

## GIVING OUR REASONS FOR HOPE: IN THANKSGIVING AND JOY

I am so grateful to our dedicated **Cathedral staff** and the countless **volunteers** who worked so diligently to prepare for the funeral for Archbishop Harry Flynn last week. As just one example, I received an e-mail from the **National Evangelization Teams**, wondering if we needed assistance with some of the funeral preparations. I graciously accepted their offer, and on Saturday morning eight young NET'ers showed up ready to work. They polished candle sticks that were used in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the public visitation. Additionally, they **dusted all pews in church**. These are two details that would have gone undone without additional help. I suspect that many of these young people didn't even know **Archbishop Flynn** personally, as they hailed from other dioceses. But their love of the Gospel brought them to work here for NET, and they answered the call to help us here. Yet another reason for hope in the Church today. And I was delighted to see our Catholic school students serving as greeters, passing out the Liturgy Guides.

Allow me to share an additional Archbishop Flynn remembrance. In June 1996, while serving as Co-Director of the Vocations Office, I was part of a group of about 50 (including a handful of priests) from the **Dioceses of Albany NY and Lafayette LA** and our own Archdiocese who were attending the ceremonies surrounding the bestowal of the pallium in Rome. I recall being amazed how he attended nearly all of the events as part of the group pilgrimage. I had assumed he would be present for a few events and that the rest of us would follow our own schedule of events. But in fact, he was with us nearly the entire time, including a day trip to Assisi. I don't think that Archbishop Flynn was particularly interested in spending his leisure time walking the hallways of Vatican curial offices!

On one day, while in the procession line for a Mass with the group of 50 pilgrims at one of the Roman basilicas, Archbishop Flynn waved me over. "Fr. John," he said. "Yes, Archbishop," I replied dutifully. "Fr. John, I think it would be just wonderful if you gave the homily today at Mass." I gulped, nearly froze, but managed to blurt out a halfhearted, "Sure, Archbishop, I would be happy to do so." I should have looked for the nearest confessional because I **told a white lie**. I hadn't even looked at the daily readings. I am one who likes to be prepared—I am not fond of surprises! Too late. I have **never listened so intently** to the lectors in my life as on that day and haven't a clue as to what I said. But I resisted the temptation to begin my homily by saying that I had been asked on the spot. That somehow seemed like a cheap shot. Since then, that experience of an extemporaneous homily has happened on a couple other occasions, and I merely repeated the formula of listening attentively during the readings and **composing on the spot**. Sometimes, you have to trust in the Holy Spirit! In retrospect, Archbishop Flynn had just taught a young and slightly over-scripted priest another lesson in "going with the flow"!

### Hope and Joy in Mudville

With a tip of a baseball cap to poet **Ernest Lawrence Thayer**, there is joy in Twinsville this season. While the iconic poem *Casey at Bat* may end on a sour note, "But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out"—here, we hold out hope for an upset of the mighty Bronx Bombers. The hometown nine captured its **first AL Central** division title since 2010, and did so in an amazing manner, belting an MLB single-season record **307 Home Runs** in 162 games. The record came down to the final game of the season with the Twins hitting three on the final day of the season to edge the Yankees 307-306 for the season. Does that portend well for the playoffs? We shall see. It will surely require our "A" game!

Consider this—for a team **to improve from 78 to 101 wins** in just one season is quite frankly remarkable. Sure, some new players were added in free agency, but most teams do that each year. More importantly, the returning players on the roster came back with a fire in their eyes and a **renewed determination** to reach their long-awaited potential. So too in the spiritual life. We are called for spiritual greatness, yet too often settle for remaining mired in mediocrity. We ought to challenge ourselves each and every day towards greater holiness of life. Do not discount the inherent value of a positive attitude every single day.

We all have our struggles—in that respect we are in the same boat. And yes, in the end baseball remains a game. There are more important aspects to life to be sure. Still, I think it must be quite a gift to be in a position to be

able to provide such enjoyment for others as in professional baseball. When I watched games this season, I saw a **young team** of players who were enjoying one another's company and **enjoying the game**. In a world that is all too often divisive, I won't apologize for "retreating" to enjoy the great American pastime. To me, it is a great example of the American spirit, and the traditions of the game touch my heart.

- A special word of welcome to any visiting the Cathedral on this weekend of the Twin Cities **Marathon**. We have traditionally **welcomed runners**, some attending the Saturday evening 5:15 p.m. Mass, and others for the Sunday evening 5:00 p.m. Whether you are here for spiritual inspiration beforehand or seeking spiritual solace afterwards, I acknowledge the tremendous accomplishment it is to run 26.2 miles. At one point it was a desire of mine, but I think those years have passed me by.
- World's **largest Archdiocese**? Apparently, no more. Last week, the Vatican broke up the massive Archdiocese of Mexico City into 4 dioceses. With the stroke of a pen, the 7.3-million-member local Church now has 4.2 million members. The other 3 million are spread into three new dioceses, each with both a new bishop and Cathedral. Now the world's largest Catholic diocese belongs to Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with Milan, Italy nipping at its heels.
- On the Feast of St. Jerome (Sept. 30), the Holy Father designated the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time as the "**Sunday of the Word of God**." Cardinal DiNardo, President of the USCCB, noted that "this special Sunday commemorating the 'unbreakable bond between sacred Scripture and the Eucharist,' allows us to remember that it is through the Word of God that we encounter its author and learn of the 'merciful love of the Father who calls his children to live in love.'" That Sunday typically coincides with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and occurs near the end of January.
- Pope Francis met with the Italian **Saint Cecilia Association** and spoke of music's task of "bringing together Christian history: in the liturgy, Gregorian chant, polyphony, popular music and contemporary music resonate." He also noted that Sacred Music is "clearly distinct and different from that used for other purposes," asking for discernment in the choice of music. Our music department takes this task seriously and truly enhances our worship with music of such noble dignity. The music at the Archbishop's funeral was stunning.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel  
Rector