



WEEKLY MEMO from BMW

Date: February 13, 2014
From: Bishop Michael W. Warfel
To: Clergy, Religious, Lay Ecclesial Ministers

I returned last Friday from a seminar for bishops for Episcopal ongoing formation and support. It was sponsored by the Catholic Leadership Institute. Some of the priests may recall that two priest representatives who presented on the *Good Leaders, Good Shepherds* program at an Assembly a couple of years ago. Knowing how effect this organization is personally, it is certainly worth reconsidering.

The Diocesan Finance Council meets in Billings on Friday, February 21st at 1:00 PM. As well as other pertinent items on the agenda will be the presentation of and request to approve the proposed Diocese budget.

As a reminder, I again request that all parishes present the Care and Share 2014 DVD during (or after) all Masses at your parish the weekend of March 1 and 2. I know there has to be someone in your parishes with some expertise who can assist in making this possible. The DVD's are scheduled to arrive in parishes the last week of February.

Plans are being made to organize a pilgrimage to the **World Youth Day** celebration that will take place at **Krakow, Poland in 2016**. I have asked Mandy Bell from Glasgow to be the person in charge of organizing this event for our diocese. She has prior expertise in organizing World Youth Day events. As bishop, I plan to travel with the pilgrims. We are looking at a **14 Day Pilgrimage to Munich, Auschwitz, Wadowice and Missionary Days** around Krakow. In Krakow, pilgrims would stay at University Hostels. We are currently projecting for 40 persons but realize there actually may be a larger number who would like to join the pilgrimage. I believe a couple of our priests have indicated that they plan to go. Each participant needs to be at least 18 at the date of departure. The general age range for World Youth Day participants is between 18 and 35. Young people from 16-18 can attend with a parent. The deposit for the trip will be approximately \$150 per person. The total cost will be approximately \$3500. Given that rooms will need to be reserved way in advance and that reservations fill up quickly, it is important to have some indication from your respective parishes of young people who would want to commit to the pilgrimage. **Please provide a number of interested pilgrims for WYD as soon as you can to mandybell@nemont.net.** We need to establish an accurate number as soon as possible. There is also a Facebook page for Montana World Youth Day.

I'll be in Sidney this coming weekend as spiritual director for the women's Cum Christo weekend.

Deacon David Suley will be arriving in Great Falls to facilitate a retreat for deacon candidates next week. He facilitated a retreat this past weekend at Richardton Abbey for a group of deacon candidates. Deacon David had been Executive Director of the Home Missions Office of the USCCB while I was Chair of that committee.

Again, please include the following announcement in your parish bulletins if you have not done so. I would also appreciate you verbally making a reference to the consecration as well as invite you to seriously consider consecrating the territory of your respective parishes.

Following the example of Pope Francis, who consecrated the world to the Blessed Virgin Mary on October 13, 2013, I will consecrate the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Friday, February 28, 2014 at 7:00 PM with a Mass celebrated at St. Ann's Cathedral in Great Falls. A Marian Prayer Service with a reflection and rosary will be held each week night immediately before the 28th (also at 7:00 PM February 24th through February 27th) in order to prepare for the consecration. All members of the Diocese are invited to participate one or all of these services.

I received an invitation for priests to make a private retreat at the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hancville, Alabama. The guest house accommodations are free for priests, brothers and seminarians. If interested, you can check out their website: www.knights.org.

For those priests who on occasion serve as Cruise Chaplains and need vetting, the Apostleship of the Sea (associated with the USCCB) has a membership that takes care of this procedure. Membership is \$100. The address is: AOS-USA, 1500 Jefferson Drive, Port Authur, TX 77642-0646.

Several individuals have asked about the survey on Marriage and the Family in preparation for the Extraordinary Synod that will occur in Rome. The following five points are a summarization of what I provided to the USCCB. They would have forward all their responses on the Holy See.

Welcome and Hospitality

The Church and its local structures (parishes) need to be communities in which those who come looking for Christ may be invited and assisted in finding him. People come to a parish church with various personal stories as well as reasons for coming to a church in the first place. If their first encounter is negative, finding the doors closed more often than open, there is no real reason for them to keep trying to enter or to return if they have been rejected. The invitation is to the journey of conversion but this must be facilitated in a receptive and truly pastoral fashion. A parish church must be a place where mercy may be found as well as a challenge to faithfully live the Gospel. The

challenge of providing a welcoming and open environment must span the various ages of parishioners, from youngest to oldest, as well as the great cultural and ethnic diversity that is found on this earth.

Cohabiting Couples

The number of heterosexual couples who co-habit in the U.S. is quite significant. Some of these couples do so in order to have an experimental time together to see if they are compatible enough to marry. Many others simply ignore or reject the notion of getting married altogether. Recent studies have demonstrated that many couples now simply opt out of marriage, including many Catholics and wonder why there is a need for the Church to be involved in “the marriage business.” Interestingly, some of these couples still view themselves as quite faithful Catholics and continue to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist. It speaks to a basic lack of appreciation and understanding of the sacrament of matrimony and a basic ignorance of Catholic teaching in general. This lack of understanding covers all of the issues surrounding Marriage and Family.

Contraception

Following the issuance of *Humanae Vitae*, Catholics had an understanding of Church teaching on contraception. While the situation centered around the HHS Mandate has been an instrument to remind Catholics about the Church’s teaching about the sinfulness of contraception, the teaching has significantly been rejected by a majority of Catholics. Few priests have been willing to address contraception in their preaching, teaching or while hearing confessions over the past 40 or so years. In order to be consistent with her teaching, the teaching should be re-introduced while at the same time providing updated information on NFP and rationale based on new findings on harmful effects of drugs. It should also include methods that lead to abortion and the tragedy of abortion itself.

Annulments

Procedures for obtaining an annulment vary greatly from diocese to diocese depending upon the expertise and personnel of a diocese. It was noted that a simplification of the process for a declaration of nullity would be welcome. Many a Catholic in a second marriage has simply decided not to go through the process of an annulment and covertly practice their faith as if their present marriage was as sacramental as anyone else’s. A more thorough pre-marital process can be helpful. Also, insisting that a couple delay a marriage if they are judged not to be properly prepared or of not having a mature understanding of the sacrament of matrimony. But what of a Catholic person/couple who find themselves divorced through no real fault of their own? I will quote one of my respondents: “...if I were to cheat, rape, pillage, plunder, murder and then truly feel remorse for my actions, I could seek reconciliation from my Church and receive absolution of my sin. But, if my husband/wife leaves me and I want to remarry, it is a long, arduous, painful process to have my Church welcome me back.” In the

mind and heart of the standard parishioners, this does not make a lot of sense and seems hard-hearted.

Same-Sex Unions and "Marriage"

There have been few occasions in societies throughout the world in which such a cultural shift has occurred in such short a period of time. But 20 years ago or less, that so many people, including large numbers of Catholics, would not only accept but promote same-sex unions and now marriage was unthinkable. Those who support such unions simply have not been convinced by any argument to date that has been provided by the Church. It has been a challenge in the case of Catholics who have a homosexual attraction to continue on in the Catholic Church given Catholic teaching. Likewise, Catholic teaching has been a detriment for those who might consider becoming Catholic. The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that those with same-sex attractions are not insignificant. It obviously does not mean that the Church should adjust her teaching. The challenge is to maintain fidelity while reflecting on ways to more effectively teach on this issue as well as refine its pastoral practice.