

BULLETIN -- JANUARY 24

Praying for unity: Jesus did it! At the Last Supper, Jesus, our Eternal High Priest, offered this prayer for his disciples: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one -- I in them and you in me -- so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:20-23).

This priestly prayer is for all of us an example of how to pray as Christ’s priestly people. Who better to imitate than our Lord and Master, our High Priest himself? And what better time to employ this and similar prayers than during this week of prayer for Christian unity? It is totally contrary to the gospel to have Christians say, as some do, that a variety of expressions of Christian faith is actually the ideal, and that having innumerable Christian bodies which are not in communion with one another is really the will of Christ. It is alleged that somehow these multiple “expressions” are examples of diversity which allow for the “freedom” that Christ intended.

That line of thinking is utter nonsense. In John 8:31, Jesus himself says, “The *truth* will set you free,” not the *diversity*. There is a natural diversity in the Church which arises from geography, language, temperament, and so on. Even the approaches to philosophy, theology, liturgy, and discipline differ, for instance, among the churches from the Western Mediterranean (Roman) and the Eastern Mediterranean (Byzantine, Coptic, Syrian, Chaldean, etc.). However, our *belief* in Christ as the incarnate Son of God and the central figure of salvation is what we have in common. Contrary opinions among some Christian sects, such as the erroneous opinion of the Episcopal Diocese of East Michigan convention back in the 1970’s, which declared that Christ was not the only means of salvation, place such people outside the unity of the Church. The array of such bizarre opinions seems to increase each day. When self-styled “faithful” Catholics like former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi can publicly proclaim their support for abortion on demand and happily call same-sex unions “marriage,” we should have no trouble seeing why our society is in such a mess. Christ’s disciples are supposed to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world. When disciples instead adopt the world’s “lights” and allow themselves to be led by public opinion and the promise of votes, it’s no wonder that the world slides deeper and deeper into the moral equivalent of the La Brea tar pits.

Christian unity is desperately needed as a basic instrument of our witness to Christ. Woe to us if we can’t get it together and *get* together. Every day that there is disunity among Christ’s believers is a day in which the ancient enemy rejoices, thinking it has won a victory. This doesn’t mean that we must lie down and keep silent while heresies are touted to the right and left. We don’t achieve unity by surrendering to falsehood. *We* don’t achieve unity at all, that’s why we pray for it! We have an obligation to *know* our faith, to *pray* for unity, and to *proclaim* the universal (catholic) truth of Christ to all people by word and example. We do so with charity and without coercion. Indeed, *we* are the ones coerced by Christ when we sign on as his faithful, to

preach the gospel “in season and out of season” (II Timothy 4:2). But it’s *his* gospel, not ours.

A third-grade teacher asked her students to write a theme about how they spent their Christmas holidays. One student’s submission read as follows:

“We always used to spend the holidays with Grandma and Grandpa in their big brick house. This year we could only go visit for a day, because Grandpa got retarded last year and they moved to a retardment village where everyone lives in nice little houses that are all connected, so they don’t have to mow the grass anymore.

“They ride around on their bicycles and scooters and wear name tags because they don’t know who they are anymore. They go to a building called a wrecked center, but they must have got it fixed because it is all okay now. They do exercises there, but they don’t do them very well. There is a swimming pool too, but all they do is jump up and down in it with hats on.

“At their gate, there is a doll house with a little old man sitting in it. He watches all day so nobody can escape. Sometimes they sneak out, and go cruising in their golf carts!

“Nobody there cooks, they just eat out. And, they eat the same thing every night--early birds, I think it’s young chickens.

“Some of the people can’t get out past the man in the doll house. The ones who do get out, bring food back to the wrecked center for pot luck.

“My Grandma says that Grandpa worked all his life to earn his retardment and says I should work hard so I can be retarded someday too. When I earn my retardment, I want to be the man in the doll house. Then I will let people out, so they can visit their grandchildren.”

Anyone in your family with a disability? Mark your calendars now! On Saturday, June 11, 2016, the Diocese is co-sponsoring a conference for all of our parents and families who have children with disabilities. The conference will take place at St. Robert’s in Ada. It will begin at 1 p.m., and includes Mass with Bishop Walkowiak at 4:30 p.m. More details to come, but please plan ahead. This could be the first recognition our Diocese has given to those with disabilities in many years, going way back to the wonderful work of Sister Rose Callahan, O.P. St. Robert’s has been a leader in offering religious instruction and events, but we are excited to see this diocesan involvement. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: “We have staked the whole of all our political Institutions upon the capacity of mankind for Self-government, upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God” (President James Madison, 1751-1836, “Father of the Constitution” and “Father of the Bill of Rights”). What happens to us when we do not allow the Commandments to have the publicity which the authors of the Constitution counted on them to have as a necessary moral foundation for the Republic?