

BULLETIN -- SEPTEMBER 27

Welcome to our Fall Festival! To all our parishioners, as well as to all our guests, neighbors, and friends, a hearty welcome as we again arrive at the last Sunday of September and our annual Fall Festival. We are so pleased to have you with us! Our parishioners have been and are working hard to ensure your enjoyment. There are many things going on in our city today (ArtPrize being a major, world-class event), and we are glad you have chosen to make us part of your day.

Our August CSA rebate has arrived, in the amount of **\$1,043.00**. This will be added to our regular checking account to augment the funds we have on hand to pay our regular bills. Your generosity to CSA is also generosity to the parish, and we are deeply grateful.

Easier in and out. Have you noticed that our hymnals are sliding in and out of the books racks in the pews a little easier? THANK YOU to those who suggested some alterations, and THANK YOU to our friend Ed Witte for his carpentry skill in doing just what was needed. You can't even tell it wasn't originally that way, which is the way we always like to make alterations.

“Save a Tree -- Go Paperless.” This sensible urging was imprinted on an envelope from a financial institution, an envelope which contained page after senseless page of reports, statements, summaries, and charts, none of which was of interest to me. Such hypocrisy! And then, if you wish to take individual advantage of their special service to provide you all the same mumbo-jumbo *online*, all you have to do is call the toll-free number, which will be answered by an automated voice and never let you speak with an actual living person. The corporate board no doubt thought that they were getting in line with Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si!*, by being sensitive to environmental issues, urging us miserable customers to go paperless. THEY, however, no doubt on orders from some unelected government agency entrusted with the solemn duty of making life miserable for all of us, THEY have neither the mind nor the will (both faculties of the soul) to sensibly say, “Come on! Who REALLY is ever going to read this stuff? Can we even understand it? Let's just put it up on our web page under ‘Nonsense ordered by the Such-and-such Act of 2012’ and be done with it!”

And speaking of bureaucracy . . . You can imagine my delight when I received a first-class letter from the City of Grand Rapids informing me that since Mom's house is no longer owner-occupied, we lose the deduction for homeowner's primary residence. But the best parts were the salutation and the first sentence: “Dear Estate: We are sorry for your loss. . .” Really.

Help for the Mideast. In response to inquiries about a local response to the tragedy of refugees fleeing upheaval in Syria, we have set up an opportunity for online donations to Catholic Relief Services (CRS). CRS is partnering with churches in Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Serbia, providing essential needs like food, shelter, and medical care. Bishop Walkowiak asks that you please consider this opportunity this

weekend, and also remember in your prayers all those who are suffering. The information can be found on the main page of the diocesan website, dioceseofgrandrapids.org. If you are not computer-friendly, you may donate to CRS through the parish just by putting your offering in an envelope clearly marked for that purpose. We will see that it gets there. Many of you are already helping the refugees through donations to the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), which often has literature in the back of church. Thank you for your generosity to the persecuted Church. In addition, by unanimous vote of our parish finance council, the parish as a whole will be making a donation of \$1,000 from our Christian Service fund to assist the refugees through CRS.

Celebrating an anniversary. I couldn't think of a better way to mark 40 years of ordination than to gather the Church for whom I am ordained. In one way, we've been doing that all year with our speaker series, and the speakers have not disappointed. Each of them thus far, Fr. Charles Dautremont, George Weigel, and Fr. Thomas Simons, has put great effort into the presentation of a really timely topic. If I had known just how much preparation was going to be put into their lectures and how good they would be, I would have arranged in advance to publish the four as a stand-alone book! I am honored at the time and thought the speakers have invested in little old Grand Rapids and in us as a parish. I am certain that the one remaining lecture, on November 1 by Sister Sara Butler, M.S.B.T., will equal the others in both depth and challenge.

The speaker series was designed to provide our parishioners and guests from around the community with a top-notch slate of thought-provoking scholars. As I've heard each of them, I realized we had succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. I am very grateful to them, and to all who have joined us to benefit from their wisdom, knowledge, and experience.

And then there's the other part of the celebration. That's today. We hope the information has gotten out far and wide that we have an open house and festival, with many activities for all. It will be good to renew friendships that have stood the test of time, and good to strengthen those which are relatively new. The 40th is a significant anniversary, the "Ruby" jubilee, as Bishop Walkowiak reminded me in a recent note. It's also noteworthy because by the time a priest hits 40 years of service, he's likely older than just about anyone else he knows who is not yet retired! There are a few of us who hope and/or need to stick around long enough to max out on our Social Security benefits, so that's a milestone about 2½ years away. So far the marbles are all in place, but there are days when I can sense them rattling around in here, just looking for a hole big enough for them to escape.

As I told a *Press* reporter recently, I've had the very good fortune of having many of my diverse interests come together in a way that they could work with and support each other in four decades as a priest. My upbringing and my experience as a mail carrier were both of great help as I moved into work as a police and fire chaplain. They also supported my love of local history and Church history, which got lots of exercise in both the archives and on the canon law team for the diocese. All of these have helped me to, on occasion, even appear deceptively competent in my work as a parish priest; although I've always known that if someone scratched the surface a little too hard, the veneer would easily come off and reveal all the human baggage in the hold of fallen human

nature. You have all been marvelously patient when that has happened, and I am grateful for that--grateful, too, for your thoughtfulness and consideration when it's been difficult to speak these last few years. I can't imagine a better place to be while the Lord invites me to share in a bit of redemptive suffering with him. You are and have been lovingly wonderful to me and my parents and family, no more so than at the times of my folks' deaths. God bless you for making the Word flesh when His loving embrace has been needed so much.

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: "It is better to fall short of high standards than to be praised for mediocrity" (David C. Lukowitz, Ph.D., 1934- , professor *emeritus*, Hamline University, St. Paul, MN).