

October 14, 2019

Reverend Monsignor Joseph P. Gentili
Pastor, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Doylestown PA

Follow up to Safety and Security at OLG – Recent Vandalism

Catholics in the United States, particularly in the Philadelphia area, are no strangers to struggle and challenges to the public profession of their Faith. In 1844, the “Nativist Riots” took place in Philadelphia, during which two Catholic churches, St. Michael and St. Augustine, were burned down by an anti-Catholic mob. However, as a testament to the perseverance in faith of our Catholic forebearers, these two churches were rebuilt and still stand to this day. While it is a sad chapter in our Nation’s history, the resiliency of Catholics in our area bears witness that faith and love triumph over ignorance and hate.

Sadly, that ignorance and hate is present in our own community as a new wave of hate crimes were committed on the Our Lady of Guadalupe church property during the past few weeks. Two weeks ago, our *Rite of Christian Initiation* sign displayed at the Durham Road entrance was torn down. Also, I have come to learn in cooperation with the police that sometime on Saturday evening, October 12, 40 of the 61 crosses commemorating the millions of unborn lives lost to abortion since the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* were taken out of the ground, broken, and stacked in two piles. In addition, two signs reading, “Stop surgical abortions,” were stolen.

Our simple and poignant message to express our respect for human life and to urge others to join with us in bringing the tragedy of abortion to an end, apparently is not appreciated nor shared by some others in our local community. Be that as it may be, it is sad and lamentable that we continue to struggle for the right to live and express ourselves in a democratic society that is supposed to take pride in basic and fundamental freedoms. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt proclaimed in his State of the Union Address in January of 1941 the *four freedoms* that are fundamental and that everyone in the world ought to enjoy: *freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear*.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta, who served the poorest of the poor, all over the world and in particular Third World countries, spoke of a spiritual hunger for which we suffer in the West. While we search for love in so many inappropriate ways, we

want and hunger for a deeper spiritual nourishment which can only be satiated through a faith in God, and for we who are Catholic, faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

It seems that every October since we have been showing this display, there have been problems with a few people complaining to me, via a phone call, a letter, an email or vandalism about some aspect of the display that offends them. Most are anonymous, but some have given their names. I respond to each one with gentle and yet firm language about the rationale for our display and the right to express our convictions and Faith as well as to try and bring about a conversion of heart in our society.

I have reported this incident, along with the others that have happened on our property over the years, to the Buckingham Police. The members of the police department have been most supportive and concerned about these serious, deliberate and intentional acts of vandalism. It is being filed, like the last one you may recall, as a hate crime, in addition to trespassing and destruction of property. I can assure you that should the perpetrator(s) be caught, they will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law.

It may interest you to know that with the assistance of the Safety and Security Team, we will continue to monitor our property along with the policies and procedures we have already put in place. You may recall that in June I reported at all the masses and published in our bulletin that policy. We just recently have installed just over 40 cameras inside and outside the buildings of our campus. Those cameras are functioning and monitored on a regular basis. While the members of the committee did discuss placing cameras at the two entrance ways and corner of our property, the cost seemed prohibitive at the time, considering our budget.

In the meantime, I encourage you to be aware of this and keep your eyes and ears open with regard to cooperating with the police and “word out on the street”. I also encourage you to pray for the one or those responsible for committing this heinous crime. Pray for a conversion of heart and reconciliation. Please pray for me as your pastor as well, that despite my many shortcomings, I will continue to boldly lead our parish in the Tradition of our Catholic Faith.

I along with Father Ianelli assure you of a continued deep commitment to fight for the dignity and respect that is accorded to all human life. We will continue to encourage you to join us in that struggle through all possible and appropriate means: by engaging our legislators and other authorities, by voting and making our voices

heard, by faithfully proclaiming and authentically living our Catholic Social Teachings in the public square and by prayer.

For your information, the display is going back up as soon as possible and will be displayed until the end of the month, as we have done for the last several years as we exercise our freedoms: of religion, of speech, from fear and from want.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, *pray for us!*

Saint Michael the Archangel, *defend us in battle!*