

BRIEF THOUGHTS

You will find in this issue of The Catholic Register temporary directives for Holy Communion during the flu season. The Latin Rite Bishops of Pennsylvania agreed at their meeting on September 23, 2009, to issue such directives. The directives are particular to each Diocesan Church and are to be implemented by the weekend of October 17/18. They remain in effect until they are withdrawn by the Diocesan Bishop. Personally, I would rather not issue such directives, as I do not believe that anyone would acquire a fatal illness from the Precious Blood, when the vessels are wiped properly. Nevertheless, it is better to err on the side of precaution.

A little over a week ago, the Faithful of our Diocesan Church traveled in pilgrimage to the National Shrine of our Blessed Lady in Washington, D.C. Thanks to a number of individuals, it was another wonderful demonstration of the Faith prevalent in these Allegheny Mountains. As I stated in my homily, it is to that beautiful basilica shrine, that the Church of Altoona-Johnstown (the Faithful, the Religious, the Deacons, the Priests, and the Bishop) journey together, away from their usual sanctuary of the Allegheny Mountains, - coming together in the sanctuary where Mary's spirit can touch us in a way that it cannot anywhere else. We came so that we might glean from her insights an understanding of the role that our experiences of crosses play in our own pilgrimage into the Lord's Reign.

Speaking of Faith, a week ago, I visited one of the state correctional institutions within our Diocese. It was my annual visit to Our Lady of the Mount Parish within the prison at Rockview near Bellefonte. Also present were the monthly volunteers that come on a regular basis to assist in the spiritual journey of the inmates, as well as the Knights of Columbus. But, what has always impressed me is the presence of former inmates who come to visit for this celebration of Saint Dismas, the so-called Good Thief. Their presence speaks of how the Lord touches these individuals and, like the father of the prodigal son, welcomes them with open arms. I cannot imagine how it must feel to have been incarcerated for years and, then, be allowed to enter and leave the very walls that held one captive. And, yet, it is only a small reflection of the freedom that can be ours when we turn back to God and are set free.

October is the Month of the Rosary as well as Respect Life Month. Those two themes go well together. In regard to respect for life, we could take an example from Saint Francis of Assisi, who was in harmony with God's creation. Everyone and every thing was brought into existence by the one God and, therefore, in some way, are related. How can we presume to have authority over the Lord's creation? We are only its stewards, taking care of it for the time being. Using the rosary beads for a meditation on our Blessed Lady's role in regard to Jesus can give us valuable insights. She was the mother of a Son and, yet, her role was to take care of him while He fulfilled his own role.

Next week, the priests and deacons, along with other administrators of our parishes, will gather for our annual pastoral conference. I ask that you be patient with their absence. These conferences are occasions for reconnecting with each other, as leaders within the one Church. They also assist us to serve you better, as those who are entrusted with shepherding you into the Lord's Reign and Kingdom. Please pray for us.