

## BULLETIN – MARCH 1

**Lenten Penance services.** We shall let you know the opportunities for your Lenten confession(s) as they are made known to us. As of right now, you can figure on these:

Sun., March 1 (today), 3 p.m.	Immaculate Heart, GR
Mon., March 9, 7 p.m.	St. Thomas, GR
Sat., March 14, 9-12, 1-3 (men)	West Catholic H.S.
<b>Sun., March 15, 11 a.m.</b>	<b>SS. Peter &amp; Paul</b>
Thurs., March 19, 2 p.m.	West Catholic H.S.
Sun., March 22, 3 p.m.	O.L. Consolation, Rockford
Wed., March 25, 6:30 p.m.	Holy Family, Caledonia
Thurs., March 26, 9 am-3 pm	St. Andrew's Cathedral (CCHS)

A number of priests will be on hand at each of these services to help with confessions. The sacrament of penance holds a central place for us in our work of Lenten penance. Please don't neglect this marvelous source of forgiveness and help.

**Rest in peace!** We extend our promise of prayer to Barb Staskiewicz and her children, from St. Anthony's parish, on the death of their husband and father, Tom. Tom was a longtime and faithful participant at our Tuesday evening Mass and novena. We



have done business with him for years at his shop, Preferred Printing on Lake Michigan Drive. He printed all of our parish stationery at cost. In the last few years, he stood ever ready to help us out with the distribution of Communion to the sick and homebound, and we called on him several times. I often wanted to throw a beige overcoat on him, give him a cigar, and put him in a 1959 Peugeot convertible to see if he really looked like Peter Falk as Lt. Columbo, or if it was just my imagination. Perhaps the two of them can discuss it now in an eternity beyond all of our imaginations! "Oh, just one more thing . . ."

**Stewardship** calls us to recognize that everything we have is a "gift" from a loving God and that we are called by God to receive these gifts gratefully, cultivate them fully, and share them generously.

As Catholic stewards, we use the blessings we have received and demonstrate both our understanding that we are managers (not owners) of God's gifts, and our appreciation for what we have received. When we contribute our time, talent, and treasure to our parish, diocese, and the universal Church, we follow the example of the servant who multiplied his talents while his master was away.

If one of your New Year's resolutions was to focus more on generosity and service to others, you may want to consider attending the Diocese of Grand Rapids 2015 Stewardship Conference at Holy Redeemer parish in Jenison, and learn about how to make stewardship an integral part of your Catholic life. The conference will be held **Saturday, March 21, 2015 from 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.** Bishop David J. Walkowiak will offer opening remarks, with Bishop Paul J. Bradley of Kalamazoo giving the keynote address, after which participants attend three breakout sessions and wrap up the

conference gathering for a luncheon presentation, “*God Bless Them*” *Genesis 1:28*, presented by Sister Mary Ann Barrett, O.P.

Along with attending the conference, you may want to check with our parish office about stewardship opportunities wherein you can contribute your particular gifts and blessings to support parish programs and services that positively impact parishioners and the greater community. Many are already doing this, and finding great spiritual benefit in it.

**The Angelus.** While we are still waiting for our Angelus bell to be repaired, we should recall its significance and importance. The French artist Jean-François Millet has left us a fine visual of devotion in his 1859 oil painting *L’Angelus*. It depicts a rural man and woman in a field at sunset, bowing over a basket of harvested potatoes to pray the Angelus. Signaled by the ringing of the bell from the church on the horizon, it marks the end of a day’s work. Morning (6 or 7), noon, and night (6), Catholic church bells ring to call us to a prayer recalling the Incarnation. If it’s not part of your daily prayer, perhaps it should be. Let’s look at it briefly. It’s really very simple.

*Verse: The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.*

*Response: And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.*

Pray the Hail Mary. While doing so, ponder God’s initiative of love, the power of the angel’s declaration, the humble cooperation of the one who in her grace-filled acceptance becomes the Mother of God. What we can learn about God’s goodness!

*V.: Behold, the handmaid of the Lord.*

*R.: Let it be done to me according to your word.*

Pray the Hail Mary. Ponder Mary’s willing response, springing from her identification with God’s will and call. What we can learn about the importance of saying “Yes” to God, even (and especially) when it changes our own plans!

*V.: And the Word was made flesh.*

*R.: And dwelt among us.*

Pray the Hail Mary. While doing so, marvel at what an impact a simple act of obedience can make, in our own lives and in the life of the world. What we can learn about allowing the Word to become flesh in our own words and actions!

*V.: Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.*

*R.: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

This summary and transition verse are, along with the second part of each Hail Mary, the only words we address to Mary in this beautiful prayer. (The first part of each Hail Mary, remember, is merely repeating the words of the angel and of Elizabeth, as recorded in Luke’s Gospel.) After briefly pondering the mystery of the Incarnation, we ask Mary to let her prayers accompany our own. We are not worthy of this initiative from God, and never will be, on our own. Becoming worthy takes the lifelong influence of God’s grace. We are always works in progress. The prayer concludes with our own humble prayer to God:

*Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, your Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may, by his passion and cross, be brought to the glory of his resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

This short and beautiful prayer sweeps through the whole mystery of the life of the God-Man on earth. Incarnation, passion, cross, and resurrection, it's all here for us to share in it. When we become Christ's disciples and members of his Mystical Body, he walks with us and we with him in all the pathways of life. We conclude by directing our prayer through the mediation of the Christ of whom we have spoken, who is our Eternal High Priest and Intercessor with the Father.

*V.: May the divine assistance remain always with us.*

*R.: And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

We conclude our brief moment of prayer and reflection with a blessing of sorts, for ourselves, the living, and for all who have gone before us in death. This little verse and response unites the whole Communion of Saints in our prayer. Recall as you conclude that, like a wave, you have joined millions of Catholics around the globe, each in their own time zones, in sanctifying the whole day and night by lifting our voices in praise of God and in honor of his Holy Mother. So at the beginning of each hour, not only is Mass being offered in many parts of the world; but where it is not, God's people *somewhere* are lifting their minds and voices to renew their acceptance of Christ's divine mission in our midst. God bless you!

Fr. Den

**Thought for the week:** "The best thing you can do to adapt to difficult change is to assume the attitude: 'Change *forward!*'" (from Jeffrey Gitomer, American business sales trainer, 1946- ).