

BULLETIN – JANUARY 1

A wild ride ahead? In some quarters, grief; in others, relief. That kind of sums up the state of the nation after the November presidential election and its ongoing aftermath. I would submit that, with a brand new president, no one really knows exactly what to expect. Critics of every persuasion will be sure to tell us how to interpret every move of the new administration as either malevolent or benevolent, inspired by the evil one itself or motivated by a genuine desire to “make America great again.”

Making or keeping America great does not have to be understood in a jingoistic sense. American exceptionalism refers to the uniqueness of our society, constantly forming into something new because of the addition of more and more layers of people with their families who continue to come here for a better life of freedom and possibilities. American exceptionalism doesn't mean that we rate exceptionally high in all the recognized human qualities. Some nations or societies do far better than we do in various areas, others do much worse.

One thing I have come to observe over many decades is that the other nations of the world *count on us like no one else* when the chips are down. What will be the U.S. response when there is a tsunami, a pestilence, a hurricane, a famine? You name the disaster, we have most generally responded more generously than nearly anyone else when it comes to trying to alleviate human suffering. We even helped archenemy North Korea a few years back when they endured massive crop failures and faced mass starvation. If we're not actively at war with you, we'll likely be first in line to offer a helping hand. And the Marshall recovery plan after World War II, along with many such efforts since, has proven that we will help even our recent opponents in war get back on their feet so they can resume being or become responsible neighbors in a world shrinking due to rapid communication and travel.

“Making America great again” doesn't begin at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. It starts at your address and mine. It starts with picking up your trash, and maybe that of thoughtless others, to improve the appearance of any neighborhood or business district. It starts with refusing the challenge to participate in road rage. It starts with repairing or replacing that car that's burning oil faster than a terrorist in the Iraqi desert. It starts with not letting politics break up a family bond or an old friendship. It starts with making sure that daily random acts of kindness are not just anecdotal. Things like these will go farther than what any President can do to improve life in our own country and set the stage for improving it worldwide.

In many ways, people's responses to the change in administrations have echoed things I heard when the Soviet Union collapsed. “What do we do now, Father?” I remember one pious gentleman asking back in 1991. “We've been praying for over 50 years for the conversion of Russia. Now that they've thrown off communism, what do we pray for?” I reminded him, as I've had to remind myself, that conversion is an ongoing process. We *always* have to be praying for our own country. We have seen how easy it is to slide into -isms that begin in our own biases and prejudices and then bloom into the ugly weeds of racial and ethnic hatreds, domestic violence, human trafficking, and abuse of the vulnerable and fragile in our midst. It may be refreshing to think of not being bound by the ludicrous demands of political correctness, but it gives us no license to turn our backs on virtue, thoughtfulness, or simple consideration and concern for

others. There is no permission effective January 20 that will condone bad language, bad manners, bad jokes, or other bad behavior. “Making America great again” will never make it to first base by means of boorish or arrogant conduct or attitudes. Let’s do our best together to make America, and the whole world, the best possible place for all people to live, and do it because we believe we are all made in God’s image.

Our crib collection this year will be split 50/50 between HELP Pregnancy Crisis Aid, our neighbor down on Bridge Street; and Project Rachel, which assists in the spiritual recovery of those who have gone through abortion. Please keep these very worthy charities in mind and heart as you kneel at the crib and ponder the mystery of God become flesh. The basket for your offerings will be close at hand. Our Christmas splendor and the crib will decorate the Church through Monday, January 9, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

Our 2017 calendars are still available at the church exits. Many are courtesy of the Barto Funeral Home, and there are some also from Arsulowicz Brothers. We thank our local funeral directors for their kindness.

Thanks also to Father Tony Vainavicz for his gift of 75 copies of Matthew Kelly’s new book, *Resisting Happiness*. If you were fortunate enough to get a copy, you will find it to be spiritually refreshing and revitalizing.

Right to Life connection correction: Oops! In a couple earlier bulletin notices, we referred to the upcoming Right to Life march and rally in Washington, D.C., but provided an incorrect date. This year the event is on Friday, January 27, one week after the Inauguration. The postponement is due to the already huge crowd expected to descend on Washington for the January 20 event, with the consequent scarcity of lodging and other amenities. Even D.C. can handle only so much at once!

Speaking of Right to Life, Planned Parenthood is not going to be happy with a research report from the Cleveland University Medical Center that there are changes in a woman’s brain during pregnancy which prepare her psychologically for motherhood. Women become more attuned to the social cues relative to their child in the womb. By God’s design, there is both a physical and psychological preparation for the beautiful task of bringing new life into the world. The nation’s largest abortion provider stays in business by pretending that pregnancy is a disease and that abortion is health care. Our task as believers is to make sure that women do in fact have ready access to the truly life- and health-supporting services which Planned Parenthood makes a show of providing, and to direct them to other, non-lethal resources and agencies. Just because the *stalag* sells cheese made by the doomed inmates doesn’t mean we have to buy it from them.

Our most recent return from your CSA generosity arrived in the form of a rebate check for **\$1,863**. Thank you for your continuing attentiveness to your pledges. Our total overage so far this year is **\$12,250**. We can’t do it without you! God bless you!

Fr. Den

A worthy resolution: “You can be a great deal too solemn about Christianity to be a good Christian. . . You must have mirth. If you do not have mirth you will surely have madness” (Gilbert Keith Chesterton, English Catholic writer, 1879-1935).