

BULLETIN -- MAY 22

Also graduating . . . We congratulate all our seniors and their families who are joining us today for Mass and breakfast. In addition to those who were named last week, we are delighted to add the names and schools of:

Anthony Boos
Joseph Robles

Kenowa Hills
Forest Hills Northern

Congratulations, graduates, parents, and parishioners!

One final CSA payback has been received from the Diocese for payments on our pledges and gifts from last year's CSA, and the \$100.00 check has been added to our regular checking to help us over some current cashflow concerns. We want to thank all of you for your past and present generosity to our annual appeal. As diocesan-wide appeals the CSA and the D.D.F. (Diocesan Development Fund) before it have been part of our lives as the Church in West Michigan for half a century now. The services that we as a Diocese provide to people in our midst could never be accomplished just by one parish trying to act on its own. *Together*, we can do marvelous things!

Among this year's graduates at various levels, we applaud Bridget Lindgren, who has received an associate certificate of Christian Humanities, *magna cum laude*, at Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Academy in Canada.

Anyone in your family with a disability? Mark your calendars now! On Saturday, June 11, 2016, the Diocese is co-sponsoring a conference for all of our parents and families who have children with disabilities. The conference will take place at St. Robert's in Ada. It will begin at 1 p.m., and includes Mass with Bishop Walkowiak at 4:30 p.m. More details to come, but please plan ahead. This could be the first recognition our Diocese has given to those with disabilities in many years, going way back to the wonderful work of Sister Rose Callahan, O.P. St. Robert's has been a leader in offering religious instruction and events, but we are excited to see this diocesan involvement. God bless you!

Our prophetic mission. When we were baptized, at our anointing with chrism, the priest prayed the words, "As Christ was anointed priest, prophet, and king, so may you live always as a member of his Body, sharing everlasting life." We often hear that we share in that threefold ministry of Christ himself by virtue of baptism. This is not something you decide you want to be. Once you're baptized, you *are* a prophet! So, what does it mean to be a prophet? Our compliments to Father Ron Hutchinson, our Diocesan Director of Vocations and State Chaplain for the Knights of Columbus, for neatly and practically outlining what the message is that we as baptized Christians are expected to proclaim, day in and day out:

- the dignity of all human life from conception to natural death;
- our non-optional commitment to the poor and downtrodden;
- building our lives on a spiritual, not a material, foundation;

- awareness and avoidance of the pitfalls of temptation;
- values that are worth sacrificing for, and even dying for;
- the truth found only in Jesus Christ and in his Church;
- our need for a Savior, since we cannot save ourselves.

Are these major themes in your life? Can people easily see and hear that you stand for these things in your family, in your neighborhood, at work, at school, and at your recreations? If we are intent on knowing what the Gospel is and intent on living it, being a prophet isn't all that complicated. We are called to be totally transparent, so people can easily find Christ through our words, deeds, and attitudes.

A great many words are poured out by those who advocate for everything from same-sex unions to cross-gender restrooms, accusing sincere Christians of hate speech and bullying attitudes. We can readily admit that some bullies employ the guise of Christianity to advance genuinely hateful ideas. But to accuse Christian doctrine and moral teaching as being responsible for physical or verbal violence is like saying we should all have our arms amputated because arms are clearly the cause of violence and abuse. The more clearly the Church enunciates the demands of the gospel of Christ (without leaving out the difficult parts), the more we stress how wrong it is to engage in violent behavior toward those who do not yet accept the totality of that gospel. Christ the Good Shepherd himself says, "I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

It is our belief in the gospel of Christ that tells us, as he says, that "no one comes to the Father" except through him (John 14:6). He alone is "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." Other people might not believe that, but *we* believe it, in their regard as well as our own. We never write them off, much less physically or verbally punish them for their failure to accept Christ and his teachings. After all, we ourselves reject his saving words every time we sin! There is a certain sadness we experience for those who mistakenly think they will find fulfillment, life, and happiness in pursuing courses of action which we understand to be sinful. This is not condescension. It's *companionship!* We are all fellow travelers. If I have a light and I refuse to share it with you while you're stumbling around in the dark, I am even more at fault than you are if you fall and hurt yourself. If you refuse to follow the light which I have been given to use for *us*, I still have an obligation to try to help you and warn you in any way I can.

We believe that there is no virtue in freely allowing others to pursue courses of action which cannot lead to life. We can legitimately interfere with those pursuits when means of interference are available. We can state our beliefs, we can protest, we can vote in accord with our beliefs as they can in accord with theirs. That doesn't automatically make either of us guilty of hatred or hate speech. Once we cross the line and allow our beliefs to motivate us to hostility or violence, whether "homophobic" or "Christophobic," we have abandoned our status as fellow travelers, companions on the journey. If that happens to us as Christians, we have allowed the evil one to twist what should be the pure motives of the Good Shepherd into weapons which appeal to our fallen human nature. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: “It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness, he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you” (Pope St. John Paul II, 1920-2005).