

BULLETIN -- APRIL 9

Last Chance. Well, no, not unless you're about to breathe your last. But please remember that, excepting urgent or emergency situations, we don't hear **confessions** during the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday). This is not a canon or liturgical law, but rather a simple pastoral practicality, to give priests an opportunity to focus on the Paschal Mystery of the Lord and the ceremonies that mark its annual celebration. We do still have plenty of scheduled hours up until then:

Mon., April 10	9-11 a.m. 7 p.m. at St. Alphonsus (numerous priests)
Tues., April 11	3-5 p.m.
Wed., April 12	7-9 p.m.

The Monday evening time at St. Alphonsus will be a penance service with many confessors available. The other hours listed are all here at SS. Peter & Paul. And you are welcome to check with surrounding parishes also, if no one of these listed times is convenient for you.

Welcome to Holy Week! Every adult Muslim considers it to be a solemn obligation, at least once in a lifetime, to make the *Hajj*, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, where hundreds of thousands from around the world gather each year for their worship. The Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. We Christians don't have to travel any farther than our parish church to join our blessed Lord in the events of the Paschal Mystery. The Church leads us through them each year during Holy Week, to help us focus on the passion, death, and resurrection of the Lord which brought about our salvation. Every Catholic should make a point of, at least once in our lifetime, to join our fellow believers in all the major liturgical rites of Holy Week: Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil on Saturday evening. Aside from the Sunday worship, this spiritual pilgrimage is not a matter of obligation, but an expression of love. Please join Christ and his Church in the very simple and solemn ceremonies which make the events of that first Holy Week present in our own place and time. Let's do it for Jesus, *with* Jesus. If you've never done it before, let this be your year!

The origins of our moral disarray: some final thoughts. Catholics whose voices were the loudest in condemning the Church and the hierarchy for the sexual abuse scandal in the 2000's were often the same voices that had been pressuring the Church to accommodate the times and to relax sexual mores in the 1960's. This should surprise no one. The same thing happened with Mass attendance. Forty and fifty years ago, some people made open fun of others who went to Sunday Mass "because they had to." Those who were loudest in their criticism of things like the Sunday Mass obligation have proved to be some of the loudest in blaming the Church and the hierarchy for the low percentages of baptized Catholics that they claim are still going to church regularly. I'm afraid they make their dismal claim with a little too much enthusiasm to be considered impartial. The editorial biases of *The National Catholic Reporter*, which I have read regularly for 50 years, are a classic example of this double-speak.

If any bishop back in the 1960's or 1970's had announced a canonical trial for a priest who was reported for sexual abuse of a minor, there would have been no louder chorus denouncing the bishop for being harsh, legalistic, and un-Christlike than the *NCR* and its minions. If the bishop had referred the matter to public law enforcement, he would have been pilloried for not using the "medicine of mercy." That having become a very popular attitude, virtually all bishops eschewed the very idea of using the Church's penal law (internal criminal law). Advised by their lawyers to keep silent and to have no contact with accusing victims and their families, and regularly advised by psychiatrists and counselors to get the offending priests back to work and give them a new start, the bishops often went along with such advice. Where were these lawyers and shrinks when the bishops came under attack for following their advice?

I'm offering this by way of explanation, not absolution. It's good to know that others in the public forum are coming to realize how harmful it is for us to reject time-tested moral standards. This is precisely what Professor Jonathan Haidt means when he refers to sexual purity / degradation as the fifth foundational principle / counter-principle of ethics. When we get to thinking that we are so far superior to people of the past that we will never be influenced by the lure of temptations which have brought ruin upon great civilizations, we are discounting everything philosophy and theology teach us about our fallen human nature. Virtues like chastity and continence were no easier for our forebears than they are for us today, with this exception: in the past, violations of these virtues were considered to be sinful and aberrant. Today, it seems, the virtue is in practicing and flaunting the vice!

So it should not amaze us, if we think about it, that the sexual abuse crisis came about. What is amazing is the *relative* speed with which the Church has responded to remedy the present and the future. What is further amazing is that the media can continue to get away with regularly implying that nothing has been done, that secrecy and cover-up continue to be the order of the day, and that Catholic celibate priests, alone among all other classes of people, continue to be predatory monsters looking for young people to abuse. The fact that this has become standard fare for both adult cartoonists and comedians indicates that the popular mind has been heavily influenced by highly selective reporting. One need no longer state that "everyone knows." It has just come to be *assumed* that "everyone knows," and the introduction of verifiable facts and figures has become an unwelcome intrusion.

The breakdown of morality and moral authority has not occurred only in the area of sexual morality, although its close relationship with other sinful aberrations is stunningly apparent. Once human life and its transmission are cheapened, the next "inconvenience" to be conquered is bound to be suffering and death. We are seeing more and more the glorification of assisted suicide and euthanasia. This immoral action basically makes an obscene gesture to our Creator in the face of life's greatest uncertainty, while rejecting its greatest *certainty*, God's overwhelming love and compassion for us. The emptiness of the Hollywood-drenched culture relentlessly washes away the foundations of the profound philosophical and theological approaches to the problems and questions of ours and every age.

Like making waves? Ride the air waves with us and listen to 1140-AM WVHF Holy Family Radio. What you learn about your Catholic faith will spill over into the lives of others and enrich your membership in the Church exponentially. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: Your conscience thinks it's much more clever than it really is. Be suspicious of it.