

“ALL IN A WEEK’S WORK” THE MANY FACETS OF THE CATHEDRAL

There are many ways that people know if they have had a busy week. For me, I can feel it in my feet and my back! As much as I love our marble floors, and I do, they tend to do a number on one’s feet and back after long hours standing on them. They are uncharacteristically unforgiving, amidst a Church that preaches mercy! We just finished quite a week here and I’d like to share with you some of its highlights, lest people wonder exactly what goes on here on a daily basis. While the “footprint” of the Crashed Ice was smaller than in past years, due to the operations being moved farther down the hill, nevertheless, there is a rush of activity in the final days before the Friday-Saturday event. As previously mentioned, this was the final such race here, and I was pleased to see many families attend together. The Saint Paul Winter Carnival Royalty’s participation in the festivities clearly lent a “Saint Paul” flavor to the event.

On Sunday evening, while most everyone else was watching the Minnesota Vikings take it on the chin in Philadelphia, we were hosting an ecumenical prayer service (Vespers) in conjunction with the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**. This was a Lutheran-Catholic initiative in which I was honored to participate in its planning. Previously, I have participated in several panel discussions of the Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue. Those are quite enjoyable, if somewhat heady discussions about doctrinal and pastoral matters. This rather, was solely intended as an experience of common prayer, not a theological dialogue. Both are necessary and have tremendous value. We had a decent turnout on a winter Sunday evening, especially considering the competition on television!

The National Lutheran Choir provided music this year, including the Kyrie from Palestrina’s *Missa Papae Marcelli*. They couldn’t have known that this was my absolute favorite of his Masses, but it was not lost on me its provenance. Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina was an amazing 16th century Renaissance composer specializing in **sacred polyphony**, compositions for “many voices.” It was the period following Gregorian chant’s dominance, in which all sing on the same note. His compositions are sung *a capella* that is, without musical instrument accompaniment. The **voice alone is the instrument** and they are simply heavenly. This particular Mass was named in honor of **Pope Marcellus II**, who occupied the Chair of Peter for all of **three weeks** in 1555. He was the last pope to retain his baptismal name (Marcello Cervini) after becoming pope, undoubtedly pleasing his mother! He participated in the Council of Trent a decade before his election and was committed to Church reform, determined to root out all nepotism.

The Council of Trent was a pivotal moment in the Catholic Church’s history, but one that also articulated the doctrinal differences with the reformers. That the choir would sing a piece in honor of a pope I took as a symbolic gesture of respect for the ministry of the papacy. But I was not expecting it. Nor was I expecting the **Rev. Patricia Lull** of the Saint Paul Area Synod of the ELCA to mention both Archbishop John Ireland and Emmanuel Masqueray in her reflection! She clearly did her homework and delivered a beautiful reflection on how a church building can stand as a beacon of hope to a world so hungry for meaning and the transcendent in life. Quite honestly, I was floored. The Women’s Association and Ladies Auxiliary baked delicious treats for the reception afterwards. Several interfaith couples approached and shared that praying Vespers together was very meaningful for them— it was for me too!

On Monday we held the **Prayer Service for Life**, and despite the inclement weather, the Cathedral was nearly filled. Large contingents from Winona and New Ulm could not make it in due to the storm, or else we would have been standing room only. Nevertheless, the Church was filled with people passionately standing up for innocent human life in the womb. Archbishop Hebda spoke passionately as he encouraged young people to be faithful and powerful witnesses to the dignity of life. I was delighted to see the good folks from St. Mary’s Orthodox Church in Minneapolis join us as well; they have been very involved and supportive. Pro-life must not be seen as a “Catholic issue,” for it is the human rights issue of the day, there being no more innocent form of human life than life in the womb. I always come away energized and confident that we are still getting the message out to a new generation to advocate for the voiceless.

Then on Tuesday, we hosted the funeral for **Fr. William Baer**. To see so many turn out was edifying to every

priest in attendance, a visible witness to the positive impact a zealous and holy priest can have on the people. He powerfully impacted so many future priests while serving at the college seminary. Mind you, in between these events, our relatively small parish staff had to prepare, clean and rearrange the Church sanctuary and other public areas (Hayden Hall, etc.) for several major events and receptions. Several amazingly beautiful liturgy guides were prepared, floors cleaned, flowers prepared, etc. I **offer profound thanks** to both staff and our volunteers. As the streets were still being cleared after 12 inches of snow, our crew stayed late on Monday and arrived very early on Tuesday to ensure everyone's safe passage. I am so proud of them for their dedication. It is truly an honor to work alongside such dedicated staff and generous volunteers. This week reminded me why I am so humbled and honored to serve here at the Cathedral.

- The case of **South Sudan** is particularly troubling. Africa's newest country (formed in 2011) and home to 12 million residents, has been in civil war since 2013. It is a largely Christian country, with Catholics representing the largest single Christian grouping. But the many ethnic divides have ravaged the country, leading to severe famine in areas that simply cannot obtain sufficient supplies.
- People are criticizing the Saint Paul Public School officials for holding classes last Monday, but given the forecasts, it was unclear how much snow would fall. Soon though it became evident that we were getting hit hard. Many schools dismissed early, but St. Paul buses were stuck, leaving some children waiting in school for hours until buses arrived. Someday, it will be a moot point, as kids will simply log on and watch live-streamed lessons from home on snowy days.
- The Church's **Code of Canon Law** was promulgated 35 years ago on January 25, 1983. Canon Law gets a bad rap. Consider that the entire Code is contained within one volume of 1,752 canons. As we work with the city about renovating the Dayton Ave. building, I have been perusing chapter 10 (Means of Egress) of the Minnesota Building Code, **just one of its 35** chapters. That chapter alone has 34,655 words (85 pages). The entire Code of Canon Law has just 121,271 words. The Bible has 930,000 words, still far fewer than the Minnesota Building Code!
- The **Church in Mexico** is celebrating the founding of its first diocese 500 years ago this weekend! Spread across 96 dioceses and intermingled with periods of tremendous hardship, may the rich heritage of the Catholic faith remain a guiding force for the good people of Mexico.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector