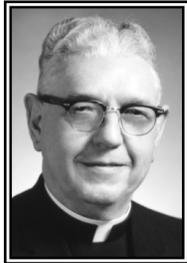


## **BULLETIN -- JULY 18-19**

**St. Anne's Novena** begins this Saturday, July 18, at 7 p.m., and continues on each evening until Sunday, July 26. Devotions are each evening at 7 p.m. except for the two Sundays, when devotions will be at 5 p.m. Confessions are scheduled one half-hour prior to each service. Mass will be celebrated at 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, with the Novena prayers and devotions following. On Saturday and Sunday, the devotions will conclude with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Our resident scholar, **Father Joseph Kiragu**, will be preaching the bulk of the Novena devotions in this, our **75<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Anne's Novena**. (The St. Anne's Novena in our parish began in 1941, just months before Pearl Harbor.) Father Joseph has been a seminary professor and rector in his native Kenya, has been engaged for some years in parish work in New York, and is serving as chaplain at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans. He will be treating us to some perspectives from the universal Church on marriage and family life. How appropriate for a devotion honoring St. Anne, and how timely, considering the upcoming Synod on the Family this fall! All are welcome, and we hope you will consider joining the St. Anne's Society in this 75<sup>th</sup> year. **AND** we are scheduled to have a special guest in our midst on Friday evening, July 24, as Bishop Walkowiak joins us for Mass to help us mark the 75<sup>th</sup> year of the Novena.

**One of my favorite seminary professors** was the late Monsignor Thomas Owen Martin (1910-1989). His scholarship and analytical mind were prodigious. He was



gifted with a photographic memory, often being able to tell an inquiring student on exactly which page in a certain dusty tome the student would find a quote from some classical author that would shed light on the topic under consideration. His dignified appearance and stately bearing made one wonder if he could have been the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and indeed he had the privilege of being able to practice law before that august body. At one time, there were only three doctorates held by the priests of the Diocese of Grand Rapids. He held all three, in philosophy, theology, and canon law! He also had an LL.M., a Master of Laws degree in civil law, and was admitted to the bar as a civil attorney in both the District of Columbia and Michigan. He taught me in my senior year of high school (1965-66), surely a humbling experience for him after having served on the faculty of Catholic University in Washington for over 10 years. We had him for civics and American history, and he was eminently qualified to teach both subjects. He so inspired me to be a good citizen that I have missed voting (in *any* election) only once in 46 years.

I well recall the day that Monsignor Martin, solemnly sharing words of wisdom, told us, "Gentlemen, one of the things that alarms me about society currently is the frequency with which one hears people say, 'I *feel* this,' or 'I *feel* that,' when they are offering an opinion. *Feeling* is always suspect when it comes to drawing conclusions, because feelings are as changeable as the shifting sands. We need to return to *thinking* if we are to avoid the dangers which I believe to be inherent in a society which has forgotten how to reason with its mind instead of merely feeling with its emotions." Wow. I walked out of class that day 50 years ago in a bit of a daze, staggered by such

brilliance. And Monsignor's prescient warnings have proven to be prophetic on a massive scale.

Some have expressed discomfort with the alleged content or tone of certain bulletin columns which have dealt with very real and very contemporary theological and social issues. One writer was concerned that trans-gendered people might feel unwelcome or singled out for ridicule by recent comments. I readily acknowledge what some may find to be a character flaw, that I often find it easier to illustrate a point with (attempted) humor than simply to present dry prose. And the point was, indeed, to help any and all of God's people to disavow themselves of any thought that trans-gender behaviors, lifestyles, or surgeries are somehow just another individual option among many. I wrote that I was contemplating changing my date of birth. I hoped that by using what (today) seems like an absurd example (but which tomorrow might be upheld by the Supreme Court!), I was illustrating the lengths to which relying on *feeling* rather than *thinking* can lead us. I hope I would never disrespect anyone in person, or make them think they were less a child of God because of either physical or spiritual difficulties.

That said, as a pastor I have as much an obligation to warn about corrupt thinking and behavior in that area as a mother would have to push her child out of the path of a speeding car. The child might cry and be alarmed and not at first understand the mother's apparent cruelty; but time, patience, and some correct reasoning would soon help that child dry the tears and realize the good the mother was attempting to accomplish, perhaps at great personal cost. It's more difficult when the speeding car is replaced by a whole culture that swims in moral relativism. The news media go to great lengths to not find any kind of bizarre behavior to be anything more than individual choice. Conditions which once were treated as serious psychiatric problems are now touted as someone's individual "truth" or "reality," regardless of how they do not square with objective fact.

Transgender feelings or behaviors are not something to be celebrated. Indulging them might feel liberating, but it's the kind of liberation that leads from the captivity of the concentration camp to the captivity of the gas chamber. Surgically attempting to alter one's gender is seriously sinful, the sin of bodily mutilation. The Church speaks against such immorality because we are charged by Christ himself to be deeply concerned about the eternal destiny of all people, and we have a duty to tell them that the road they are choosing is not the road to eternal life. People don't go to Mary Free Bed to lie in bed. They go for demanding physical therapy. The church is a hospital for sinners, but sinners must expect to be challenged when they come to church. We are here for demanding spiritual therapy. Christ died for me and accepts me "just as I am," true. But he always wants me to become better than that. We church people are adulterers, liars, thieves, gossips, gluttons, lechers, bullies, sinners in thought, word, and deed. We are all welcome here, but it would be the gravest spiritual injustice to encourage us to remain just the way we were when we arrived. To people with transgender difficulties, and to all those sinners both listed and implicitly included above, there's a better way and a better life awaiting you with the Lord Jesus. Come, open your mind and heart. Don't be tossed about on the stormy seas of life by feelings alone. THINK about who really loves you. And heed His call to turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel. God bless you!

Fr. Den

**Thought for the week:** Whether the weather be fine or the weather be not, whether the weather be cool or the weather be hot, we'll weather the weather whatever the weather, whether we like it or not. (Heard on WOOD-AM Radio.)