

BULLETIN – MAY 3

We welcome our area fire fighters, retirees, their families, and friends to the annual St. Florian Mass and breakfast this Sunday. St. Florian has long been revered as the patron of fire fighters. Devotion to him is very strong in Central Europe, where he died as a witness for Christ while serving as a member of the Roman imperial army. He is usually depicted in a Roman soldier's gear, pouring water on a burning house. His feast day is celebrated on May 4. He is also, appropriately, the patron saint of brewers. Nothing like teamwork among his devotees!

Capt. Bud Morrow organized the first St. Florian Mass in our area in 1969. That initial service took place at St. John Vianney Church in Wyoming; and for practical reasons, it has most often been held at the church where the Catholic chaplain is assigned. The St. Florian Mass is scheduled annually on the first Sunday of May. Fire fighters, family members, and friends gather to pray for one another. A special commemoration of those who have answered their last alarm is made by tolling a fire bell once as the name of each of the past year's deceased is read, and then the tolling of the bell with the traditional 5-5-5 signal, indicating that a member has responded to his or her last alarm. While the St. Florian Mass is Catholic in form, fire fighters of all faiths are welcome to attend the Mass and the breakfast which follows. In addition, the St. Florian Society, made up of all the Catholic members of the Department, has a memorial Mass offered very soon after the death of any individual member or retiree.

Congratulations to Bridget Lindgren, who has returned home from Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Academy in Barry's Bay, Ontario, with a first-year certificate *magna cum laude*! Welcome back, Bridget.

Sincere thanks to the family of Charles and Adele Zygas for their gift to the parish of \$1,000 from their parents' estate. Charlie and Adele were faithful members of the parish and of the neighborhood since coming to Grand Rapids in the 1950's. *Ačĩũ labai! Tegul ilsisi ramybėje!* (Many thanks! May they rest in peace!)

Our amazing rummage sale a couple weekends ago brought in an amazing total of **\$3,398.29!** Sincere thanks to all who donated items, all who participated, all who patronized, and all who worked so hard to see to it that this annual event was well publicized and a big success. Special thanks to Patricia and Ken Barnes, and to our facilities manager, Dennis Vainavicz, for their patient and efficient organization of tons of stuff.

The second in our 40th Anniversary Speaker Series comes to us this Tuesday evening, May 5, at 8 p.m. The slightly later hour is to accommodate our regular 7 p.m. Tuesday Mass, without having too much undue commotion by having them crowd each other. **The Perpetual Help Novena that evening will take place BEFORE the Mass, just after the rosary.**

Our May speaker is an old friend from school days, George Weigel. He was a freshman when I was a senior back in 1969-70 at St. Mary's Seminary College. In those heady days of renewal, reform, revolution, and rejection after the Second Vatican

Council, we became fast friends and kindred spirits. George has gone on to become very well known as a Catholic author and commentator on world and national events. He is a frequent guest on television and radio, and is a Vatican analyst for NBC News. He is a Senior Fellow at and a past president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. He is perhaps best known for his two-volume biography of Pope St. John Paul II, *Witness to Hope* and *The End and the Beginning*. Mr. Weigel's address to us this Tuesday will deal with the greatness of St. John Paul II, whom he was privileged to personally interview for countless hours in preparing the monumental work. He brings to all of his work a wide background of study in foreign and domestic affairs, and has been awarded no less than 18 honorary doctorates from various institutions of higher learning. As it happens, on Wednesday, May 6, at 12 noon, he will be delivering a major presentation at the Acton Institute downtown, on Pope Francis and the Modern Papacy: Continuity and Change. Both of these occasions promise a full measure of his insight, thoughtfulness, and humor.

Some recent attacks on pro-life politicians zero in on those who commit the (apparently) gravest mortal sin of them all, in pro-abortion terms: they do not support abortion even "to save the life of the mother," however rare an occurrence that is in actual practice. The objection is always made to sound very rational and very noble: "She already has other children to take care of. Who will take care of them?" But let's change the scenario just slightly. What if the house catches fire? What if Mother has five of her six children safely outside and one of the children asks, "Where's Jimmy?" Mother frantically looks around, Jimmy is nowhere to be found. What mother will simply huddle her children together and say, "Well, too bad for Jimmy, let's say a prayer for him"? Aren't the stories in fact legion, of mothers who go nearly berserk with grief when they have to be restrained from re-entering the burning house, **without regard for their own lives**, in order to rescue the life of someone who depends on them completely? The point is, it is a natural inclination of a mother to desire to preserve the life of each one of her conceived children. I have never met a mother after a miscarriage or a still birth who was not genuinely grieving the loss, often years later. Who would be so monstrous as to flippantly say, "Oh well, it's easier this way than getting to know them and THEN having them die"? THAT'S not consolation! The woman feels keenly the loss even of a child whom she could not bring to live birth. And the truth is that women keenly feel the loss even of children who are aborted, no matter how much Planned Parenthood and other such organizations counsel them to just get on with life.

The Church has never approved actively taking the life of an unborn child in order to save the life of the mother. You may not commit one grave sin in order to prevent another evil. This is not a military medic having to make a decision between which of two gravely wounded soldiers to attend. The assessment has to be in favor of the one who appears to have the best chance of survival. But that's not a question of actively killing the other one, which would be murder. And that's the problem with abortion. The pro-abortion camp would love to declare the unborn to be "non-persons," and therefore incapable of being murdered. The trouble is, we know where that has led, with slaves, with Jews, with our fellow Christians who are being butchered by ISIS. All this is why definitions are important. It's important to ponder and to know the profound and fundamental meaning of things like life, person, sex, and marriage. When we allow the

lines to be compromised and blurred in monumental ways, we are tampering with the very foundations of human nature. When those foundations become a matter of mere human whim and “choice” (which deceptively sounds so very fair and democratic), we place at risk the survival of the human race itself. Look at the evidence in the last hundred years. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: You don't have to be a paragon of virtue to know the difference between moral poverty and moral bankruptcy.