

BULLETIN -- FEBRUARY 26

Thank you for continuing to fulfill your 2016 CSA pledges! Our most recent rebate check from the Diocese was in the amount of **\$633.00**, which brings our total of funds returned to the parish to **\$20,046**. While we shall begin our 2017 campaign in a few weeks, we deeply appreciate your consideration in taking care of your commitments from last year.

Alumni news! We extend our congratulations to our parish alumna Carol Jachim, the daughter of our late parishioners Frank and Sally Nezwek. Carol and her husband, Ron, live in Harper Woods near Detroit. They are being honored by Pax Christi Michigan with the Purple Ribbon for Peace Award, which they will receive at the statewide conference in Westland in April. Carol notes that since she was “grounded in my Faith at Sts. Peter and Paul Church, so very long ago, attending grade school before going on to Catholic Central High School,” she thought it appropriate to share this good news with us. We agree. They have been deeply involved in the work of promoting peace for over 50 years.

Pax Christi (“The Peace of Christ”) has an international history, born from the horrors of World War II. Their brochure offers a brief sketch: “In 1945, a small group of people in France met regularly to pray for peace. What kept them coming together was their experience of an agonizing fact: French and German Catholics, who professed the same faith and celebrated the same Eucharist, had killed one another by the millions in the 20th century. That situation could hardly be the will of God. So they prayed for forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace.

“After the war, Pax Christi centers were established in France and Germany; by the 1950s the movement had spread to Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, and Belgium. Pax Christi began in the United States in 1972, at the initiative of a small group of prominent U.S. Catholics, mostly lay people.”

Thank you, Carol and Ron, for your witness to the gospel!

You may not have heard that four professional poker players recently accepted an offer to engage a computer in a poker match. Computer scientists at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh have been working for many months developing the new Artificial Intelligence. The computer was the only player who truly had a poker face. Needless to say, the computer won. The 20-day competition ended on January 30. After playing 120,000 hands of heads-up, no-limit Texas Hold ‘Em, the computer was ahead of its human challengers by more than \$1.7 million in chips. Now, poker is a game which requires for success not only skill and luck, but the ability to make correct conclusions about the cards in the hands of the other players, the ability to know when to hold and when to fold, and the ability to bluff. In short, the scientists had to teach the computer, among other things, how to lie and cheat. Word has it that the next project is to have the computer run for public office.

Discrimination for the sake of justice? Sure, all the time. When the police get a call that a tall man in his 20’s has just held up a bank and run west, will they bother to stop and frisk a little old lady pushing a shopping cart heading toward the bank from the

east? Gee, probably not. Is that discrimination? Of course! So we have to be very careful about wholesale objections to “profiling” as though acting on gathered information is somehow unfair to people who bear some resemblance to a given description.

It used to annoy me no end to hear our Franciscan Sisters tell of their adventures in air travel to Pittsburgh and elsewhere after the advent of Homeland Security. These 80-something women in their modified un-burka-like habits would on almost every occasion be pulled aside and they and their luggage thoroughly searched by TSA officials, while they watched bearded men in turbans and robes pass right through as though they owned the place. (Of course, perhaps they did!!) Many times, exasperated citizens in line behind the Sisters would begin shouting at the examiners, “For cryin’ out loud, can’t you see they’re Sisters? What about *those* guys?” And they would point to the Middle Eastern men smiling back mockingly as they passed unhindered through the security gates.

We discriminate every day. In deciding to make a purchase, we might discriminate based on how we’ve been treated at a particular store. We discriminate on the basis of price, perceived quality, size, color, and a host of other factors before we settle on something that seems right for us. Even animals discriminate. Coco will sometimes look at me after I’ve put something in her dish, with eyes that question, “You expect *me* to eat *that*?” And when I take her for a walk, I use my own sense of discrimination: I pick up after her, but knowing full well that what she leaves behind is not shoe polish, to paraphrase an old proverb.

It should be no surprise, when accusations of discrimination or profiling are leveled, for investigation to reveal that the majority of traffic stops in a 3-block-square area around Franklin and Eastern involve African American drivers. It would, on the other hand, be disturbing to find that a majority of traffic stops around Lake Michigan and Collindale involved African American drivers. If even *one* such traffic stop were made at the latter location, and the officer approached the car with gun drawn, saying, “You lost, boy?” *that* would be grounds for termination of employment. No agency that strives for professionalism in its public service would tolerate such behavior, let alone expect its citizens to put up with it. There is a right and a wrong time and place even for appropriate discrimination.

Officers quickly become familiar with the homes and families in any area of a community who provide cause for repeated calls for service. Those calls are not initiated by the police. Their response to those calls is based on need, not on discrimination. I have often challenged officers who have begun to perceive certain neighborhoods as troubled areas to drive through those same areas in the mid to late morning and note the people who are depending on the police to keep their neighborhoods secure. They’ll be out mowing their lawns, tending their flowers, painting, sweeping. They aren’t the ones you’ll see out on the streets at night, causing trouble. And rarely, in any neighborhood, will you encounter people who frequent a church or a synagogue or a mosque being the ones causing trouble. We could make a good case for healthy discrimination there: people who’ve “got religion” are generally more capable of solving their own difficulties without having to resort to law enforcement to do it. You won’t see that on TV, where the screenwriters are eager to portray anyone with any sincere religious inclination as a kook. We’ll ponder that further in the upcoming weeks of Lent, as we examine the very

interesting theory of the five foundations of morality of social psychologist Jonathan Haidt. God bless you!

Fr. Den

“Come away to the desert” (Hosea 2:14). “There I will speak to your heart.” These words of God, spoken through the prophet to God’s beloved Israel, are addressed to us, his people, his New Israel, as we plunge into Lent. Happy traveling!