

## **BULLETIN -- JANUARY 17**

**We are delighted** once again to announce that a \$2,000 gift to our Christian service fund and food pantry from Paul and Mary Alice (Schoen) Johnson has been matched 50% by a \$1,000 gift from the Consumers Energy Foundation. Thank you to the Johnsons for helping us feed our neighbors and community!

**Found at a sale!** Hidden inside something else! Four group photos of classes from our parish school. The oldest is the First Communion class of May 3, 1959, on the front steps of the church with Fr. Watson; the children would have been born about 1951-52. Next is a First Communion class with Fr. Moeggenberg, same location, likely in the spring of 1961 or 1962. The third is the Grade 7 class of 1965-66, 17 boys and 22 girls; these would have been the students who graduated West Catholic in 1971. Finally is an 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduating class in the new school with Fr. Jude, so this has to be mid- to late-1960's, 16 boys and 19 girls. Naturally, not one of those in the photos is identified. If you went to our school at some point during that time, stop in at the parish office and see if you can identify any of the students or adults in any of the photos.

**You'll rue the day** you missed noticing the newest addition to our yard plantings! Right at our church sign at the Myrtle & Quarry corner, we have planted a traditional Lithuanian landscape feature called *rūtos*, or rue. Other cultures have used laurel wreaths to adorn their contest champions. Lithuanians have traditionally used rue for similar purposes. These bushes, we hope, are taking root in their new home with us, having been transplanted this fall from my mom's yard on Oaklawn Street. Her grandmother, Rose Turskas, carefully brought sprigs of rue with her from Lithuania when she came to the U.S. in 1899. She planted them in their yard in the coal mining town of Pittston, PA, then brought shoots to the coal town of Ledford, IL, and finally to their home at 825 Front N.W. here in Grand Rapids in 1919. When that house was claimed by urban renewal in December of 1961, my grandmother, Josephine Tursky, transplanted the rue to their new home on Jennette Avenue. When Grandma died in 1998, Mom brought sprouts from those same bushes to her side yard on Oaklawn, where she nurtured them diligently until her own passing this past July. I share this botanical genealogy with you to let you know that what we pray you will see flourishing in the spring has roots in the "Old Country," as do we all -- one "old country" or another, and sometimes several!

**"Caring for the smallest."** That was the front-page headline in the *Press* on Thursday, December 10, relating the story of baby Alexia, who was born in Traverse City on August 10 at just 25 weeks and 1 pound 11 ounces. She was transferred immediately to Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, from which she was discharged on December 5 at 5 pounds 3 ounces. Her original due date was November 23. Parents and the amazing staff in the Small Baby Unit have all been part of a 3½-month-long miracle. With all the support and assistance they have no doubt received from relatives, friends, and the compassionate general public, they will no doubt still be facing astronomical medical bills for the indefinite future. My own 2-night hospital stay for a heart attack six years ago cost \$32,000, most of it fortunately covered by insurance. Many of you have similar stories in your own family life. We are gifted in our community with very competent and

very empathetic medical personnel. With the VanAndel Research Institute and the other medical facilities on what we jokingly used to call “Pill Hill” and around the area, Grand Rapids is truly on the cutting edge of medical science in many areas.

It does make one wonder, though, what the folks at the largest abortion provider think about all this. Do they sit around their break room aghast that so much money is spent on neo-natal treatment of “products of conception”? Does it ever dawn on them that the only difference between the tiny baby who is being pampered beyond imagination up the hill and the tiny baby who is being torn apart by their instruments down the hill is a simple “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” from the mother? Doesn’t that choice remind us of the Roman emperor’s whim in deciding the fate of gladiators in the Coliseum? How can the one be a baby and the other merely a clump of cells or a blob of tissue? How can the media feature a story about saving the life of a very premature infant and yet give so little positive coverage to those who see the need to protect *every* life from conception to natural death? Why are so many in our society in awe on the one hand at the neo-natal miracles that take place regularly in our midst and so casual on the other hand that the sale of baby body parts can be calmly discussed over lunch?

Baby Alexia might not have parents who will ever be rich. But she has parents who have cherished her so, that they kept vigil for three and a half months as the miracle of her tiny life unfolded for them day by day. And she has had a team on the hill that put their focus and attention and skills to work for her hour by hour until she could leave the hospital. Does anyone from that amazing team ever wonder how the other team, *down* the hill, can do what they do and still call it “women’s health care,” or even *medicine*? And can anyone name another law which allows a different word to be used based on the completely subjective intention of one party, as in: it’s a *baby* if you want it and a *fetus* if you don’t? Not very scientific, is it? To say nothing of medical or philosophical or theological. Just legal, dependent on one person’s free will alone. Don’t give us the facts, Ma’am. Don’t bother us by trying to require an ultrasound.- See why it’s based on a lie? No good has ever come from it, and none ever will. Only “the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

**Diocesan Mass Friday night** commemorating the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*: On Friday, January 22, 2016, the nation will mark the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, *Roe v. Wade*, legalizing abortions in the United States. The Diocese of Grand Rapids will observe a **Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children** that day. As Catholics, we are deeply committed and concerned about the need to protect human life from the time of conception to natural death. Many prayer resources and ways you can participate can be found on the diocesan website.

**Friday evening at 7 p.m., Bishop Walkowiak will celebrate Mass at St. Andrew’s Cathedral** to give thanks to God for the gift of human life. A light reception will follow in the parish center in the lower level of the Cathedral. All are welcome, but the first six (6) parishioners to call our parish office (454-6000) with the intention of attending will be our official representatives at the Mass. Please call by this Monday noon. God bless you!

Fr. Den

**Thought for the week:** The Venerable Bishop Frederic Baraga died January 19, 1868, so Tuesday is his 148<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He is one verified miracle away from becoming our own local saint, the first Catholic missionary in the Grand River valley and technically the founding pastor of our Cathedral parish. Take a detour down Butterworth Street this week, and as you pass his memorial rock on the north side just west of Front Avenue (the site of the chapel he built in 1834), offer a prayer for his canonization. We live in an age that badly needs heroes. The miracles are all around us.