**Moving Heaven and Earth.** On October 2\textsuperscript{nd}, the Vatican and the U.S. Embassy co-hosted a one day symposium entitled, *Pathways to Achieving Human Dignity: Partnering with Faith-Based Organizations.* As the title indicates the purpose of the meeting was to discuss ways the Vatican, the U.S. government, and faith-based organizations could work together to promote human dignity and religious freedom. In his opening remarks, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, who serves the Vatican as Secretary for relations with states (foreign governments), stated that our aim at collaboration must be to build a society which is truly tolerant and inclusive. This was not a new goal but simply a reiteration of the goal Pope Francis proposed on his visit to the U.S. in 2015. The archbishop went on to say that “the principle emphasis with regard to religious freedom should not be political or ideological. The main concern should be to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms effectively and to promote peaceful coexistence in inclusive societies in which people could express their beliefs freely.”

Issues discussed at the symposium included human trafficking and religious repression. U.S. Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo also spoke at this meeting. When it comes to defending human dignity, he said, “the stakes today are higher than they were even during the Cold War because the threats to it are more diverse and more numerous.” He went on to say that the roots of religious repression live with authoritarian regimes that will never accept a power higher than their own. That is why we must exercise our moral voice to confront them. The most fundamental issues of human dignity and religious freedom transcend everyday politics. The Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, likewise spoke, outlining global challenges to achieving this dignity. Peace, social justice, fighting poverty, and promoting sustainable development were the hallmarks of how the Church, faith-based organizations, and governments could work together. U.S. Ambassador for Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback, gave some concrete suggestions as to what could be done. One, was to push our legislators to stand up boldly for religious freedom. Two, perhaps to host meetings with those who have experienced religious persecution; and three, help rebuild churches destroyed by religious intolerance. Working together is essential if our world is to be a better and safer place for all. This year marks the 35\textsuperscript{th} year since St. Pope John Paul II and President Ronald Reagan established diplomatic relations between the two governments. Many good things have come about through this joint cooperation. Ambassador Brownback acknowledged this in his remarks saying that when you get these two great powers working together, “you literally move heaven and earth.”

**Don’t forget** the 50\textsuperscript{th} Annual Blessed Sacrament Auction this coming Saturday evening. Come enjoy the fun, food, and fellowship…and don’t forget to get a bidding number. A perfect find may just be waiting for you.

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**Fr. Jeff**