

BULLETIN – MAY 10

Mother's Day thoughts. Special greetings today to all of our moms who are with us, and heartfelt prayers for all those who have gone before us. One of my favorite quotable people, in a characteristic malapropism, once referred to "the importance of bondage between a mother and child" (Vice President Dan Quayle, 1947-). While not encouraging any inordinate attachments, we strongly promote healthy manifestations of loving appreciation between children and their moms, today and every day. This holiday conveniently falls during the month of May, when the Church has traditionally turned our attention to the Blessed Mother in devotion and prayer. Many non-Catholic Christians do not understand our veneration of the Mother of God, but for us, it's all in the family. One Catholic commentator has described Mary in this way: Isn't it just like a Jewish mother to continue to show up at her children's homes all over the world in different outfits? *Enjoy* this day with a lightness of heart that reflects our heavenly Father's love for us as his precious children, entrusted to the care of moms who are not only dear to us, but so very dear to him that he chooses them as the vehicles of his gift of life.

Thank you to all who helped with our beautiful St. Florian liturgy and breakfast last Sunday morning. Behind the scenes of the impressive ceremony were chef Bill Kasperlik, a marvelous set-up crew in Sheila Marzolf and Dennis Vainavicz, our organist and choir members, and all who expressed heartfelt support for our local fire companies in their daily vigilance for all of us. Bishop Walkowiak eloquently offered them our gratitude in his skillfully-crafted homily.

Takin' one for the team. You've already experienced one development as a result of our March parish survey. We had several suggestions to move the 5 p.m. Saturday vigil Mass to 4 p.m., and that has been done.

We had earlier anticipated the difficulty of understanding the pastor's preaching, and had already engaged parishioners to read the written homily for clarity. You know by now that we generally use Eucharistic Prayer No. 2 to try to cut down on the length of the Mass and the long stretches of difficult speech. We stopped announcing the page numbers, because most didn't bother to pick up a missalette and follow along anyway. We have arranged to most often have substitute priests cover the 4 p.m. Mass because that's where the majority of complaints were heard. So we're really trying to accommodate. It's somewhat disconcerting to have people still report that they worship elsewhere because they can't understand. Not sure what else we can do.

In their surveys, several proposed the thought that the homilies and bulletin columns are thinly-veiled Republican rants, and that Democrats feel alienated. Interesting that the last time I had a letter of complaint sent on to me from the Bishop's office (a couple bishops ago, I think), it was from a Republican politician in Ottawa County, complaining about a letter I had written supporting public employees' right to collective bargaining. I hadn't taken my cue from either party, but from Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum* (1893) and the Church's long history of social teaching. As a pastor, I have an obligation to provide the congregation with the authentic teaching of Christ and his Church, and to oppose falsehood. If that happens to be in conflict with one or another party platform, that's the choice of the respective party, not mine.

Archbishop Dom Hélder Pessoa Câmara (1909-99) of Brazil once said, “When I feed the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor are poor, they call me a communist.” In no way do I compare myself with the holiness or influence of the late archbishop. But I can understand the frustration. There is no way I can overlook the danger of a statement like that recently (April 23) made by Hillary Clinton in her address to the 2015 “Women in the World Summit,” a 3-day gathering in New York City organized to examine the struggles and triumphs of women and girls around the globe. You didn’t see this on network news, because the media knew very well it would be pure poison for their generally anti-Christian, anti-life sympathies.

Mrs. Clinton said, “Yes, we’ve cut the maternal mortality rate in half, but far too many women are still denied critical access to reproductive health care and safe childbirth. All the laws we’ve passed don’t count for much if they’re not enforced. Rights have to exist in practice--not just on paper. Laws have to be backed up with resources and political will. And deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs, and structural biases have to be changed.” The applause was thunderous.

Who are the women who are denied critical access? I’ve never heard of a woman who showed up in labor at a hospital, or who showed up pregnant at a clinic, who was ruthlessly turned away. Are we talking about drug addicts who give birth to addicted children in crack houses in a narcotic stupor? Isn’t that rather a matter of their own tragic personal choices? You’d think the pro-choice crowd would be thrilled, rather than calling it denial of access.

Everyone knows that “reproductive health care” is just a euphemistic phrase for birth control and abortion. To Mrs. Clinton and her minions, there’s nothing “reproductive” about the health care on *their* agenda--just the opposite!

And who’s not enforcing the laws? Mrs. Clinton’s party has been in the White House for 14 of the last 22 years, with attorneys general appointed by the executive branch. Is she complaining that her own party hacks are not enforcing the laws?

“Deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs, and structural biases have to be changed.” Cut that any way you want, it is opposed not only to the Church’s teaching on religious liberty, it is in direct opposition to our own Bill of Rights. Since when is it any government’s or candidate’s role to change core values and religious beliefs? Some will be quick to dismiss such statements, and will deny that she really meant what she very clearly and emphatically said. After all, she’s a politician, she’s preaching to the feminist choir, and on and on. No, I think she’s really laying out the blueprint for the kind of society she wants, and we’d better be astute enough to pick up on what kind of architect she is. The fact that she’s a Democrat? To quote her, this time admittedly out of context, “What difference, at this point, does it make?” She’s wrong, and what she’s proposing is inimical to the faith of everyone who does not worship at her altar. And if she really didn’t mean what she said, then she’s a liar. Take your pick.

Now, was that a partisan rant? A personal attack? If I had not named the speaker, citing the date and place at which those words were spoken, I could have been accused of setting up a “straw man” argument. Considering that it’s my job as a shepherd to keep an eye out for the wolf and guide the flock accordingly, I have no choice but to point out obvious danger when I see it. It’s incomprehensible to me that we have Catholics who would put their faith on hold when they vote. Do the members of special-interest lobbies do that? Aren’t we special-interest believers? Don’t let the baptismal water turn to steam

when you stand at the voting booth. There's room for debate on a whole wide range of issues; but when someone announces that, in her world, I will have to change my religious beliefs in order to conform to government standards, my job is to do what I can to let others know just what is being proposed by someone running for high office.

One of the reasons that I tend to be outspoken on issues that matter is what I saw when I visited the Netherlands in 1998. How the Church in a country which had generously sent zealous missionaries all over the world could in just three decades suffer such a dramatic and tragic destruction of its religious fabric was even more of a shock when I saw it up close and personally. I determined that I had to do all in my power to keep such a disaster from befalling the Church in my own country, or at least in that portion of the vineyard entrusted to my pastoral care. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: If you don't stand up for something, you'll lie down for anything.