

BULLETIN -- JULY 16

If you notice a glow in the Grand Rapids skyline, it might just be emanating from the Bishop and key staff members at Cathedral Square. Bishop Walkowiak took about a dozen “apostles” from the Diocese to Orlando with him, to join in the Convocation of Catholic Leaders on July 1-4. The convocation was sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and titled “The Joy of the Gospel in America.” Among the other activities of the Convocation was a procession with the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of Orlando, with 3,500 Catholics from every diocese in the U.S. accompanying Baltimore’s Archbishop William Lori in honoring Christ in his Body and Blood, the central Mystery of our faith. Oh, you didn’t see that on TV? You didn’t read about it, or hear about it on the radio. No. Let one yay-hoo dressed like a bum show up at a political rally with a sign saying “Down with Everything!” and the media are all over it like flies on manure. Let a handful of angry malcontents show up to protest an ordination and they’re sure to be featured on the front page of the *National Catholic Reporter*, aka “The Gloom of the Church in America.”

The simple fact is, it’s not the job of the media to spread the gospel. That’s OUR job. And except for those who aren’t afraid to identify as believers, it’s not the job of reporters to *live* the gospel. That’s OUR job. The 3,500 who gathered in Orlando are like matches, going back to the woodpiles of all of our dioceses to pass on the flame and set us on fire with an evangelizing zeal. You don’t have to be a diocesan staff member to live the Joy of the Gospel in America. You just have to heed the words that are used in the rite of ordination of deacons when they are presented with the Book of Gospels: “Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.” It’s not just for deacons. It’s for ALL OF US! Let’s get busy. Oh, yeah, and SMILE! ☺

Troubled by fireworks. No, I’m not talking about Coco, who quivered and quaked, huddled next to me in my bed (where she *never* usually sleeps) until 2 a.m. for a few nights a couple weeks ago. Where are all the animal rights zealots when animals both feral and familial huddle and tremble in confusion because of the legal holiday racket (with both meanings intended for that last word)? They go after Big Oil, Big Pharma, Big Deal, and every other perceived corporate monster because of abuse of any kind and because of harm to the environment; but I never hear a whisper from them about Big Pyro, which has free reign to help the world sound like it’s at war for several weekends every summer, terrorizing our animal friends.

I said, though, I’m not talking about Coco, or about your own pets who are shocked out of their fur by the snap, crackle, and pop explosions lasting nearly till dawn. I’m not even talking about any shell-shock on my part. For the most part, I can take it in stride. What I find most troubling was exemplified by one fellow who is a frequent customer when it comes to begging money for a utility bill, for gas, for food, for his car insurance, etc. Monday, July 3, came a request for “\$10 or \$20 so I can buy some fireworks.” What I *wanted* to say was vulgar and unbecoming, and there was no way I could tone it down. So I said nothing. Stony silence. He apparently got the message.

If I could have been pleasantly logical, I would have said, “Sorry, I don’t believe in setting fire to money when it could do someone some *good*.” I mean, this is an even

worse deal than the lottery. With a game of chance, you *might* win, no matter how slim the odds. But with fireworks, 100% of the money you spend on them is going up in smoke. That would be *your* money, not mine. You don't have any? March down to the river and watch the free show from downtown.

Now you might upbraid me for my lack of charity, saying, "Aw, Father, come on, people just want to have a little fun. Don't be so hard-hearted." Nope. For all the reasons cited above, I must say that this is something that exposes poverty, in some cases, as a mindset. There are people who are *really* poor; who, no matter how hard they work *and* how frugal they try to be, just can't make ends meet. And then there are the poor who rather just like to claim the title for the benefits it can provide, and who often exhibit a lot of cleverness in figuring out how to get the benefits without legitimately working for them. Finally, there are the poor like our recent customer, who work and beg and just scrape by without ever getting ahead, because their lifestyle is full of all the wrong choices: \$5-\$6 a pack for cigarettes, who-knows-how-much for pot or opioids, rent-to-own at a major interest profit for the rental business, monthly payments instead of daily *saving* to buy what you want down the road, etc., etc. Many folks have enough such bad habits to fill an old convent closet, and they just don't see why they can never get ahead. Fireworks might be just the tip of the iceberg, but anyone who wants to blow money up today when there's no food in the cupboard for tomorrow is not really poor. Just dumb. So don't ask me to help. Been there, dumb that!

Street repairs. PLEASE TAKE NOTE: The City of Grand Rapids has notified us that during the summer and early autumn, the entire lengths of Myrtle and Crosby Streets, from Turner west to Greenwood Cemetery, will be undergoing complete reconstruction. It will be obvious when the work begins, but please be warned: when the work is taking place, there will be no on-street parking on Myrtle from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. All coming to the parish grounds or buildings will be requested to approach on Quarry or Hamilton from the north. Your cooperation will be appreciated by the work crews. Thank you!

Beat the heat. We've been hearing a lot about the Arizona heat up this way. Here in Michigan, it's only 70 today and in the 50's tonight. It rained midday, and it was actually quite chilly. But only the heat makes headlines, because that's what pumps up the anti-Trump global-warming enthusiasts. The big problem, as I see it, is that they are perfectly willing to make the U.S. carry ALL the burden of expense for their global schemes, as though we haven't done a thing to clean up our act. All one has to do is travel abroad to see how little attention so many other signers of the Paris accord pay for and actually *do* what they signed up for. What a joke! China and other major offenders just laugh when they see the U.S. get stuck with the bill. THAT'S what makes Trump mad, and one of the reasons the geographical majority of the country voted for him. This is just opinion, mind you, certainly not dogma. But the evidence is breathable when you travel. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: “The modern world is full of the old Christian virtues gone mad. The virtues have gone mad because they have been isolated from each other and are wandering alone. Thus some scientists care for truth; and their truth is pitiless. Thus some humanitarians only care for pity; and their pity (I am sorry to say) is often untruthful” (Gilbert Keith Chesterton, English Catholic author and commentator, 1879-1935).