? God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: You'll spend your life annoyed if you expect people to always behave rationally.