

BULLETIN -- JANUARY 29

What a nice post-Christmas present! Believe me, we appreciate your sacrifices in tithing and contributing! A sterling example arrived in the mail last week, as the Diocese sent us the CSA rebate check for the month of December: **\$7,163.00!** What makes this astounding is knowing that you were catching up on your pledges precisely as purchases and bills for the Christmas season were adding up. Your generosity is overwhelming and humbling. This brings to **\$19,413** the amount over and above our target that the Diocese has sent back to us this fiscal year to use in our local apostolates. Thank you!

A march of irony. What were the actual numbers of those who were present for the Inauguration on January 20? Depends on whether you listen to the Administration's figures or those of the anti-Administration media. What were the actual numbers of those who were present for the marches for women's rights in Washington and elsewhere on January 21? Again, depends on which sources you listen to. The estimates range from 200,000 in D.C. itself to millions upon millions worldwide. Those participating in the march for women's rights made it quite clear that their primary concern was preserving their "right" to abort their unborn children. The irony is that all of the thousands or millions who were there were able to be there because their mothers had at some point made a conscious, positive choice for LIFE.

And after beholding the perverse antics of some of the anarchists who were screaming their fury during those marches, it seemed like wholesome family entertainment to just watch a few football and hockey skirmishes. Whatever some of the leaders of the women's rights marches hoped to prove, they surely didn't prove that they were *ladies*. And where's the dignity in that?

A degree from where? The president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, Fr. Michael J. Sheeran, S.J., recently issued a press release in which he glowingly reported, "A hallmark of Jesuit education is service to others, and we are proud to see that commitment represented by the alumni of Jesuit institutions who serve in the House and Senate. We appreciate their leadership and look forward to working with them during the 155th Congress." Father Sheeran and his colleagues might have more work to do than they were counting on. Matt Archbold of The Cardinal Newman Society recently did a little research and found that of 12 U.S. senators who graduated from Jesuit colleges or universities, only two, Barrasso of Wyoming and Sullivan of Alaska, can be considered reliably pro-life. Out of 44 in the House of Representatives who attended a Jesuit institution of higher learning, there are only 12 who vote reliably pro-life, while the other 32 have pro-abortion or mixed records. Perhaps Father Sheeran's work should include requiring a course in remedial Catholicism for his Society's grads. And maybe for their professors.

Could have happened yesterday. The hysteria over imagined affronts to one group or another is not just the result of the recent political campaign. Back in 2014, a Dominican Sister from Nashville, TN, was invited by a Catholic high school in Charlotte,

NC, to speak on the meaning of the virtue of chastity for men and women. Her presentation considered the teaching of Christ and the Scriptures, and the long tradition of the Church in encouraging all people to live and behave chastely. From all reports, it was well received by a majority of the students, who certainly receive no such challenge from a society or culture swimming in hookups, porn, and every manner of accommodation to sexual deviance. Some parents, however, subsequently scolded school officials for extending the invitation. Their letter read, in part, “Your mission to truthfully convey the teachings of the Church--the teachings of love, compassion, and humility--was replaced by teachings of hate and intolerance.” My best guess is that the Sister said absolutely nothing contrary to any teaching that appears in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, not a medieval document by any stretch. One of the real problems is that today’s young people, longing for solid directions and goals in their personal lives, can be hampered by the attitudes of parents and even grandparents who are the products of several decades of catechetical decay. Many in those generations unfortunately grew up basically being taught that “Jesus was nice, so we have to be nice, and then we can be like Jesus.” With that kind of solid grounding in moral theology, no wonder such a huge percentage of them left the Church altogether.

A former Catholic priest who had joined the Episcopal church once gently chided me for remaining Catholic. “It’s wonderful where I’m at,” he said, “they don’t care what you believe.” And I simply responded, “I can’t figure out why I would belong to something that didn’t require me to believe anything. I don’t have to join anything to do *that*.” And when many in the field of religious education some 30-40 years ago watered down Catholic teaching to a mush of “love, compassion, and humility”—all wonderful virtues and qualities when properly understood—I’m afraid their primary message to many who are parents and grandparents today was, “You don’t have to believe anything (or be in love with Anyone) in order to be here.” Which is why, no doubt, there were probably so many Catholics involved in the marches for women’s rights.

Catholic Schools Week. Bishop Walkowiak is anxious to make sure that any Catholic family or student who wants to have a Catholic education may receive one. This obviously requires much more family sacrifice today than it did generations ago, when teaching Sisters provided the Church’s schools with whole faculties of religious who simply performed their services as a central part of their vocation. Parishes provided the buildings and facilities, the religious orders provided the personnel. Now the parishes/parents have to provide both, and it requires a substantial commitment. Nonetheless, it continues to be amazing how Catholic schools can generally outperform their public counterparts for a much smaller per-student cost. True, the public schools are obliged by law to provide many services which Catholic schools are free to pick and choose. Some of these things might well be more the fault of over-reaching legislation than of the schools themselves. Schools have become the default setting for all sorts of needs which are not provided by parents who have grown used to entitlements: free school supplies, free meals, free clothing, free transportation, free health care. That alone does not explain the per-student cost differential. The truth is that our Catholic school teachers, by and large, are also dedicated men and women who are teaching our children in fulfillment of a vocation rather than as a job. And that’s not only a cost savings in many cases, but added value. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: State officials estimate that 50% of the waste that is buried in Michigan landfills each year has value, and could either be recycled or the food waste composted. Ponder before you pitch. And think of it the next time you drive past Mount Coopersville along I-96 or Mount Pierson along US-131, both of which keep growing higher and higher.