

FROM THE PASTOR'S



Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 13, 2008 A

NICE TIME AWAY

Even though I returned last Monday from my ten day trip, I am not here this weekend. As you know, Fr. Gregory is here for the annual Propagation of the Faith Appeal. So I decided to go to the Tampa area to visit a class mate and watch on TV one of the big hurling games (a Gaelic sport) - something I very much enjoy attending when I am in Ireland during the summer.

My time away started with a trip to Spokane where I gave a retreat/seminar on the topic of forgiveness. The retreat house, Mary Immaculate, is located out in the country. The area reminded me a lot of Ireland, green field, rolling hills. When I went out for a morning walk I needed a sweater. The weather was just perfect.

From Spokane I journeyed to Presentation Center—a retreat and conference facility run by Presentation Sisters. Their place is located up in the hills a few miles from Los Gatos and about 20 miles from San Jose. In the morning I relaxed, walked their trail and read. In the afternoons I visited places such as Monterey, Carmel, Napa Valley—all of which were very beautiful. I would love to have played golf at Pebble Beach, but I would have needed to take up a second collection to pay for the green fees. The temperature was perfect; cool in the early mornings and evening and not too hot during the day. My time away was very lovely. Oh! Gas prices: \$4.65. Everything is relative

Some books I read while away

For relaxation, I read (most of it) Tom Brokow's *Boom-Voices of the Sixties*. Though I didn't grow up in the sixties in this country, it was interesting reading the reflections of people my age. If you are interested in reading this book, I would be happy to loan it to you.

No Such thing as a Bad Day—a Memoir by Hamilton Jordan. Part memoir, part cancer survival story. This moving book recounts the adventures and personal struggles of former White House chief-of-staff during the Carter Presidency. I enjoyed this book very much. On the cancer side: Jordan fought three types of cancer over a period of twenty years. When the book was

written in 2000, he seemingly had beaten all three cancers. Unfortunately, I read recently he had died. The portion on prostate cancer is especially worthwhile. His final chapter *Ten Tips for Cancer Patients* is especially practical and I would say very helpful for anyone fighting cancer—especially prostate cancer. I also enjoyed reading the rest of the book, his civil rights stories and his years in the White House.

Word on Fire—Robert Barron. The author is a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and a professor of theology at Mundelein Seminar. He is one of the leading theologians in our church today. This particular text is a book of reflections on thirty-two miscellaneous scriptures. The book is very readable and has lots of *fresh insights* into scriptures that we have heard many times. Commenting on the book, Lawrence Cunningham of Notre Dame states: “Robert Barron’s reflections on the scriptures weave vast learning, beautiful prose, and his own vivid faith into a seamless whole.” I am especially enjoying the frequency with which the author draws on the insights of Thomas Aquinas.

Your Personal Renaissance—Twelve Steps to Finding You Life’s True Calling, Diane Dreher PhD. The author holds a doctorate in Renaissance literature and is a professor at Santa Clara University (Jesuit). The back cover of the book states: “Whether you are graduating, changing careers, getting divorced, retiring or just unsure of what’s next, *Your Personal Renaissance* will help you find the right path.” I have only read 100 pages of this 240 page book. I am enjoying it very much. I like the way the author draws on the lives of people like DaVinci, Michelangelo, Galileo, Thomas Moore and others to inspire us on our journey of self-discovery. I would especially love to put this book into the hands of young people going off to college. People of any age can enjoy this book which has many questions and exercises to help us discover our true calling. So far my favorite statement in the book is: “Your job is not your calling. You are always more than you do - what matters most is the *spirit* in which you do it.”

Bishop Wenski Speaks out on the Same Sex Marriage issue

If you get the *Florida Catholic*, you may have read Bishop Wenski's weekly article titled: *'Common Good' calls for defense of traditional, legal marriage*. As usual, our bishop has written another thoughtful article. Since many of you probably do not receive the *Florida Catholic*, I am making the bishop's article a part of this column. The bishop writes:

The imposition by judicial fiat of same-sex marriage on the citizens of California has reminded us that society's culture wars are far from over. This example of raw judicial activism should reinvigorate efforts to enshrine in state and federal constitutions the traditional legal understanding of marriage. The stakes are high. Those who see "same-sex marriage" as progress towards a more "tolerant" society will – with characteristic intolerance – label their opponents as "intolerant," "bigoted," "homophobic" and so on. However, to defend marriage as a monogamous union between one man and one woman is not bigotry. Nor are the efforts of those who seek to enshrine in state or federal constitutions the "traditional" understanding of marriage intolerant.

Of course, in America, we value our privacy and that of others – and so today most agree that one's sexual orientation shouldn't necessarily be anyone else's business. And even those Americans who hold homosexual activity to be immoral and sinful are increasingly tolerant of homosexuality as a "private" phenomenon. They might invite the person who experiences same-sex attractions to conversion and, in place of behavior viewed as sinful, propose chastity – but they *do not invoke the coercive power of the state* to force such a conversion.

On the other hand, however, in redefining the legal definition of marriage to include same-sex unions, the proponents of "gay marriage" are in effect imposing their views and lifestyle on the larger populace and *once legal the state's coercive power will punish those who refuse to embrace gay marriages*. For example, public officials – regardless of their views on the rightness or wrongness of homosexual acts – will be obliged to officiate at same-sex "weddings"; public schools will be required to teach their acceptability to children whether parents concur or not. Even First Amendment freedoms will not be protected from assault.

Marriage has been primarily about the raising of children (who seem to be hardwired to be best raised by a father and a mother who are married to each other). The state has had a legitimate interest in favoring such traditional marriages as a way of investing in the future of society by providing for the human flourishing of upcoming generations. Of course, in recent years, in the face of increasing relativism and individualism in the culture, the state has often retreated from vigorously promoting these interests: Sometimes this occurred through legislation (e.g., no fault divorce laws); sometimes through judicial fiat (e.g., *Roe v. Wade*).

In the culture wars, the two sides are fighting about the understanding of man and his relationship to truth and reality. One side – and today "gay marriage" is its poster child – holds that anyone can essentially create his or her own reality. This side holds for a radical autonomy by which truth is determined not by the nature of things, but by one's own individual will. The other side holds men and women are not self-creators but creatures. Truth is not constructed, but received and thus must reflect the reality of things. Or, as the Book of Genesis says: "Male and female, He (God) created them." (Gn 1:27).

The former's position, like that of the secular Utopias of the 20th century, is a recipe for tyranny; the latter's position promises a freedom that is only achievable through adherence to objective truth which we do not, and could never, invent. As I said, the stakes are high. Same-sex "marriage" – if allowed to prevail in law – will result in the devaluation of all marriages with terrible consequences to society. The common good demands that the understanding of marriage as a union between one man and one woman not be lost. We need a constitutional amendment protecting traditional marriage.

In next week's column, I will share with you excerpts from *Forming consciences for Faithful Citizenship—a Call to Political Responsibility* from the Catholic Bishops of the United States.

Have a blessed week,

