

BULLETIN – JULY 31

Adoration location for Tuesday, August 2, is changed to the **Convent Chapel** due to some interior decoration work and repair being done in the church. All Masses and other services during the week will take place in the church as scheduled. Please use the front door of the convent / parish office. We'll have the air conditioning on for you!

Congratulations, scholar! Parishioner and graduating Jenison senior **Gabrielle Vachon** was honored with a *Press* article highlighting her activities and awards. These included her volunteering at God's Kitchen, among academic and volleyball distinctions. She plans to attend Hope College to study biology and chemistry and, of course, to play volleyball. We wish her well!

Rest in peace, brothers! We ordained four new priests in June, but lost two of our number in one week in July. Then **Father Phil Salmonowicz**, pastor of St. Francis de Sales in Norton Shores and of St. Michael's in Muskegon (both previously *very* full-time jobs!) died Thursday morning, July 21. Phil was ordained "late," if there is such a thing. He had studied in his youth at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit, then left the seminary to go on to a 27-year career in health care administration, including 3 years at St. Mary's Hospital. His ordination took place in 2003, although he was just seven months younger than I. He served first as pastor in Greenville, then since 2010 in Muskegon. Phil was the very personification of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, in the very best pastoral sense: welcoming, challenging, forgiving, laughing, understanding, teaching, encouraging--all the various elements of the ministry of the Lord Jesus to which priests are committed and for which we are ordained.

Father Donn Tufts had retired three years ago after several years of ill health. We lived at St. Adalbert's together back in 1986-88, when I was assistant there and he was in residence as chaplain of both Butterworth and Blodgett. You never had to guess what Donn's opinions were about anything. Scratch the surface and you'd get exactly what was on his mind, plain and blunt. But that voice was equally capable of producing rich and melodious tones when he sang the liturgy, and he could entertain with a playful cynicism that connected the twinkle in his eye with the one in his heart. One morning as we arrived at breakfast, I commented on the drunken transient who had parked himself in the driveway beneath both our windows about 3 a.m., loudly and obscenely calling for the services of a priest. I had finally called the police and had the foul-mouthed wretch removed, and asked Donn, "Didn't you hear that guy?" "Oh, I heard him all right," Donn replied with a raised eyebrow, "but when I heard all the profane adjectives he used to modify the word 'priest,' I knew he was calling for *you*." ***Requiescant in pace!*** ("May they rest in peace!")

It's on the Internet, it must be true. Or at least it was for *The Huffington Post*, which has its own editorial biases. At any rate, on January 13, 2016, it was reported that "The number of college students seeking mental health treatment is growing rapidly. The increase . . . is vastly outpacing enrollment growth. And no one knows why."

Let me suggest a few possible reasons. 1) Our college-age young men and women do not remember a time when they could not instantly connect electronically with the world which was of interest to them. Many of them have, in fact, consistently tuned

out any other reality. Suddenly they are out on their own, confronted with an outside world that is not under their control, and which might therefore be perceived by them as alien and hostile.

2) Many have come from a family or household which represents an ever-growing number of dysfunctional, broken, single- or no-parent families which they have learned to tolerate or ignore out of sheer self-preservation. This means they are arriving at college with a minimum of fundamental socialization experiences.

3) Many have never had basic (and often erroneous) personal assumptions challenged. If they have a circle of friends, those friends are no longer easily available to them. Since they likely have spent elementary and high school hanging only with like-minded fellow travelers, any idea or opinion that threatens what they have always heard and had reinforced by their peer group is perceived as a personal attack, or “hate speech.”

4) If they have had no exposure to expressions or practice of religious faith of any kind – and a steadily increasing number have not – they will think of any kind of such expression or practice as bizarre and untrustworthy, thus being cut off from the vast majority of sources promoting purposeful existence, systematic worldview, organized thinking, philosophical reflection, and virtuous behavior.

5) From the rejection of “gender binary” to the wholesale acceptance of “multiculturalism” with all of its behavioristic variants, young people have been submerged in a culture which has left them with virtually no moral foundations or anchors on which to build. Morality, thanks to assaults from relativists in academia, government, and even in religion, has become simply a matter of, “If you want to do it, it’s all right for you.” The gurus have eagerly ruled that no one can be governed or formed by anything outside of the impulses from within one’s own self. No wonder that the number of incidents of suicidal thoughts and actions, self-harming, cutting, and so on has soared, especially among the young! Remove the skeleton and there’s nothing to hold the body up! Nothing can be achieved without goals, and focusing on goals is impossible without boundaries.

6) Finally, and this is hardly the end of what could be a much longer list, many of our young folks have been raised to be afraid of nearly everything. Since their parents, on average, have not had nearly as many children as parents of previous generations, they have been very sheltering and protective. Nothing is quite so instructive of this point as driving down a suburban street, for instance, and seeing a child riding a plastic, big-wheeled tricycle around in circles on the magnificently wide cement driveway, wearing a helmet, shoulder pads, knee pads, slathered with sun screen, and barely out of the hovering embrace of his anxious mother who is chasing him around, teaching him to ride like a real man. One wonders if she’ll let him ride alone next year when he’s twelve!

Now, the “bubble boy” on the tricycle might be a tiny exaggeration, but what our children are not picking up from their parents, they are learning from school, from the culture around them, and from their electronic media. If direct sunlight will harm them, so will the climate change which they cannot escape. Trees and animals are all dying, and all we can do is join some society and express our communal guilt and anguish. We are culpable for disasters left and right, and feeling bad over just about everything is the least penance we can do for the crime of being born and further polluting a world which is doomed to destruction because of human perversity. When young people are brought

up in such an atmosphere, who can blame them for feeling like they are responsible for carrying all the burden of the world's corruption?

What to do? Teach our youngsters from an early age that they *do* have a responsibility for themselves and others, because we are called by God to be stewards of his creation and neighbors to everyone he sends into our lives. We must be aware (not just *wary*) that many people do not share our beliefs and values, but we still have to treat them as we would want to be treated. But more than anyone else, Christians have reason to appreciate the truth of the words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" (Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933).

Thanks to St. Anne's officers and members for a wonderful Novena. The weather did not disappoint those who say that the hottest days of the year are sure to fall during St. Anne's Novena! Thank you all for your generosity, but above all for your example of patience, endurance, and perseverance. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: "The righteous did not suddenly become righteous. They just refused to go over the cliff with everybody else" (Polish Catholic woman who helped rescue Jews during World War II).