



WEEKLY MEMO from BMW

Date: May 5, 2014
From: Bishop Michael W. Warfel
To: Clergy, Religious, Lay Ecclesial Ministers et al

The annual diocesan priest's retreat will be at Red Lodge's Rock Creek Resort from Monday, May 12th concluding on the morning of Thursday, May 15th. For those priests who may have lagged behind in registering, please do so at your earliest convenience. The Clergy Personnel Board will meet on Monday, May 12th at Noon prior to the beginning of the retreat and the Priest's Council will meet at 10:00 AM on Thursday, May 15th following the conclusion of the retreat.

On Saturday, May 17th, Carlos Malaver-Parada will be ordained a transitional deacon for the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings at St. Ann's Cathedral at the 4:30 PM Saturday Vigil Mass. This will likely mean that some priests and deacons may not be able to be in attendance given the time. However, please try to accommodate this with your schedules.

Mother's Day is Sunday, May 11th. Let us show our appreciation for our mother's and offer our prayers for them.

There is a Diocesan Pastoral Council conference call on Friday, May 9th.

I will be out of Great Falls most of the week celebrating confirmations/first communions: May 5th at St. John in Baker; May 6th at St. Peter's in Wibaux; May 7th at St. Francis in Circle; May 10th at St. Pius and then St. Patrick's in Billings; May 11th at St. Thomas, St. Bernard's and then Little Flower in Billings.

The Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Ann's Cathedral on the occasion of Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II being officially canonized was a beautiful celebration. I include the homily from that Mass for those of you whom might be interested in what I said.

Homily for Mass of Thanksgiving for:
Saints John Paul II and John XXII

The canonization of Saints John XXIII and John Paul II warmed the hearts of many. Upon reflection on the naming of saints, we might ask, "How do the saints serve us?" First of all, they aid us through their intercessory prayer. The saints obviously are close to Christ. They are fully a member of the Communion of Saints. We benefit through prayer to them. The norm for canonization is that two miracles be demonstrated as having occurred though intercessory prayer before canonization can occur. This does not mean, however, that the saints are somehow relegated to having but two opportunities to intercede for us. It seems to me that if two miracles can take place as a

result of intercessory prayer, why not four or four thousand?! We do not, after all, have to scientifically prove why a prayer is answered. It is a matter of faith.

The saints are our elder sisters and brothers in faith. In faith, we are related to each other. They have concern for our eternal well-being. They desire that we share with them fully in the Communion of Saints. It is, after all, why God created us.

Secondly, the saints aid us by their witness to the kingdom of God. The saints have a focus on doing the will of God at all times and in all ways. They witness to holiness in their lives in the unique time and place as well as circumstances in which they lived on earth. Though some were especially gifted, more important was their response to live a holy life and how they allowed God to use them in whatever way God chose to do. They were very much in touch with God and their lives were centered in Christ.

How do Saints John XXIII and John Paul II serve us? By their prayers and example! These were particularly gifted spiritual and pastoral leaders. Knowing them as saints, we can seek their intercession. And, knowing them as saints, we can look to how we, in our own time and place and in our own circumstances can respond to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Pope Francis, at the Mass in which they were canonized said this about them:

They were priests, and bishops and popes of the twentieth century. They lived through the tragic events of that century, but they were not overwhelmed by them. For them, God was more powerful; faith was more powerful – faith in Jesus Christ the Redeemer of man and the Lord of history; the mercy of God, shown by those five wounds, was more powerful; and more powerful too was the closeness of Mary our Mother.

John XXIII and John Paul II cooperated with the Holy Spirit in renewing and updating the Church in keeping with her pristine features, those features which the saints have given her throughout the centuries. Let us not forget that it is the saints who give direction and growth to the Church. In convening the Council, Saint John XXIII showed an exquisite openness to the Holy Spirit. He let himself be led and he was for the Church a pastor, a servant-leader, guided by the Holy Spirit. This was his great service to the Church; for this reason I like to think of him as the pope of openness to the Holy Spirit. In his own service to the People of God, Saint John Paul II was the pope of the family. He himself once said that he wanted to be remembered as the pope of the family.

During this Easter Season, we listen to a continuous reading from the Acts of the Apostles in the Liturgy. Acts is really part two of the Gospel of Luke. It offers the disciples of today a portrait of the early Church as it developed and spread from Jerusalem to the city of Rome and throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. God calls us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus in a similar manner by appropriating his Gospel into our daily lives and allowing him to be “the” center of our lives. God also

sends us out as apostles to proclaim the Gospel, by word and deed or as Acts terms says, “to the ends of the earth.” Why is this important? As recounted from today’s passage from John’s Gospel, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life...” Jesus did not die on the cross for no reason. He died on the cross because of human folly and sin. Those who remain in sin and without Christ will not see life within the Communion of Saints. As such, it is vitally important, not only that we attend personally to what we hear, but also that we share what we hear. Jesus came for the salvation of all and it is God’s plan that the way this message is proclaimed is from his followers.

Just as these two saintly popes responded to the grace of God within their time and place with the unique gifts and abilities with which they had been endowed, each of us can do likewise. It doesn’t have to be all that profound. We are not called to be super heroes; we are called to be saints! To live a saintly life mostly is a matter of living within the most ordinary of circumstances but in an extraordinarily graced way.

Fr. Walter Ciszek was a Jesuit priest who had been imprisoned in Soviet Russia for 23 years. He eventually was released in a prisoner exchange. He was a holy priest who, even in the midst of Siberian work camps, found a way to serve God. Reflection on his years of imprisonment, he provided words of great insight into holiness - words that Saints John XXII and John Paul II embodied themselves and words that we too would do well to embrace:

God’s will for us is what he actually wills to send us each day, in the way of circumstances, places, people and problems. The trick is to learn to see that – not just in theory, or not just occasionally in a flash of insight granted by God’s grace, but every day. Each of us has no need to wonder about what God’s will must be for us; his will for us is clearly revealed in every situation of every day, if only we could learn to view all things as he sees them and sends them to us.

The door to great holiness is open to all of us. And the call to sainthood is likewise given to all of us. It why God created us! May the example of Saints John XXIII and John Paul II motivate us to be of service to God within our own circumstances of life. And through their intercession, may the Holy Spirit inspire us to live holy lives.