

Feb. 8-9, 2014

Thoughts from the pastor,

This past week we made some changes to the HOPE sales procedures. This was a long time coming and it is always interesting when change happens. The changes had to do with sales procedures. The Archdiocese has dealt with several situations of money being appropriated inappropriately over the last few decades. Archbishop Sheehan knew that this was happening in several parishes but didn't want to do anything about it because he thought that having an auditing system for his priests would send the message that he didn't trust his priests. He found out the hard way that he shouldn't have trusted some of them. The Archdiocese lost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Archbishop Curtiss heard about this as he came to the Archdiocese so he started an audit process for parishes. The hardest part of the process was demanding that all accounts that had the parish name on them or used the tax exempt status of the church needed to be monitored. When this came out it drove some people crazy. They complained that it made it look like the Archbishop did not trust groups like Men's Clubs, Women's Groups, etc. It also worried them because part of the procedure required that the pastor's name must be on the signature cards so they would have access to the money. What the Archbishop was trying to do was put in a checks and balance system, but many people had been burned by priests who overspent money in ways that did not please the people who had worked to earn it for their parish. It did finally get straightened out by having all the accounts monitored by the Archdiocese through a computer network.

The other worry was one that I mentioned last year and that had to do with the weekend collections and money counting. Parishes needed a system by which no one person, including the pastor, could have access to money in ways that weren't overseen. That is when parishes set things up so that at least two people, who were not related to each other, would be involved in bagging the collection money and getting it to a safe place and also counting it and getting it to the bank. This solved two purposes, it took away any temptation to be dishonest and also protected the reputation of people involved in case there was any discrepancy in the figures.

As a pastor I am thrilled by these procedures because it has kept things honest and kept honest people from false accusations. This was very important because I have served in parishes where fraud was discovered. The HOPE sales have never had any problems with missing money but it hasn't always followed those procedures. This is not good because it involves thousands of dollars worth of merchandise. So I am tightening up the procedures. For HOPE sales there must always be two or more people selling before or after Masses and one of those people can't be related as in husband and wife, etc. The result of this is that at this point **we need more volunteers to help with sales**. This has been a great bonus to our parish and I hope that it can continue to be a benefit, but I want to do it according to the guidelines of the Archdiocese so that no one gets in trouble. Like the Archbishops found out, it is not just a matter of being trustworthy. It is a matter of following procedures that make that a reality for everyone. Contact the HOPE office if you can volunteer.

One of the books I read on my vacation was "Dangers to the Faith, Recognizing Catholicism's 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Opponents" by Al Kresta. I really enjoyed this book. It clarified much of what I was wondering about and was concerned about in different areas. One is the New Age Spirituality where he touched on the difficulties we face when people think they can be spiritual but not have a religion that they are grounded in. He also looks at Eastern Spirituality, Islam, abusers of power and government, and consumerism gone wild.

I will let you know about the other two books later. This week Fr. John and I will be gone most of Monday and Tuesday for the Priests conference in Schuyler.

God bless you,

Fr. Frank