

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL: WELCOMING THE HANDMAIDS

As you likely have heard by now, the Cathedral parish is greatly blessed to be able to welcome into our midst four remarkable young women, members of a new religious community known as the **Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus**. This idea for the community had its genesis in 2007 and the sisters received approval by Bishop John LeVoir in 2010, basing themselves in the Diocese of New Ulm. Now, with the invitation of Archbishop Hebda, the growing community is setting up its second convent here in the Archdiocese. The sisters receive numerous requests for their services in parishes and dioceses. No doubt, this is because it is obvious at first glance that they are faith-filled, vibrant, life-giving and talented women. I am humbled that they discerned that the Cathedral would be the right place from which they would begin their formal presence here in our Archdiocese. I know that I myself do not feel that I have earned this gift, and I take it just as it is— a providential gift from the Lord.

When I was contemplating the purchase of the **244 Dayton Av.** building (former location for *The Catholic Spirit*), I was not even entirely sure of its future use. In many ways, it was a “defensive” bid, an attempt to ensure that the building (owned at the time by the Archdiocese) would remain in Church-related hands, and not fall into secular use. I am certainly not opposed to beautiful historic buildings being used for a variety of purposes, but this one is different, being as it is on our campus. The rectory and convent share the same water pipes; the systems are literally inter-connected, with the power plant in between.

But when this possibility was brought to my attention, I felt that I needed to listen carefully. Too good to be true? I thought so at first, but to borrow a phrase from my **second favorite** Archbishop, John Ireland, “the hand of God was in it.” (The current office holder always holds the top slot!) When **Archbishop Ireland** was approached about a possible acquisition of the **Kittson mansion** on this very site for use as a residence, he demurred for various reasons. *Deo Gratias*. But he quickly seized on another possible use for the property— to build a grand Cathedral. He truly believed that “the hand of God was in it” and the property was acquired, the mansion torn down and the rest, as they say is history.

So, who are the Handmaids? Religious communities speak of charisms, a mission statement of sorts. We, the Institute of the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus (*Ancillae Cordis Jesu*), feel called to live in imitation of Mary as handmaid, virgin, and mother in the diocesan life of the Church, carrying out the New Evangelization in parishes. Depending upon the needs of the parishes, diocese or Archdiocese, their apostolate (work) includes assisting in sacristies, religious education, music, domestic care and work in diocesan offices, to name but a few. The sisters now count twenty-three members and have “outgrown” their convent in New Ulm, MN. We are the direct beneficiaries of the many blessings they have received.

In the short-term, much of the sisters’ time will be spent in preparing the 244 Dayton building, helping to transform it from its most recent use as an office building into a convent. That process will take some months, and I am so grateful to the good people who have arranged temporary housing for the sisters in the old St. Michael’s Convent (West St. Paul), until the Dayton building is ready for occupancy. Much of the work will be done with volunteers, in addition to the professional work that by city code must be done by licensed professionals, including plumbers, heating professionals, architects and engineers. The sisters live very simply, relying on Divine Providence for their needs, including food. Folks would stop by the New Ulm convent with corn, vegetables, potatoes, etc. and the sisters’ reliance on Divine Providence has sustained them for nearly a decade. People also offer assistance through monthly work weekends. Please mark your calendars with the dates for the next two work weekends: **Saturdays October 7 and October 28 from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.** You are invited to assist— particular skills are helpful, but there is plenty to do for people of varying skill levels. We have already had donations of furniture, kitchen cabinets and beds.

The sisters work humbly and always in service to the needs of the day. You will soon see them working in the sacristy, as they will help with visiting groups, and with vestment care. **Sr. Mary Joseph** will be the local superior in charge of the St. Paul convent. She hails from Mendota Heights and is a graduate of Catholic schools in this Archdiocese. She will be joined by **Sister Agnes** (from Rochester, MN), **Sr. Amata** (Duluth, MN) and **Sr.**

Mary Elizabeth (Coon Rapids). We are blessed with women hailing from three Minnesota dioceses in this new convent. My own brother Andy is donating his time as a *de facto* project manager, working with the sisters, the Cathedral Heritage Foundation (the property owners) and coordinating various bids as we finalize a proposed plan. He managed my brother and me while growing up, so this should be a piece of cake! I'll keep you posted as to the progress. For now, the Sisters would love to meet you in Hayden Hall after the 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. Masses today! Please stop by to say hello.

- Today is also a sad day in that we must bid farewell to **Fr. Nels Gjengdahl**, weekend assistant here, while also serving as a chaplain at one of our Catholic High Schools. His new assignment is Parochial Administrator at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Bloomington. That is the **other** Nativity, not to be confused with Nativity of our Lord in St. Paul, my home parish! Fr. Nels, you will be missed greatly. Please stop by after the 10:00 a.m. Mass to offer your thanks and promise of prayers as he begins his new assignment.
- I offer my profound gratitude to **Marybeth Gaetano**, Office Manager here at the Cathedral since early 2012. She and her husband are relocating to Florida (planned long before the hurricane!) as they approach retirement. Given Minnesota winters, I cannot blame her. But I speak for so many in saying that she will be deeply, deeply missed. She managed numerous daily operations and interactions with such dignity and grace, animated by a spirit of faith and joy. Well done, good and faithful servant.
- Ouch— papal black eye! **Pope Francis** slightly injured himself when his Popemobile came to an abrupt stop during his visit to Cartagena, Columbia. He was reaching out to a member of the faithful, and bruised his eye when his face struck a metal bar on the vehicle. The Holy Father was unfazed, and finished his schedule for his final day of the apostolic visit. Can you imagine how the driver felt?
- Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore called “deeply disappointing,” the grilling of Notre Dame law professor **Amy Barrett**, nominated for the federal bench. Several questions at her confirmation hearing zeroed in on her Catholic faith, one senator saying that her Catholic “dogma lives loudly within you.” Lori wondered: “Were the comments of the Senators meant as a warning shot to future law students and attorneys, that they should never discuss their faith in a public forum, if they have aspirations to serve in the federal judiciary?” Barrett is a wife and mother of seven.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,

Rector