

Aug. 12, 2018

Thoughts from the pastor,

St. James/Seton School starts this week on Wednesday, 8/15. It also happens to be the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The school children will have Mass in the morning. For everyone else the Masses are at 7am & 7pm, and 12:10pm. I love this Feast Day because it is about Mary going to heaven with her glorified body. That is good news for us because it is a sign of what we would be able to receive at the end of the world, but also because it makes it possible for her to appear all over the world in her glory.

This weekend we will have our annual Missionary Coop appeal. The second collection will be for this or you can use one of the envelopes that will be in the pews and send it in or bring in your donation at another time.

As many of you know I was in Colorado. It was a multi-purpose trip. I got to see my great niece who is now 1 ½ years old. My brother-in-law just had knee replacement surgery so I had the reminder of the young and the old in my family. I was also there for my class reunion. Forty years ago my St. Thomas Seminary class of '78 headed in different directions. Most of us were ordained. A few had left to get married. A few got ordained and then left and got married. Everyone was invited and many came.

The two in that last category lost their husbands. Yes that is written correctly. One is divorced and one widowed. Their lives are a confused mess and the sad target of their pain was the Catholic Church because they didn't feel supported enough in all their decisions. I was proud of my classmates as we tried to continue our support for them as God's children. Of course that was not enough because they can't look past their pain to see the difficulties involved in their decisions. But some of the news that has come out this past week has been a reminder of just why the Church teaches what it does.

We continue to teach that marriage is meant to be a covenant between a man and a woman that is to be faithful, life-giving, and permanent. Our sexuality is God's gift to us to help us with that goal, not just for our amusement. The news reports I am referring to are as follows. *Cardinal Theodore McCarrick Resigns Amid Sexual Abuse Scandal*. He was from New York but served as a bishop on New Jersey. *Chilean Bishops' Efforts to Prevent Sex Abuse Affirmed by Pope Francis*. Sex abuse has seemingly been rampant in that area. *Pittsburgh Bishop to Release Names of Accused Priests*. About 70 priests are on that list from that diocese. *Bishop Conley Reviewing Process for Boundary-violation Reports*. A priest is accused of having an inappropriate but non-sexual relationship with a 19 year old. And a few months ago: *Australian Archbishop Guilty of Covering up Child Sex Abuse*. There are more stories this year but you get the idea.

These kinds of scandals hit the Church in the USA about 20 years ago. In 2002 the bishops of the US, the USCCB, put together their response in what was called the *Dallas Charter*. They said that there would be zero tolerance for any priests who had credible accusations against them. Even though they had been asked very pointedly, it was clear that this did not include bishops. At that point I started to worry when this other shoe would drop. If there was no oversight on bishops the Charter could not work. If a bishop knew he could get into trouble for what he had

done or was still doing, he was not going to work with any real investigation of his priests, for fear that the fingers would eventually point back to him. This left whole dioceses, and even the seminaries they sponsored, out of the loop of any real investigation. I was happy that most diocese, including the Archdiocese of Omaha, took it very seriously. That is why we have had such thorough investigations and work done to deal with any reports. But this has not been the case across the country or around the world.

Pope Francis will have his hands full over the next year or so. Please understand that I am not accusing everyone who is not heterosexual of being an abuser. I also have same-sex orientated classmates who are excellent priests and have been living the kind of chaste lives that each of us promised to live when we got ordained. Any sexual orientation that doesn't have appropriate boundaries, like the Church's definition of marriage, is a disaster waiting to happen. What is so sad is that disaster might not hit the person's directly involved. My classmates who were in same-sex marriages have not caused any abuse, but they have decided to support the breaking down of the boundaries of God's law as the Church has tried to teach. This has led to what seems like a dam being broken, that started all sorts of justifications for bad sexual behavior.

The Church is supposed to be the pillar of strength in support of God's plan for sexuality. If we ever get to the point of officially justifying any of these bad behaviors, we are lost. I don't believe God will allow that to happen. Instead I believe that the world-wide awareness of these scandals is one of the best things that could have happened, for now the Church can fix the problems left unresolved when it didn't seem to think a bishop could be an abuser. Now every diocese and every seminary will be a place that can be an example of God's wonderful plan for us. He does not want us to use each other. We are to love each other unselfishly. He does not want us to live in fear of an abuser. He wants us to have healing and be confident that the Church is once again a place where we can be safe. After all, it is where we learn to be the Family of God.

Now I want to offer some really good news and then a request. The good news is that we did have the seminarian send-off Mass and party here at SEAS last Sunday. The Archbishop was here for the 11am Mass and many of the seminarians were helping as altar servers, lectors, etc. After the Mass there was a luncheon for them and their families. After that they went out to play softball. For me that is the really good news. I was scouting the teams. I wanted to know if there was going to be any help coming in the next few years for the I-80 Collar Series. I am happy to report that we do have some good recruits coming up. So our win this summer will hopefully not be a one-time wonder.

The request has to do with the parish picnic. Last year I suggested that you think about inviting family members or neighbors to the picnic, who might not be members of the parish. This is a chance to make us visible when we are at our best. The picnic goes from 2:30-7:00pm on August 26, two weeks from now. Let's make it a great family celebration or actually an *extended family celebration*. By then the parking lot should be all done and the sound system work should be finished. I get excited when a project actually gets finished. Just remember that there is no 5:30pm Mass on the evening of the picnic, so plan ahead.

God bless you,
Fr. Frank