

## **“COME, LORD JESUS”: REMEMBERING ARCHBISHOP HARRY J. FLYNN**

“Fr. John, how are your parents?” Archbishop Harry Flynn would rarely miss an opportunity to check in on my aging parents. He did this routinely with his priests, so genuine was his concern. Serving as our chief Shepherd from 1995 to 2008, the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis has lost a dear friend in the person of Archbishop Flynn. His **funeral** will be here on **Monday at 11:00 a.m.**, preceded by a **public visitation** beginning at 8:00 a.m. in the Blessed Virgin Mary Chapel. **[Due to the Visitation, Monday’s 7:30 a.m. Mass is cancelled.]** It is impossible (and inadvisable) to encapsulate the ministry of this **gentle shepherd** in one column. My first encounter with Archbishop Flynn took place shortly after his arrival as our coadjutor Archbishop in 1994. As I was being considered for an Archdiocesan post, I had meetings both with Archbishop Roach and then a few days later with Archbishop Flynn. That the two “interviews” were so radically different, only highlights the many and varied gifts that each man offered in service of God.

I waited patiently for Archbishop Flynn to inquire about my ideas for the Office of Vocations, but that question never came. Instead, he asked me about **my family**. As I would soon learn, this was no anomaly. It was at the very core of his being to be relational and to focus on the importance of faith and family. He wasn’t interested that day in my ideas. He wanted to **get to know a person**, not an idea. I worked with him from 1994 to 1998 while serving in the Vocations Office. The next time I would have a private meeting in his office occurred shortly after Christmas 2004. I literally had no idea why he called me to the meeting, but I soon learned the reason. The current rector, then-Auxiliary Bishop Fred Campbell, had been named the new Bishop of Columbus Ohio. On that late December afternoon, Archbishop Flynn asked me to serve as an interim until a new Rector could be found. I was humbled that he asked me to serve in that capacity.

At the end of that, he sent me to Rome, ostensibly for a Licentiate in spiritual and historical theology at the Gregorian University. But after just seven months, I received a letter inviting me to come home as the new pastor at the Church of Saint Agnes. Having become accustomed to life as a student priest and still learning a new language, I was unprepared for how quickly my life would soon change once again. Only several years later did I **muster the courage** to speak candidly, sharing with him my disappointment in ending my studies early. However, I said that it turned out to be a magnificent blessing in disguise— I **thanked him** for providing me with what had become the **most rewarding** assignment of my priesthood.

God works in such mysterious ways. Ever the consummate pastor, Archbishop Flynn taught me that our **true peace** comes from responding to God’s will, **and not** our own. When I had the opportunity to visit the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown six years ago, I suggested to the priest with whom I was traveling that we ought to stop by St. Ambrose Parish in Latham, NY, the pastorate that Archbishop always spoke of so fondly. We did and had a wonderful visit there. When I told him of visiting with some parishioners, he knew exactly of whom I spoke, saying that he still writes to them. I did not doubt that for a second.

The Archbishop quickly distinguished himself by means of his gentle manner, his penchant for engaging the faithful and offering his ever-famous “Thank You’s” at Cathedral liturgies. **No one** was left off the thank you list— absolutely no one! He was a pastor, not an administrator. He often said, “**If I had 1000 lives** to live, I would live each as a priest.” But he wouldn’t live a single life as a bishop! Those weighty responsibilities were difficult for him, but neither did he shrink from them, as he took on a leadership role at the USCCB following the Boston scandal in 2002. Archbishop Flynn helped with the process that led to the Charter for the Protection of Young People, more commonly known as the “Dallas Charter.”

All bishops are evaluated from the perspective of history, in one way or another. That just goes with the territory. The Church has experienced some very difficult days, including during his tenure. At this time though, it is critically important to note the human qualities of this holy man. When living in retirement at the rectory at St. Vincent de Paul, he made friends with a group of **Harley-Davidson bikers** who lived across the street and who would occasionally gather in the parking lot. These folks literally kept an eye on him and periodically came over for visits. The **charity and kindness** of Archbishop Flynn knew no bounds. He was kind to

everyone, and he always looked for the good in others. This singular lesson alone, if we but follow his example, would make our lives so much better. I encourage you to pay your respects, either on Sunday afternoon beginning at 6:00 p.m. tonight at The Saint Paul Seminary (St. Mary's Chapel) and continuing on Monday (tomorrow) morning beginning at 8:00 a.m. in the BVM Chapel. Bishops lead in many ways, but they do so in the best way by their example. Well done, good and faithful servant. *Requiescat in pace.*

- Freedom of Choice? In a recent survey of 1,004 adults, 83% of Americans believe that healthcare professionals should **not be forced** to perform procedures against their moral beliefs. Yet only 58% answered the same way when the specific procedure mentioned was abortion, with 22% answering “not sure”. The phrasing of the question is key, but it signals that when the word “abortion” is used, some viscerally respond with a pre-determined animus against pre-born life in the womb.
- For likely just the second time since the administration of Richard Milhous Nixon, **my mother** attended a **Twins** game! We had a wonderful time watching the home team hit four home runs in an 8-5 victory over the Royals. Actually, we saw only three HR's; we early risers ducked out in the 7th! I thought I had merely “lent” her one of my Twins caps for the evening– but at night's end she refused to give it back! Ever the obedient son, I did not argue. Go Twins!
- **Mohandas Gandhi** was born 150 years ago (Oct. 2, 1869) this coming Wednesday. In a world torn by violence and its constant threat, we pray for the grace to be instruments of peace. We pray for guidance for world leaders, that they may be inspired to seek peaceful solutions to the vexing problems in society.
- The return of the stained-glass windows over the Dayton Ave. confessionals completes the restoration of **18 windows** through the generosity of the Cathedral Heritage Foundation. They look spectacular! Join us for the **Cathedral Festival of Lights** this coming Thursday. Proceeds will be directed to the 95-year-old sacristy tile floor and marble accents, so badly in need of restoration.
- **Next weekend** is the TC Marathon. Hint: Attend either the Saturday (5:15 p.m.) or Sunday (5:00 p.m.) evening Mass. All roads will be clear, I promise! Thank you for your support on Marathon Weekend.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel  
Rector