

BULLETIN -- MAY 8

Still coming in, thank you! Our March CSA payback check has arrived for the overage from last year's Appeal, to the tune of **\$1,138**. And a happy tune it is, because you can see how our weekly income is regularly striking a bit of a minor chord. Thanks be to God for some generous gifts to our Improvement Fund, for they have helped us schedule some necessary "sprucing up" of the interior of the church and some enhancements to our sound system. It's been over a dozen years since our big Centennial renewal, which we were able to accomplish without any big drive or pitch for funds. AND we were still operating our school at that time! Thank you for your ongoing generosity. The times have been tough, and many of you have been more than faithful.

Thank you also to Chef Billy Kasperlik for turning over **\$1,312** which we received over and above expenses from the Lenten Wednesday Soup and Salad meals. The April rummage sale raised **\$2,498.52**, and we extend our special thanks to Patricia and Ken Barnes for all their work over the past months gathering and arranging the donated items. Our Easter sale of *ausiukes* brought us **\$692.50**, and we thank the many workers who spent hours and hours preparing these Lithuanian holiday treats. Thanks also to those who continue to patronize Meijer and who have allowed the Community Rewards program to return to us a check for **\$114.34**. See, the parish is like a symphony. Together, we make nice music!

Can't we just have a funeral? When someone dies, I mean? We've fallen all over ourselves trying to come up with new words and phrases to describe (or disguise) human realities. Schools are now learning centers. Churches are worship centers. Libraries are reading centers. Hospitals are medical centers. Attorneys' offices are justice centers. Sewage disposal plants are wastewater treatment centers. Everything is a *center*, which winds up making the word meaningless. Maybe the learning center at Lake Superior State should think about banning *that* word next year.

Catholics have very cleverly added some vocabulary to American jargon. For years, we've said things like, "The funeral Mass for Hortense will be celebrated at . . .," with the details of when and where. No doubt the normative and rather stodgy American culture found that to be a bit odd. "What are those Catholics up to now, 'celebrating' at a funeral?" But now they've taken up the cause with gusto, and celebration has come back to haunt Catholics far beyond its original and legitimate meaning. Every other obituary in the paper states that there will be "a celebration of life" for the deceased, often in a completely secular context, perhaps in an attempt to make us drown the thought that he or she is dead, and most likely in need of our prayers.

The somewhat somber nature of a Catholic funeral, on the other hand, is intended not only to remind us of the promise of resurrection, but also to remind us that we mortals have only a limited amount of time (in Latin, the *funes* part of "funeral") to cooperate with God's grace in accepting and activating the salvation Christ has won for us. Without that participation on the part of us mortals, we could well rise to condemnation, a tragedy of eternal proportions. Now a brand new term has appeared in a recent obituary, saying that "a *rejoicement* of her life" was to be held for a deceased lady in an area church. I can assure you, spell-check does not recognize that word, although it

probably will in a couple years. Since English and most other useful subjects are not high on the priority list for Common Core, almost anything you want to think or do is fair game. Before you know it, you'll be able to win at Scrabble by making up a word that you "feel" should be a real word. In the reality game of life, it seems that it's already happening.

Spirituality for seekers? There aren't many bookstores left these days, but in the few that are still open you will probably find a reasonably large section on "spirituality." I put that in quotes because spirituality is such a broad term and includes so many different things that you are apt to find topics from agnosticism to Zen Buddhism and everything in between, all on a par, all without judgment, and all without direction. No wonder so many people never stop seeking—or so they say! They wander about from one book club and prayer group to another, looking for a community or a worship center or a life center rather than a church, because that word seems so off-putting. After all, "church" implies membership, and commitment, and obligation, and rules – and all the other things that make life worth living if we're going to be serious about sinking roots and making a genuine contribution to the world. We've heard before that "church" in Greek is *ek-klesia*, those who are called out from the rest for a reason. And when Christ calls us out from other people, it's not because we're better than they, but because we are given a mission by him to return to them and live in their midst and "infect" them with Christ and his gospel. What a privilege, to be his Church!

Spirituality is for seekers, but seekers often are not responding to anything except their own inner hungers, and trying to find satisfaction through their own "inner lights." "Believe in yourself," a common bromide blathers to the seeker. And so on they go, staring into the rear-view mirror, looking at themselves and what's behind them instead of deciding on a destination, looking ahead through the windshield, and actually getting someplace. The Catholic faith is for finders, for those who actually want to embark on a pilgrimage that makes sense. It is *revealed* religion, not invented. What we present to others is not what we have made up, but what we have received from Christ himself. If it is not that, there is no part of it that can be trusted. As one preacher said, if we can't trust Christ about the fact of the Eucharist being his Body and Blood, we can't trust anything he said. If he lied about that, and let his Church lie about it for 1500 years until the "Reformation," nothing about him or his Church is worthy of belief. And that means that *all* of Christianity falls apart, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, all of it, because it all comes from the same Root – Christ himself!

Most seekers are not inclined to call Christ a liar. Many of them are too wishy-washy, too relativist, to call *anything* "truth" or "falsehood," because that would mean *deciding*, and they want to leave all their options open. They will find Christ worthy of belief, about *some* things. But if he can't be trusted about *everything*, including his own claim to be the Son of God, then he is lying and not worthy of trust about *anything*. The leap of faith into the arms and heart and mind of Christ is indeed a gamble, in worldly terms—but look at the stature of those who have done it! We are in the magnificent company of the Virgin Mary and Joseph of Nazareth, of Peter and Paul our patrons, of Perpetua and Felicity the martyrs, of Augustine and John Chrysostom and Thomas Aquinas, of Teresa of Avila and Thérèse of Lisieux, of John XXIII and John Paul II, of Edith Stein and Benedict XVI, of Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa and Francis. If such a

magnificent variety of women and men from every time and place had the courage to take that leap of faith and decide to be found and employed by the risen Christ as his witnesses, aren't we brave enough to follow suit? What, indeed, have we got to lose? God bless you!

Fr. Den

Mother's Day prayer. May God grant you always:

A sunbeam to warm you, A moonbeam to charm you,
A sheltering angel, So nothing can harm you,
Laughter to cheer you, Faithful friends near you,
And whenever you pray, Heaven to hear you!