

TIDINGS

OF HOLY NAME OF JESUS NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARISH

A Monthly Newsletter of Information and Events

Vol. 20 – 2007

Month of October

No. 10

A Priestly Spirit (Part V)

I sit down today to start writing this article on September 11th, the sixth anniversary of the terrorist attacks against the United States of America. Religious fanaticism has mired the world in conflict. We as Americans are not free of all blame, but I think even the most skeptical are realizing that the so-called capitalism and imperialism of the United States are not the progenitors of the extremism of a man like Bin Laden, Al Qaeda, the Taliban and the such. On this dour anniversary, in the far from conservative *New York Times*, they quote an editorial in the German newspaper, the *Bild*, concerning the recent foiled terrorist plot in that European nation: “There are no easy answers. But the 1.4 billion or so Muslims owe it to the rest of the world to at least try to give answers and find a remedy. A religion with bloody margins does not belong in a world which wants to and must move closer together.” (9/11/07, A6) In this same article, a poll in Spain found that 63% of that population believed that Islamist terrorism sprang from religious fanaticism, while only 17% blamed it on the United States.

Muslims must obviously find a way to deal with the extremism that emerges from a fanatical interpretation of their religious tradition. Such concerns are not limited to Islam, however. Chandra Bhan Prasad has written extensively about the Hindu caste system in India. He has said, “In all ways, it’s worse than the Jim Crow laws were in the American South because it’s completely sanctioned by religion.” (*Boston Globe*, 7/5/07, A17) The Indian economy is growing dramatically, life is improving, but for the “untouchables” these benefits are a world away – because of religious fundamentalism.

In Mark Penn’s recent book *Microtrends*, he has noted that in the past 20 years the number of American female clergy has more than tripled, but also that in the last 50 years nearly every major religious denomination that allows female clergy has seen membership drop. Penn says it is tempting to say the female clergy have caused this decline. However, the figures point in another

direction. Penn notes that female clergy are a sign, are a result, of a larger liberalizing trend that is itself unpopular among the religious. Religious fundamentalism is currently prevalent across religious divides, and a reflexive opposition to women priests is but one unfortunate aspect of it.

But it was not always this way. Our nation emerged during the epoch called the Enlightenment. Society was marked by an interest in this world, by efforts to make this world a better place in which to live. They embraced creativity and discovery, and of necessity along with these, they enshrined religious freedom and toleration. Read if you have the chance *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment* by Henry Steele Commager who once taught at our local Amherst College.

The pendulum has swung dangerously far over to the side of fundamentalist religious thought. We need to help it gravitate back toward reason and creativity. We are made in the image of God, says the Bible from its start. This means we have intellect and free will. These should be the fundamentals of religious fundamentalism.

The conductor Claudio Abbado last performed in the United States shortly after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. He is now coming back this month. Many think of Classical music as stodgy, but Maestro Abbado’s philosophy is: “Understand in life there are always limits. I try to find a way to avoid limits, to do something new.” (*NYT*, 8/21/07, B5) A literalist, fundamentalist religion is a limiting factor in our world. It has bred violence, poverty, prejudice and ignorance. Openness to female clergy is one sure sign of an alternative religious orientation, of an open-minded, interpretive religious orientation. To at least consider its possibility in an informed and polite discussion is a sign that we are attempting to avoid the limits of fundamentalism, and to try and consider something new. As I have tried to argue over these past several months, we have the tradition, the authority and the mechanism to avoid artificial limits, but do we have the will to consider something new?

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTH OF OCTOBER

October 3, 2007 –Monthly Mass for Health at 6:30pm

October 5th – Monthly visitations to the sick and shut-in of the parish

October 6th – Confession for the youth of the parish at 9:00am (Please note special time!)
2008 Youth Convocation meeting in Westfield at 11:00am.

Annual meeting of the Central Seniorate Council in Westfield at 1:00pm.

October 7th – Polish Mass will be recited at 7:45am.

Monthly meeting of the Parish United Youth Association at 10:00am.

October 9th – Monthly meeting of the Parish Committee at 7:00pm.

October 14th – **FEAST OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY.** Mass at 9:00am.

Bp. Gnat will administer the sacrament of **Confirmation** at 4:00pm.

October 15th – Bible study group will meet in the parish hall at 7:00pm.

October 21st – The new Confirmation catechism class will hold an organizational meeting at 11:00am.

October 27th – Annual **Fall Bazaar** in the parish hall from 9:00am – 2:00pm.

October 28th – Monthly meeting of the Adoration Society at 10:00am.

October 29th – Last Bible study group meeting of the year at 7:00pm.

*** ** * ** **

“[Americans] do not nowadays refute our predecessors, we pleasantly bid them good-bye.”

- George Santayana.

BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Our Bible study group meetings will come to a close this month after another year. From early Spring through late Fall we meet on alternate weeks. This year we have been reading Old Testament history. Next year we may read the Jewish-Christian Gospel of St. Matthew and take special note of his emphasis upon prophecy-fulfilled in the life of Jesus. If you would like to come and get a feel for the class, you are invited to join us during our last month. Then, if you like what you see, you can think about coming back in the Spring and starting with us from the beginning. If you have any questions, please feel free to give a call, and remember that non-

members are welcome to join us, as well, so invite a friend.

