

BULLETIN -- JULY 30

Thank you to Mrs. Barbara King and her faithful corps of summer volunteers who once again have displayed consummate patience and ingenuity in putting on our annual Vacation Bible School. This past week has been a flurry of activity as the different groups of children have engaged in a myriad of activities, all designed to help them become more aware of the Lord Jesus in their own lives, and to manifest that awareness by their conduct. Some of the children who come to us have absolutely no idea about how to pray, what the Church is, what goes on in the church *building*, or what makes us Christians different from others. We hope and pray that we send them off with a better idea about all those things, and perhaps with the seeds of a desire to learn and do more in union with Jesus. A shoutout to all who make VBS possible by your generosity!

Thanks also to the zealous and hard-working officers of our St. Anne's Society and to all the Novena attendees. We appreciate as well the priestly services and assistance of our resident, Father Douglas Braun. The presence of so many on these warm summer evenings is edifying for all of us. You might be surprised to find out how much *your* presence can inspire others to greater effort, even if it's gently competitive, for example, "If *she* can make it, *I* certainly can do it, too!" Etc. Thanks to St. Anne for adding our prayers to her own for all the people and potential people of the Covenant!

Thank you once again to Paul and Mary Johnson of Jackson, MI, who in memory of Mary's parents, Tom and Helen Schoen, and her brother Tim, have made a gift to our Christian Service food assistance program. They have provided a gift of \$2,000, to be matched 50% by the Consumers Energy Foundation. We are grateful to all our parishioners and friends who help us help others, both within our parish area and beyond, with emergency needs of various kinds. Please keep the deceased members of the Schoen family in your prayers.

Reformation news and views. In this 500th year since the famous 95 theses were posted on the church door at Wittenberg by Fr. Martin Luther, O.S.A., as a challenge to fellow theologians, a January statement by two leading prelates of the Church of England, the archbishops of Canterbury and York, is enough to throw a bucket of cold holy water upon any overly enthusiastic celebrations.

Archbishops Justin Welby and John Sentamu, the two most senior figures of the Church of England, have issued a statement calling upon the faithful to acknowledge "the lasting damage done five centuries ago to the unity of the Church" by the Reformation. They said that the conflicts among Christians that occurred with the Reformation were a clear offense against Christ's call to unity. The statement recalled "the lasting damage done five centuries ago to the unity of the Church, in defiance of the clear command of Jesus Christ to unity in love. Those turbulent years saw Christian people pitted against each other, such that many suffered persecution and even death at the hands of others claiming to know the same Lord. A legacy of mistrust and competition would then accompany the astonishing global spread of Christianity in the centuries that followed."

This year's commemorations, their statement concluded, should lead all Christians "to repent of our part in perpetuating divisions. Such repentance needs to be linked to action aimed at reaching out to other churches and strengthening relationships with them."

The archbishops' statement also pointed to the great blessings to which the Reformation directly contributed. "Amongst much else these would include clear proclamation of the gospel of grace, the availability of the Bible to all in their own language and the recognition of the calling of laypeople to serve God in the world and in the church," they wrote.

We would suggest that these blessings were not new discoveries in the universal Church. The fathers and doctors of the Church, from the inspired writings of St. Paul to St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), were all clearly aware of the good news of the action of grace.

Also, Bibles were not easily available much before Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in the 1440's. The Reformation took maximum *advantage* of that important advance in technology; but prior to that, Bibles were chained to the walls of churches to prevent their theft, since they each had to be laboriously copied by hand. And there was not much writing in languages other than Latin anywhere in Europe, since most of the vernacular languages were necessarily quite fluid during their times of formation. Since the vast majority of people could not read at all, books remained in Latin so they could be read and exchanged among scholars who were able to use them.

Finally, the New Testament is quite free of the clericalism which eventually came to be identified with the Church. The call to holiness and virtue is universal; and St. Paul, for one, would be the first to insist that NO follower of Christ is exempt.

Much of the credit for calling this news item to our attention belongs to Ulf Ekman, former pastor of the enormous Word of Life Church in Uppsala, Sweden, who with his wife, Birgitta, converted to Catholicism in 2014. At that time, Stefan Gustavsson, general secretary of the Swedish Evangelical Alliance, stated that "Ulf Ekman, despite all the controversies along the way, is undoubtedly the most dynamic and influential Christian leader we have had in Sweden during the past half century." With that kind of a reputation, who knows what influence the Ekmans' conversion will have on the Church in Sweden and all of Scandinavia, where Christianity has become largely nominal at best in the last 100 years? God guides his people in inscrutable ways.

Keep in mind that many of the most popular and energetic personalities on the air on Catholic radio are former Protestant ministers, most of whom never dreamed that they would ever willingly set foot in a Catholic church, let alone be proclaiming Catholic doctrine. There is a common thread, though. Once these eager disciples of the Lord began reading the writings of the earliest Christians, the "Fathers of the Church," some of whom were acquainted with the Apostles themselves, they realized that what they were reading about was the *Catholic* Church, not any brand of Protestantism. Intellectual honesty and openness to the truth led them, by God's own divine light, to union with the universal Church, not simply to another "denomination." God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: “In the end, there are only two types of people in the world: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God will say, ‘*Thy* will be done’” (C.S. Lewis, 1898-1963, British novelist and Christian apologist).