

## **From The Pastor**

Thank you God, for a beautiful day and a very wonderful parish picnic last Sunday. A good time was had by all of the nearly three-hundred people who came to enjoy the day. We had a delicious lunch with an ice cream treat, followed by games for the kids. Kids and adults alike raced through the pie eating contests. Late in the day, the winners were drawn for the raffle. Congratulations to those who won.

After expenses and payment of the prizes, the raffle has yielded a little more than six-thousand dollars. I want to thank not only those who came to the picnic, but especially those who bought and sold raffle tickets. Given the tough economy we are in, I am pleased and grateful for all who participated in this parish effort. I am particularly grateful for Tim and Nancy Oparka who chaired the picnic. Mel and Marie Szlag coordinated and ran the raffle. Steve and Sarah Mall planned and coordinated the lunch, with many helpers in the kitchen, on the grill, and on the serving line. Kirsten Kyle ran the games for the kids with the help of many of our youth. Thanks to Hopcroft Funeral Home for printing the raffle tickets, and for Swanson Funeral Home who provided prizes for the children and game winners. Without the hard work of really, a small group of people, the picnic would not happen. Thank you to each of you and any and all not mentioned here. You all did a great job.

This week is the bi-annual Priest's Convocation at Boyne Highlands. Most of the priests of the diocese will gather for this time of retreat, conferencing, and fellowship. We are all interested in the address to be given by Archbishop Vigneron regarding the reorganization of the Central Service Offices of the diocese, and the overall financial situation. It proves to be a stimulating and important time of prayer and interaction for the presbyterate of Detroit. I will leave early afternoon Sunday and return later on Thursday. Please pray for us during this time, as we will be praying for all of you.

Although the hope was to use the raffle monies for an upgrade to the sound system, it now seems much more prudent to use this money to repair the sidewalk and church entrance on the east side of the building. These cracks and broken cement create much more of a concern than the sound system right now. The six-thousand dollar gain from the raffle will cover the majority of this expense. Bids have been taken and the work will begin soon.

St. James, in the second reading, confronts the fundamental question of sin and grace, darkness and light. Where do the conflicts among you come from, he asks. It is from within your members, he says. He is not referring to members of the church community, but to the inner attitudes and tensions we all carry within our hearts. War and conflict come from the inner tensions and unresolved hurt and fears of persons. Today's readings are all prime examples of this universal human reality.

The unconscious emotions that we bury from past hurts and the defense mechanisms we create around these fears to protect ourselves are most often the trigger points in us for dissension and conflict. Notice the mood and disposition of the first reading, and consider where these emotions and hatred come from. 'Let us beset the just one because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings, points out our faults and charges us with our crimes'. This is the dark, collective mood of a group who is being confronted with the way of justice. The mood is malicious and arrogant. It seeks damages and defense against this threat to their wrongdoing.

The reality is that we are all burdened with a dark side. We have all buried past hurts and pains that we have not been able or willing to face or deal with. This hidden and buried hurt gets pushed down in us, but it does not go away. We think we are done with it, but it waits below the surface and reveals itself at the most inopportune time. The scribes and the Pharisees are a good example. They pride themselves in perfectly keeping the law and standing above any reproach. They may keep all the laws and rules, but at the end of the day, where do they put their inner passions and dark thoughts; murderous, prideful, arrogant, lustful, prejudice, or greedy desires?

The solution is to bring such inner tensions into the light where they will lose their power. Admit and confront, reveal the inner tensions that are yours. Face your feelings and your fears and they will not leave you powerless. To leave them in the dark gives them the power to deceive and control you. The gospel shows the way of children. They do not have masks or carry the emotional defenses of an adult. Their inside and their outside match; they cannot hold back or hide their emotions. This is the way of the Kingdom of God. The challenge is to know ourselves in the light and truth of Christ, not holding back the dark and hurt feelings. To do so is only to create an inner darkness that can take on a life of its own, and to whom we fall victim. This is what St. Paul means when he says, 'why do I not do the good I intend, but the evil that I hate'. Paul calls for the light of Christ to dispel this darkness.

Our essential nature is one of goodness and light. Jesus works to call that light and goodness forth through love and acceptance, forgiveness and mercy, grounded in trust and openness to the One who has set us free. Let go of inner conflicts and dissension and find God's peace.

Father John Esper