

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York 14202

TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING by S. Casarotto 4/5/09

TEMPERANCE

I am always at a loss when I hear about the trillions of dollars of our national deficit. I cannot count that many zeros! Nor can I fathom the consequences the next generation will face. Bailout money is like pumping air in a balloon which is already at the point of bursting. Who will pay? There is also something wrong when, in this time of crisis, a few people in our country got richer and much of the bailout money went as bonuses to the people who created the massive problem we are suffering from.

According to *The Economist*, today's economic system had several causes, aside from the speculative lending, including a tide of cheap money from emerging economies, outdated regulations and supervisions. But millions of dollars can not save modern Western capitalism focused mainly on maximizing wealth without due consideration of the means as long as the means are efficacious.

"An economic model which is based on the continued and unlimited consumption of limited resources can only end in tears," claims *The Economist*. Economy and finances are not everything. As Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Community of St. Egidio, observed:

"In order to build a world of well-being for a few, we have built a world of pain for many."

For too many people money has no morality. Golden parachutes, cooked books, and greased palms are the results of the capitalist carnage we have witnessed with Enron, WorldCom, AIG, etc. The Romans, who had a good knowledge of human nature, knew something about the "auri sacra fames", the insatiable hunger for wealth.

One of the reasons for trying to silence the Church in the public arena is the claim that the real world has not and should not have anything to do with morality. In the present economic crisis, Pope Benedict XVI condemned the "deficit of ethics."

Left to itself, the financial market has no point of reference, not even a global economic framework. Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Birmingham, England, stated: "There is little discussion about the four fundamental moral virtues and their importance for the common good: prudence, courage, justice and temperance. Temperance is the virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasure and creates a balance in the use of created goods. It is the opposite of greed and self-indulgence. It is needed more than ever in an age of consumerism, hedonism and excess."

In prosperous times, temperance leads to philanthropy and charity and in austere times it must lead to a simpler lifestyle and to wise judgments about what is of lasting importance and common good.

THE FEAST OF THE DONKEYS

In some rural towns of Italy, on Palm Sunday people celebrate the *Festa degli asini* (Feast of the Donkeys) with parades and races. Jesus rode a donkey as He entered Jerusalem amidst the cries of jubilation of the people who welcomed their King. It is believed that St. Joseph used a donkey to carry the Blessed Mother to Bethlehem and then to escape with her and the Child to Egypt. The donkey is a humble and useful animal. It is resilient and docile. Sometimes the word "jackass" (asino) is used in the derogatory manner. Remember St. John Vianney? He had a hard time with his seminary studies. One day, a teacher told him, "John, you will never accomplish any-thing in life. You are a jackass!" To which the young seminarian calmly replied, "Samson killed thousands of Philistines with the jaw bone of a jackass. Imagine what God might accomplish with a whole jackass!" *Viva gli asini!* Hurray to the donkeys!