

Thank you for a great Fall Festival! God provided gifts of faith, hope, love, and weather. You all provided so much time, talent, ambition, and energy. Chairs Dennis and Lisa Vainavicz, along with Karlene and all the members of the Vainavicz family gave us a sense of direction along with all their hard work. Lisa's sister, Chris Barres, came all the way up from Plainwell to run the kids' games with all their challenges, one of many non-parishioners without whom we could not have had a Festival. The many donations gathered by Karen Coe, Beth Kalczuk, and our many other volunteers almost made a long and extended mini-affle into a maxi-affle, organized expertly by Sally Augdahl. Sheila Marzolf and Roz McCormick worked with an autumn flair to provide thematic decorations inside and out. Deb Hanes ran the bingo, Rob and Amy Pease and their family ran concessions, Bob Maxon ran the beer tent, Billy Kasperlik and Jeff Crawford directed the kitchen, the Worm family had charge of the affle, Jean Jilote shepherded all of our volunteers, and Tom Marcusse and Dave VanderLinde put in endless hours all week long getting everything ready. Sobie Meats donated all of the meat and baked beans for our wonderful dinner, while Ralph's Market donated 20 lbs. of brats and Brechting Farms supplied the farmer's market. Team *Ausukie* performed its usual magic, twisting strips of batter into delectable Lithuanian treats. Parishioners worked eagerly to peddle affle tickets far and wide, turning a handsome profit for the parish on what are still the best-bargain tickets in town.

You won't hear this on the nightly news, but let's remember the words of St. Teresa of Kolkata as she received her Nobel Peace Prize on December 11, 1979: "The greatest destroyer of peace today is **abortion**, because it is a war against the child . . . a direct killing of the innocent child, murder by the mother herself. . . And if we can accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?"

Perhaps you've heard commentators ask about those who have rioted in Ferguson, Baltimore, St. Paul, Charlotte, and other places during the past year and during the past months: "What do they hope to gain? What connection does this destruction and thievery have with grief over someone's death, whether justified or not? What does it prove or resolve?" The answer, I would submit, lies within Mother Teresa's address to the whole world as she received her Nobel Prize. The aimless agony expressed by so many people, many of them professional agitators brought into "hot spots" by, shall we say, "moneyed interests," is typical of the anomie we might expect from the brothers and sisters of generations of aborted children—an out-of-proportion number of them African American. When life itself is so cheap, what's a store window? What's the value of a new TV compared to all the Black Lives that haven't Mattered to anyone except the abortionists, lining their pockets with cash from their grisly trade?

One can detect a cruel thread winding its way through events of the past half century in American history. The inner cities and college campuses of the U.S. broke out in anarchy in the mid to late 1960's. Was it just coincidence that Woodstock in 1969 was timed to pour drugs wholesale into the streets of the U.S.? It began the convenient diversion of the attention of young people from serious social issues to the invitation of Dr. Timothy Leary to "Turn on, tune in, drop out." It helped in the creation of an underclass in which, as decades went on, virtually no one would be raised in a two-parent family and few would know anyone who held anything resembling a steady job, let alone support a family with actual earned income. The answer to the social woes of such people was to be found in government, in President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society," which in retrospect has turned out to be neither great nor much of a society.

The discovery of a "right" to abortion on demand by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973 overturned centuries of jurisprudence and the legal and medical protection of pre-born human beings. Citizens could now confidently look to government rather than to any religion or faith for the answers they were seeking and wanting about the most important things, even life itself. Growing dependence on government and its programs was not interrupted by the Watergate scandal and the unprecedented resignation of a sitting President in 1974. In fact, the parties and personalities of government came to mean less and less as the checks bestowed by that government came to mean more and more. With a populace anesthetized by narcotics and hypnotized by free everything, the gradually engineered takeover of every aspect of American life by moneyed interests could proceed nicely. Meanwhile, religion had been effectively replaced by bureaucratic regulation in many areas of life. Faith communities became embroiled in scandals due to the moral lapses of their leaders, and consequently had little credence in the face of various lobbies campaigning against once-sacrosanct standards and values. Creeping relativism and the narcissism fostered by the easy capability of instant gratification made the announced transformation of American society predictable, if not welcome by an apparently significant minority of citizens.

In such a climate, it is important (in the playbook of the social engineers) to have periodic unrest to destabilize a society that has become a little too complacent, especially when there are semi-organized groups of citizens unhappy with government and anxious to thwart the continuing onslaught against values they consider integral to a healthy social order. To be sure, Americans are on edge about many things: a generalized lack of civility, the climate of exaggerated political correctness, terrorism hitting increasingly closer to home with greater frequency, anxiety over nearly every aspect of immigration, saber-rattling by rogue states. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, the country seemed more united than ever across its historic racial divides. Even many who opposed an Obama presidency held out the hope that at least having a black President in the White House would at last put to rest some of the all-too-familiar animosities. It quickly became apparent that those hopes would not be fulfilled. Perhaps the prospect of racial harmony held the promise of too much calm to satisfy the goals of the moneyed interests. You see, if everyone is getting along, who needs a community organizer? By keeping a medium level of turmoil constantly brewing, they would like to have the people continue to look to the federal government and bureaucracy to resolve their differences and support their desires and wants. For these interests, reliance on government brings about

the creep of the control they desire over every aspect of life: justice, health, education, welfare, commerce, environment, transportation, security. The list reads like the directory of federal departments headed by presidential cabinet members.

Who pays for the chronically unemployed, disaffected, and ever-ready-to-travel group of professional protesters like those who represent Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter? They move from city to city, have a standard agenda and method of operation, and just happen to appear in selectively chosen places to stir up trouble. Their slogans, chants, and missiles are designed to wear down the patience and confidence of both the public and of public safety. They show no real loyalty toward or love for the persons or causes they claim to adopt. They come to a setting where lives are broken, and typically nothing has been healed by the time they leave. They withdraw, leaving the local community in a shambles. But they ensnare the minds of those who are easily duped by their clever yet irrational thinking, seizing on rumor and just enough authentic experience to make sweeping generalizations seem like incontrovertible fact. And behold, a whole new generation of discontent is spawned, convinced that only more government can assuage their acquired feelings of being aggrieved, offended, and victimized.

How is this the poisoned fruit of abortion? Well, when human life in the womb can be snuffed out with such callousness, and even for profit, what else can have meaning? The cynicism which arises from the communal wound of the deliberate murder of each generation's own future is easily translated into angry and irrational rage, which gets played out every time a new opportunity is offered. The cycle is vicious and the roots are deep. The only answer is Christ. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: "Be a fountain, not a drain. Create more, consume less" (Hugh O'Neill, professor of strategic management, University of North Carolina).