

BULLETIN -- MARCH 26

Penance opportunities. You will find confessions available with multiple confessors at the following locations this week:

Sun., March 26, 11 a.m. **SS. Peter & Paul (here! today! ☺)**
Thurs., March 30, 6 p.m. Holy Family, Caledonia

Authority and anarchy. The Greek word *ἀναρχία* (anarkhia) says it all: “no rule” or “without order.” An evil billionaire who has made a life’s work of disrupting the established order in country after country is still at it. He continues to pour millions into causes that will not only upset the *status quo*, but will actually allow societies to descend into chaos so that people will accept anyone or anything that promises them some relief from the reign of total confusion. This person is well-known and well-documented. He doesn’t care about that, but he doesn’t seek publicity for himself. He is zealous about having his “progressive” ideas relentlessly drilled into the public mind, so that after a campaign of ethical anesthesia, total moral relativism will hold sway. What has commonly been considered good and virtuous will be considered bad or silly, and made illegal by legislation. Things that have been considered wrong will be pushed to the forefront of the public mind, and forced upon the willing and unwilling alike. Sound familiar?

It’s with good reason that Dr. Jonathan Haidt has designated “authority / anarchy” the fourth of his moral principles/counter-principles on which a moral civilization is founded. When I was a college student, I would occasionally play a mind game trying to figure out how I could disrupt as many lives as possible with a single act. For instance, I used to walk in to visit at a local hospital through the employees’ entrance. (It was closest to the bus stop.) There on the wall, next to the clock where they all punched in, were all the employees’ time cards, totally unprotected. No guards or security cameras anywhere in those days. I reasoned that I could really screw up “the system” for awhile by simply cleaning out the whole lot of them and throwing them in the trash. Of course, I never did it. Vandalism has no appeal for me, even though I could ease the tedium of a hot summer day by imagining how it could be done for maximum impact. Security cameras were ultimately installed to catch or discourage people who were inclined to go much farther than just my maniacal musings. Imagine my delight when some years later the *Die Hard* movies proved that I wasn’t alone in my world of destructive fantasies, except that Bruce Willis found a way to make lots of money from them!

The point is, we thrive on order. Not mindless goose-stepping, mind you, or jumping through procedural hoops for no reason other than to give a bureaucrat a reason to exist. No, we thrive on order that allows us to live life, to enjoy liberty, and to pursue happiness, as long as we do not encroach on the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness of those around us. Our Declaration of Independence even tells us that these things are God-given *rights*. When anarchists invade a community, as the Occupy Wall Street crowd did a few years back and as others have done more recently, they might be expressing their own rights, but they encroach on those of others. When they take over a public park, for instance (as they did with Lincoln Park right here on the west side), and

turn it into a public latrine and brothel, that's a serious infringement on the rights of others, who can call on civil authority to throw the bums out.

Is it any wonder that Matthew tells us in his Gospel that people were attracted to Jesus because he "taught them with authority, and not as their scribes" (7:29)? Jesus doesn't have to refer to this commentator or that, he doesn't have to drop names and citations to back him up. He presents himself as one with authority, and indeed he is. He backs up all his teaching by practicing it himself. No one can blame him for anything to the contrary. The elders and high priests represent divine authority, but their way of life only invites skepticism and disgust. They lose their authority by not practicing what they preach. Nonetheless, Jesus tells his disciples, "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do" (Matthew 23:2-3). Even corrupt human authority is better than no authority at all, which would be anarchy.

Bringing order into chaos is a godly work. It is supremely rational. It recognizes that, in order to thrive, humans need a certain amount of predictability balanced with enough spontaneity to keep it interesting--or vice versa, to keep us from going insane. It requires both thought to keep it on track and thoughtfulness to make it helpful to others. And it must be done by one having authority or at least representing authority to be considered authentic. Even those whose cars sport bumper stickers saying "Question Authority" have presumed that they could purchase an item from someone who could guarantee--with authority--that it would actually stick to their bumper.

Archbishop Salatka's prayer answered. At Christmas, I shared in this column some details of the life of Father Stanley Rother, one of Archbishop Salatka's priests in Oklahoma City. Join me in rejoicing at the following news, which came out on Monday, March 13:

"Father Stanley Rother, a native of Oklahoma who was killed while serving as a missionary in Guatemala in 1981, will be beatified in September. Father Rother's martyrdom was formally recognized by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints last December. His beatification has now been scheduled for September 23, to take place in Oklahoma City. Father Rother was a priest of the Oklahoma City archdiocese, which made the announcement on March 13. While serving in a parish in Guatemala, Father Rother acknowledged that the nation's civil war made his post dangerous. 'But if it is my destiny that I should give my life here, then so be it,' he wrote. 'I don't want to desert these people.' He was gunned down on July 28, 1981."

In the back of church this weekend, we have some copies of *Our Sunday Visitor* which provide more details of the life of this American Catholic hero and soon-to-be-saint. And okay, Archbishop, now get to work on Bishop Baraga and Father Joe Walijewski! It's a joy to see, little by little, more and more who have had connections with our country being recognized as models of holiness and as heavenly intercessors. We are called to be in their number. God bless you.

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: “No person can be a great leader unless he takes genuine joy in the successes of those under him” (Rev. W.A. Nance, Methodist minister, Kentucky, 1918-1980).