

## **BULLETIN -- MAY 15**

**The tour of Holy Cross Cemetery** which is advertised elsewhere in the bulletin provides us with a reflection as we approach Memorial Day. Many people who are into genealogy and local history are fascinated by the memories, stories, and meditations stimulated by visiting the graves of our ancestors, fellow parishioners, and townsfolk. We have venerable traditions as Catholics, going back to the Apostles and even into Old Testament times, of praying for the dead, honoring their bodies as the temples of the Holy Spirit which they have been, and consecrating as sacred the ground and places in which they repose. Our altars connect us with our heroic past by enclosing within or beneath them relics of the saints, heroes of our faith. Much as we officially treasure all the ceremonies surrounding the death and burial of the faithful, we are witnessing in our own time a sudden and stunning collapse of the attention the Church has always paid to the sacred nature of the Christian funeral. For a whole host of reasons, many not altogether clear, we are caving in to a cultural cynicism regarding death and burial practices. How have we gotten so far off track in just 30 or so years? And have the morally anesthetizing attitudes about abortion, euthanasia, marriage, and the value of the human person and human body had something to do with our beliefs and practices regarding death as well?

It has become common to hear complaints about the cost of funerals, which are, frankly, no more burdensome as a percentage of family income now than they were, say, 60 or 70 years ago. One of the problems is that we have often taught ourselves that we need more in current creature comforts than we do to provide for our family's future, including funeral arrangements. Our inability to live modestly, not necessarily our income, makes paying for things like the decent burial of a family member problematic. So, we often blame it on funeral directors. "It's a racket." "They just want to make a killing on all the extras." And so forth. When in doubt, blame our failure to provide on the local merchant, be it the grocer or the undertaker.

Our apparent reluctance to pay for anything that won't enhance our comfort might be responsible for the frequent choice of cremation and of greatly abbreviated services, if any are conducted at all. The saddest choice is when Christian believers, or the family members of Christian believers, act contrary to anything in the liturgical Order of Christian Funerals, even to the point of not having a burial place or place of entombment for their deceased family member. "He wanted his ashes scattered over Lake Michigan." Well, then, he wanted something that is in direct contradiction to the requirement of his Church that the body, and even the cremains, of the baptized Christian is to be treated as the temple of the Holy Spirit which it is, and given a proper burial to await the resurrection. No family member is under any obligation to fulfill wishes that are just plain WRONG. If we are Christians in life, we are not to act like pagans in death.

The many genealogists I work with through the Diocesan Archives are appalled at the casual treatment of the body on the part of so many in society today. We are able to visit the graves and note the dates of life and death for past generations of our relatives. Why would we be so selfish with OUR descendants as to leave them no way to find out about us and our role in our families' lives? There is no substitute for standing at the graves of those who have helped hand on the gift of life to us. To deprive ourselves and our children of that experience is to condemn them to a soulless spiritual poverty.

**You might be interested** in your pastor's response to the State Board of Education's "Draft Statement and Guidance on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Students." We were encouraged by the Michigan Catholic Conference to voice our opinions regarding the policy proposed by your State Board earlier this year. The deadline for comment was May 11. The entire PDF document is six pages long, so we could not print it here; but my response is as follows:

The draft begins with a list of definitions. Whose definitions are these? Are they found in the DSM-IV, or have they been approved by any medical or mental health association? Young people of any age are in formative stages of their lives. It is critical that they not be locked in to some "assigned" status contrary to their own biology while they are in a formative stage. Who of us in our elementary, middle, and high school years wasn't "Questioning" ourselves or others about a lot of things, sexuality among them? To allow student-led "clubs" for those who don't feel like they fit in with other schoolmates in any way is to abdicate responsibility for the guidance and formation of young people which should be the task of 1) parents and 2) educators, not of student peers. How often do the drafters of this horribly misguided "policy" envision allowing a student to CHANGE a designation / pronoun / gender assignment based on how the student feels? Can these be day-to-day decisions, becoming a bureaucratic nightmare trying to keep up with what might very easily be the transient whims of students who are psychologically unstable? Would changing designations be allowed only once a week? Once a month? Once a semester? If a student is genuinely Questioning, who is to know how often different answers might be arrived at, particularly when the state of any student's personal feelings seems to be the primary basis for this entire policy? Are there built-in safeguards in the policy to protect against its manipulation by clever students who think it amusing to abuse the system by making false claims of gender fluidity? Finally, will the State Board of Education also allow students who feel that they have an inner call to be seated on the Board to at last take their rightful place as voting members?

**Our longtime neighborhood friend**, Mike (Gus) Thompson, died on Friday, April 22, 2016, at the age of 54. Gus helped out for years at the B & B Party Store on Leonard, and knew just about everyone around the community. He didn't have an easy life, but loved music and had even played in a band. There was a kind of disarming innocence around him that at times led to his being taken advantage of by others. Gus died at Trillium Woods after a bout with cancer. He had many caregivers who were very solicitous for him in his final weeks and days. He was buried out at Burnips in Allegan County. May he rest in peace!

**Estate sale coming up!** We don't routinely advertise estate sales, because there would be no end to it. However, so many have asked about when the sale will take place at Mom's house ("The Morrows of Oaklawn") that I know I'd forget to let at least half of them know. The estate sale is on Wednesday and Thursday, May 18 and 19, from 9 to 5 at 1265 Oaklawn N.E., 3 streets north of Aberdeen and ½ block east of Fuller. Don't be expecting furnishings from the Vanderbilt mansion. Mom and Dad had far more interests than they had money, so their possessions are very humble. But maybe there's something there that's just the thing for you or someone you know. Thanks so much to Barbara Sue

Damore and her faithful crew members for navigating the cargo ship into the harbor!  
God bless you!

Fr. Den

**Thought for the week:** Online comment regarding the need some of the wealthy have to build huge, ostentatious mansions: “They need those big houses. If they were smaller, spouses would actually have to see each other more than once a day, and bingo, there goes the marriage.”