

BULLETIN -- FEBRUARY 12

The power to dispense. You might recall that several years ago, St. Patrick's Day fell on Friday, as it does again this year. Last time, this created a big stir in the Catholic community, when we pointed out that the traditional Irish dinner of corned beef and cabbage should take place on Thursday or Saturday, since Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent are the only days of abstinence from meat left in the universal Catholic calendar. It's an opportunity for all of us to do something penitential TOGETHER, so why not make a bit of a fuss by changing our routines and plans to make a talking point about why Catholics do things like this in the first place? Well, as it turned out, local pastors who did not grant dispensations to their petitioning flocks got overruled by the benevolence of the then-Bishop, who (as some saw it) caved to the pressures of populism even though he wasn't running for office. As the French say, *Comme ci, comme ça*. Or better yet, *C'est la guerre!*

Many years ago, a man asked me after Sunday Mass whether he and his wife, who were planning to travel on vacation, could have a dispensation from attending Mass on Sundays while they were away. I asked him whether their travels would take them to places where no Mass was being offered anywhere around (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Tibet, etc.). "Oh, no, Father," he readily admitted, "we just don't feel like packing good clothes and spending time looking for a church." That response earned him a mini-homily on the spot! Mere convenience should never be a reason to absolve ourselves from the moral and ecclesial obligation to worship God with the universal Church. In fact, it's one of the reasons we *belong* to a universal Church—so that everywhere we go, we can find the Lord anxious to share his Word and Sacrament with us, perhaps with a touch of local flavor. Invariably, people are always anxious to relate their adventures (or mis-adventures) about where they went to Mass. For Catholics, it should be part of the fun, or at least of the experience, of traveling!

Many people seem to look upon the privileges of their baptism as something that they can dispense with apart from their actual presence in church. No priest, bishop, or pope can dispense any of us from the obligation we have to provide a solid example of Christian behavior in any situation of life in which we find ourselves. Remember the beatitudes which we heard in the Gospel a couple Sundays ago? What was so memorably refreshing about Jesus' teaching was that it wasn't just a rehash of do's and don'ts. The be-attitudes are just that—all about **ATTITUDES**. If a person is striving to be poor in spirit, meek, clean of heart, thirsting for justice, those "attitudes" of life will bring about an atmosphere in which the do's and don'ts will just fall in place. The very thought of dispensation becomes unnecessary when you're madly in love. After all, can you imagine asking for a dispensation from buying your sweetie a gift or card for Valentine's Day? Only a miserable cheapskate . . . But wait, is *that* your attitude toward God?

Honor Roll parishioners! West Catholic High School notifies us that the following among our students have made the Honor Roll for the 2nd quarter. Their grade levels are in (parentheses): Nathan Augdahl (9), Wyatt Davis (10), Margaret Edozie (9), Michael Edozie (11), Holly Holtzclaw (11), Samantha Knight (12), Bridget Kohane (10),

Joshua Kohane (11), Olivia Marzolf (10), and Joseph Worm (10). Congratulations to these and all of our scholars who are doing their very best with their God-given talents!

Where will it all end? “Father, I can’t believe you’re not on Facebook!! There’s so much interesting stuff on there!” Well, if I went on there, that would bring the average of interesting stuff down a notch or two, for sure. Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and on and on. Already people accuse me of not having an unpublished thought, and that’s just after writing a weekly bulletin column!

And if there’s “so much interesting stuff on there,” how come the news commentator I listened to this morning mispronounced words like “Pfizer” (he said “Fizzer”), “arraignment” (he said “arrangement”), “Hattiesburg” (he said “HATE-eez-burg), and “Gloucester” (which he pronounced “GLOW-ches-ter”)? In a couple of minutes, we learned that this college grad has no familiarity with business and economics, the legal process, or American or international geography. Maybe because he’s spent all his time learning “interesting stuff” on Facebook. And to be fair, he is certainly not the first commentator I have heard make gaffes like that. Anyone who is doing public speaking should know, before the first time they utter a word, that if there’s even one word or name whose correct pronunciation you do not know, ASK SOMEONE!! I know you’ve never opened a dictionary (and might not know where to find one), so at least look it up on Google Pronounce! But please quit distracting us with your lack of breadth in education when you go on the air.

Go into any restaurant these days and observe the various pairs or groups of people at tables or booths. You’ll likely find that 50 percent or more of them have their minds, eyes, and fingers engaged with their electronic devices, rather than actually enjoying the company of those with whom there are dining. If you happen to be a store clerk, how often have you had to sort out the simultaneous conversations your customer is trying to have with you AND with one or more other persons on their gadgets?

That’s part of my difficulty with social media, in spite of my absence from it. I’m afraid so many people spend so many of their waking hours telling everybody what they’re doing at every blessed minute or similarly nosing into others’ activities that they’ve no time left to live life! Can you imagine coming before the Eternal Judge and being asked, “Well, what did you do with your life?” and having to say, “Gee, like, I didn’t do anything *wrong*, I just spent all my time on Facebook.”

Confirmation news! Our students who are planning to be confirmed will celebrate the sacrament on **Wednesday, May 10, 2017**, at 7 p.m. at the Cathedral with Bishop Walkowiak. Sincere thanks to our catechist, Mrs. Cathy Lindgren, for her fine and conscientious work in preparing our young people. Any parishioner who has been properly trained and would like to be involved in the liturgy that evening is welcome to call our parish office to sign up. Parents and relatives of the confirmands are especially welcome to volunteer. We shall need 5 altar servers, 2 readers, 10 extraordinary distributors of Holy Communion, and 10 greeter/ushers. We also need a volunteer chrism bearer from among the confirmands.

If you are older than 8th grade, have not been confirmed, and are not in RCIA, we can arrange to prepare you for confirmation at the Cathedral with Bishop Walkowiak on **Wednesday, May 31, 2017, at 3 p.m.** Attendance at three sessions with your

confirmation sponsor before that will be a requirement, but we must have you register with the parish office before February 15 if you wish to be confirmed. Remember, your sponsor must be an active, practicing Catholic. A godparent is preferred, but any confirmed Catholic other than a parent is also eligible. Start thinking now about a confirmation name, the name of a saint whom you wish to honor or emulate in your own life. Remember that the Church is most eager that any Catholic being married should be confirmed before marriage, if at all possible. So, if you have a wedding coming up and either you or your Catholic fiancé is not yet confirmed, this is important for you. Please plan ahead. Call the parish office at 454-6000 to register, so we have a sufficient amount of materials available. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: Often, the right thing to say is just a pat on the back.