



THE PASTOR'S DESK

November 22, 2009 - Two Things

Dear Parishioners,

There are two things I need to write about this week. The first is Fr. Gellert's transfer. The second is the marriage issue in the District.

As I write this column, Fr. Gellert is about to announce his transfer. He and I have known about this for some time. We just had to wait for all the paper work to be completed before it became official.

Since arriving here in July, I have come to know and admire Fr. Gellert. The love you have for him, the large number of people whom he serves, and the dedication he has to the priesthood and to our parish all prove the great work the Lord has been accomplishing through him here at St. John Neumann. He is one of the happiest, friendliest persons I have ever known. He even puts up with my "Count Dracula" jokes!

While we will all miss him, remember that his life is in the hands of the Lord. He has important work to do for the Church in Hungary. This is a country ravaged by Communism and atheism. It is easy to tear down, but it is very difficult to rebuild. Fr. Gellert will be doing the Lord's difficult work of rebuilding the Church in what was once one of the most Catholic of nations. I know we will all keep him in our prayers as he remembers us in his. We will be planning a going-away reception for him. The details will be announced.

While you will miss Fr. Gellert's ministry, I will miss his help. As of now, there is no one to replace him until next summer after the ordinations. As Msgr. Fisher told me "the bench is thin." We are trying to find a student priest, a senior/retired priest, or a religious order priest to at least help on the weekends. Fr. Francis has said he will help in any way he can. I appreciate his desire to help very much. But, I'll need the most help from all of you. Back in "the day" when there were plenty of vocations, a parish this size would have three, possibly four, resident priests. For the first half of next year, you will have one. Please understand if I cannot come to all the various activities and meetings; if I have to beg-off a dinner invitation; or if I have to change the schedule of Masses and other activities. Any such changes should only be temporary until a new associate pastor is assigned. I ask for your prayers and understanding during the busy months ahead.

I also want to write about the District government's attempt to redefine marriage. The Archdiocese has been bracing for this in the last couple of months. The parishes in the District have been given materials and catechesis on this situation. Parishes in Maryland did not have to use this material. I decided to hold off for a while, fully aware that our day will certainly come. But, because this issue is now so out in the public and the Church is being cast as the "bad guy" in all of this, I need to say something to you.

Today's (Friday, November 13th) newspaper has an article on the Archdiocese's position that it cannot take any money from the District if it will be required to provide benefits to the "spouses" of employees who enter into such relationships. There is also a by-line criticizing the Church for threatening to pull-out of social service work. The Church would refuse to take public money for these services rather than have to violate the moral law. Of course, in the media's view, it's all the Church's fault. We are not supposed to criticize the government for trying to re-define marriage or uphold the truth.

The truth we are upholding is that marriage is part of the natural law; part of human nature as created by God. The natural law is prior to man-made law. Marriage didn't come into existence with the District (or any) government. The District government has no more power over the meaning of marriage than it does over the structure of the human body. Do not fall for specious arguments. Keep yourself informed and don't be cowed by being accused of intolerance or bigotry. Imagine your sixth grade son being taught in school that he has the choice of marrying a man or a woman. It makes no difference which one he chooses, both are equally good.

The "wall of separation" between Church and State will eventually crush the Church. The Church cannot influence the government and the government, having no check on its power, will think it can do, or define, anything. The wall will inevitably move toward the Church as the government claims more and more power. Unless we are vigilant and faithful there will be very difficult times ahead.

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.

**God bless,
Fr. LaHood**