

Chaplain's Bulletin April 21, 2024



Dear Folks,

I saw the movie “Irena’s Vow.” It is beyond amazing. It is about Irena Gut Opdyke who sheltered a group of Jews during World War II, and one would never have believed how she did it. The movie showed the terrible evil of the Nazis who were seeking to make Germany “free of Jews.” We remember how the Nazis accused the Jews of all sorts of crimes in an attempt to justify their actions.

This Sunday the Gospel is about Jesus the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18). The Good Shepherd “lays down his life for the sheep.” This is the essence of the Gospel: the Lord, with nothing to gain for Himself, paid the ultimate price for our salvation, and calls us to receive His gift and give ourselves in love. This is not only the greatest story ever told, but the greatest story that could ever be told. It will never be repeated but has echoed in the lives of many Christians who suffered, sacrificed, and put their lives on the line for the love of God and neighbor.

There are many true stories about people who make heroic, selfless sacrifice to help others. Irena Gut Opdyke is one. Irena Sendler is another (see the movie “The Courageous Heart of Irena Sendler.”) I’m also fond of the story of Monsignor Hugh O’Flaherty, whose work is detailed in the movie “The Scarlet and the Black” and was subject of the book “Hugh O’Flaherty: The Irish Priest Who Resisted the Nazis” by Fiorella De Maria.

We remember the terror attack in Israel on October 7 and the horrible cruelty that was committed. We see how Hamas is still holding hostages while trying to maximize civilian casualties. We see people accusing Israel of crimes while dismissing the crimes of the terrorists. There have been rallies in the United States, including Michigan, in which people have shouted “Death to Israel” and “Death to America.” At a time when hate crimes against Jews is on the rise, at a time when people are getting more and more casual about destroying human lives, we would do well to pay attention.

I notice that at the worst times in history, God raises up great heroes. True stories of heroes remind us what one person can do, and that often these people are the ones you would least expect. We don’t know what God will call us to before we are done. Not all Christians are called to die for the faith, but all Christians are called to be ready to die for the faith, and all are called to service. What would we be willing to do to answer God’s call?

Blessings,
Fr. Jim