YOUTH CONVO MEETING

The national Youth Convocation will be hosted by our diocese next Summer. Preparations for this event have already begun. If you would like to be a part of the planning team, you are invited to join us at our next meeting in Westfield on October 6th. If you are interested, give a call to the rectory so that we can work on the logistics.

The theme of the Convocation will be *PNCC Pride*. The Convos are open to parishioners between the ages of 12 and 17. Those who are 18 and older may attend as chaperones. Along with our sessions we have already talked about a day at a Rhode Island beach and a dinner cruise. If any of this sounds interesting, make plans now.

FEAST OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

At the General Synod of 1914 the church promulgated a brand new feast day celebration: the Feast of the Christian Family. During the horrible destruction of World War I in Europe, our mostly immigrant congregations feared for their families back across the Atlantic. With this in mind, they instituted this unique feast day. So often we take our closest gifts for granted. Only when they are threatened do we pause to take stock of them and show our appreciation. This is what happened in 1914.

The Christian Family is still under-appreciated. It remains one of the most important parts of our lives, and yet we seem to take it for granted far too often. This is why our church denomination has been celebrating this special feast day for all of these years on the second Sunday of October, and we hope that you and your entire family will come and join us for Mass on this special day.

It seems to me that the month of October was chosen to counter-balance an older tradition that emphasized the virginity of Mary at this time. Our church has always had a deep seated respect for Mary and her role in salvation history. However, we have also chosen to emphasize Mary's role as Jesus' mother rather than the tradition of her virgin conception of Jesus. The virgin conception lasted for nine months; Mary as Jesus' mother lasted a lifetime from Bethlehem right through Calvary Hill.

To reinforce this teaching, our church placed the Feast of the Christian Family within the month of

October. We tied together the idea of Mary as a part of the Holy Family with our hopes and prayers for the Christian Family. We see family life as an exemplary form of the Christian life. This is why our special feast day of the Christian Family is celebrated in October.

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

The sacrament of Confirmation will be administered by our diocesan bishop, Bp. Thomas Gnat, on Sunday, October 14th at 4:00pm. The ones being Confirmed are: Kristin Calvo, Jason Farrick, Joseph Hubbard, Evan Lesenski, Angelica Perfido, Emily Sanderson and Kevin Stefanik, and Amber Orzel will be joining us from our sister parish in Northampton.

Confirmation marks the transition point in a person's faith life from that of a child to an adult. With the increased responsibility of adult church membership, the church shares the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that God may help them to better lead truly Christian lives. And in turn, the Confirmands take a solemn oath of faithfulness to God and church. These are the sacramental gifts and the pledge of a person's word that this class has been preparing for since September 2005.

In our church denomination, we teach that Confirmation is the completion of Baptism. At Baptism the godparents speak the words of assent for the one wishing to enter the church. At Confirmation, the young adult *confirms* those baptismal vows for himself or herself and a chosen sponsor only stands there as a witness. By combining these two acts into one sacrament, our church allows for the introduction of infants into the family of the church, and also allows for the personal profession of faith once a person has reached the age of young adulthood. Confirmation is impossible without Baptism, but Baptism is not fulfilled without Confirmation.

This is an important moment in the lives of our young people being Confirmed, their families, and in the life of our parish. We invite all would like to participate to attend. Our bishop will also be joined by other clergy from our Central Seniorate parishes.

NEW CONFIRMATION CLASS

The Confirmation class of 2009 will meet for an organizational meeting on Saturday, October 21st at 11:00am. At this time we will discuss when to

hold our classes so I ask that both parents and students show up for this meeting.

Requirements for Confirmation catechism are regular attendance at Mass and Sunday School, along with your participation in our catechism class. If you cannot commit to these three requirements at this time, it is best to postpone your Confirmation date.

FALL BAZAAR

The annual Fall Bazaar will be held on Saturday, October 27th from 9:00am until 2:00pm. This is an important fundraiser of our parish and we hope that everyone will help in some way. Volunteers will be making pierogi for the Bazaar on Monday, October 1, 8 and 15. If you can help in this way, please come down to the parish hall kitchen. We will also make apple pies for the Bazaar on October 25th. Plans are not yet finalized, but we will also make golumpki tentatively on October 25th, as well. Along with these delicious offerings, we always turn to our parishioners and ask them to make and bake their own kitchen specialties, and to then bring them to the church hall on the 26th of October.

At the Fall Bazaar we also have a plant sale, craft tables and raffles. If you can help with a donation to any of these projects, it would be much appreciated. We run a coffee can raffle at the Bazaar. Anyone wishing to donate a prize is asked to speak to Cindy Hubbard or Mary Ellen Ahearn. Also, monetary donations or donations of baking ingredients are appreciated. Please call the rectory for more information. And Thank You!

ST. JUDE'S HOSPITAL

The parish has become a *Partner in Hope* with St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. We are receiving monthly stories and photos of the children we are helping. These materials have been placed on a special bulletin board in the parish hall for everyone to read. If you would like to make a contribution to this campaign, a collection-jug is located in the church vestibule. Any donation is appreciated from change on up. If you would like to make your donation by check, please make it payable to the parish with a clear note indicating the St. Jude's collection. Thank you.

**If someone you know needs a hospital visit,
please notify the rectory.**