

“MARTHA VERSUS MARY”: SILVER LININGS AND A (FORCED) RETREAT

Late Friday afternoon e-mails are not typically blockbusters. Still, I momentarily hesitated before clicking to read it. The e-mail was short, though surely **not sweet**. My **Covid-19 test** came back– **positive**. So much for my theory about a summer cold. Just to be safe, our deacons had been distributing Communion at daily Masses all week. I am glad I was cautious! My first thought was, “I am glad I do not have a wedding tomorrow.” The past three Saturdays had them, as did this weekend, thankfully with a visiting priest. **Dodged that bullet**. But I knew what this meant– **quarantine**. I quickly made some phone calls to secure help. Our new parish Business Administrator **Jim Gajewski** stayed late to fill out the required Archdiocesan/Catholic Mutual forms. The Archdiocese’s **Laurie Wohlers** was amazing in securing last Sunday’s clergy, being that Fr. Pavlak was on a well-earned vacation.

My thoughts now turned to a duty that I have been **remiss** in following. Canon Law is rather blunt. Priests “are equally bound to make time for spiritual retreats according to the prescripts of particular law.” (Canon 276 §2.4) That typically refers to an **annual retreat**. So, why did it take an e-mail to force my hand? I am isolating at a Northern Wisconsin cabin. (see photo inset) I am most grateful to my brother for permitting this, and truly sought to use the time for **prayer and reflection**. It is surprising how much time is consumed by daily Mass, confessions and details of Cathedral hospitality for groups and special events. I’ve developed a daily **built-in 3:30 p.m. alarm** to head over to Church and prepare for **confessions**. I feel as though I have abandoned my post, gone AWOL.

I am immensely grateful to **Frs. Joe Bambenek** and **Mark Pavlak** for their assistance with Masses and for United Hospital chaplain **Fr. Mike Monogue**, who served as confessor in the afternoons, amid his duties! The word “quarantine” dates from the **14th century** effort to protect coastal cities from **plague** epidemics. Ships arriving from Venice (back when they ruled the sea!) were required to **anchor in port** for 40 days (Italian, *quaranta giorni*) before landing. The Covid protocols are inconvenient, yet they absolutely need to be followed. And no, I hardly consider myself indispensable. That isn’t my point at all. We **creatures of routine** do not like to break out of routine and there is always this nagging sense that someone or something is being neglected in the parish.

All the more reason why there is a need to step back, evaluate, re-calibrate, and become renewed in spirit. I actually rather enjoy being alone– that is not the issue. Boredom? No, sir– not a chance. However, the **Martha** side of me is far more **dominant** than the **Mary**, and in a **clash** between the two, Martha almost always wins! Ironically, when she “wins,” I too often lose! Striking a balance between work and personal life is a struggle for many– ask any parent caring for kids at home! It is not a problem unique to us priests. However, when you live where you engage in ministry, when the office is one floor beneath your room, it makes the **separation** more challenging. Never in 32 years of ministry have I seen the priesthood as my “job.” It’s my vocation– that is very different, not merely one of semantics.

Among the legal maxims contained in the venerable **Code of Justinian**–commissioned by the Byzantine Emperor (†565 A.D.) himself–was the phrase: *Nemo dat quod non habet*.’Translated “no one gives what he does not have,” its significance goes beyond mere **property law**– it applies equally to the life of the soul. The soul cannot give what it does not have. A soul that is dying of malnourishment offers little to others. At some point, doing good works is not enough; ministry must flow from an **inner life** fortified by prayer and the Holy Eucharist, a devotion to Mary and the saints, plus a daily striving for virtue. These qualities are not the cherry on top of the sundae– they are the very foundation and building blocks of our interior life in Christ. If we do not take the time to nourish this, we will wither.

As a result of my quarantine (though I feel just fine!), I need to absent myself from the parish through the entirety of this weekend. As a result, we are going to postpone **the Ice Cream Social to a later date**. I invite you to **sign up** at the Welcome Desk in Church after Mass and commit to trying a small group session. This sign-up does **not** commit you to all six weeks, but gives us a sense of the interest levels. It does presume in **good will** that you make a sincere effort to attend the early sessions and see if they are fruitful for you. We are

in need of a number of people who would be willing to serve as **facilitators**. Each session begins with a video teaching in Hayden Hall, after which each table discusses its implications for our Archdiocese. May the Holy Spirit guide and inspire us to respond to His call as engaged and hopeful disciples on the journey.

- Congratulations to Cathedral parishioner **Paul Kuhmeyer**, one of eight recipients of the Archdiocesan “Leading With Faith” award, presented to business leaders and executives who put their **faith first**. He received it at a Mass here last Wednesday celebrated by Archbishop Hebda. Paul is owner of Innovo Automation, with his wife Ursula and three sons, all of whom are familiar and active faces here at the Cathedral. We are very proud of you, Paul!
- Summer’s fading! Back to school is just around the corner. We desire to serve your children through a solid **Religious Education** program. Please see the registration information on our parish website.
- In the fight for the unborn, change is seemingly imperceptible at times, but nonetheless real. The state of **Missouri** had **30 abortion clinics** in the 1980’s. Pro-life efforts, including maternity homes for pregnant women, have made a real impact. Only **one** Planned Parenthood **clinic** remains. Twenty-nine down, one to go!
- “Build it and they will come”– to **Dyersville**, Iowa. White Sox vs. Yankees in a **regular season game** at the Field of Dreams. Sure, they added 8,000 seats, but the idyllic setting was amazing, hearkening back to a simpler time. Bravo– MLB finally got it right!
- **St. Dominic** died in Bologna, Italy on August 6, 1221. A full 800 years after his death, his community remains a powerful force in the Church today. The current Master of the Order hails from the Philippines, a tribute to the worldwide appeal of St. Dominic’s preaching and teaching. It currently has four branches: **friars** (both lay brothers and ordained priests), **nuns** (cloistered), **sisters** (active religious women) and **laity**, who collaborate with the Order’s mission. Congratulations!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector

