

BULLETIN -- MARCH 6

Lenten penance services. We are happy to provide, for your convenience, the schedule for Lenten confession opportunities in the area. We shall keep you updated with any additional choices as we learn of them.

Sun., March 6	11 a.m.	SS. Peter & Paul
Thurs., March 10	9 a.m.-3 p.m.	St. Andrew's (for CCHS and others)
	6-8 p.m.	St. Robert's, Ada
Sat., March 12	9:25-10:40 a.m.	
	1-3 p.m.	West Catholic H.S. at Kephra Retreat
Sun., March 13	3 p.m.	Our Lady of Consolation, Rockford
Wed., March 16	2-3 p.m.	West Catholic H.S. cafeteria

In addition, we have our regular confession schedule on Tuesday evenings at 6:30, Saturday afternoons from 3-4 p.m., and 2 hours each day during the MTW of Holy Week.

Please pray for our confirmands! Our junior high students have been preparing for the sacrament of Confirmation for two years, and in the process have been praying for us. Several of them have written beautiful letters professing their faith and their eagerness for the gifts of the Spirit to put at the service of the Church. Please hold these young people up in prayer the next few days, as they celebrate their Confirmation this Tuesday evening, March 8, at 7 p.m. at the Cathedral. Come, Holy Spirit!

Mercy, mercy! We still get calls and questions: "Do you have general absolution?" "Do you know where we can find a general absolution service?" The answer, at least to the latter question, is, yes, perhaps if you travel to a Christian village in Syria or Iraq which is 20 minutes from an ISIS invasion. And even then, those faithful Christians are probably keeping their priest busy hearing their confessions, one by one, in their last moments of freedom. They, it seems, know their catechism far better than we do, and are far more aware of the power of the grace of the sacrament. In our country, the Church is in and is part of a culture that wants to hide, excuse, and cover up its sins. Contraception and abortion refuse the very gift of life to thousands of children per day, but denying the damage they cause to our soul as a nation and to our souls as individuals has become a billion-dollar industry, with the encouragement and support of the government. No wonder "general absolution" became so popular for a time! Drive through as much mud as you want, as often as you want, and head to the car wash with a free coupon. What could be simpler?

And what could offer more ammunition to the old Protestant saw that Catholics just run to confession, run out, and commit the same sins all over again without any intention of changing their lives? I saw plenty of evidence over about 30 years of pastoral care that many people were far more eager to get the quick car wash than they were to do the detail work their souls really needed. In those 30 years, we have witnessed plummeting rates of church attendance, a proliferation of immoral lifestyles, a decline in respect and enthusiasm for Christian marriage, ubiquitous pornography, soaring rates of juvenile self-cutting, a narcissistic preoccupation with God-given

fundamentals like gender identity, and out-of-control increases in both suicide and threats of suicide. Granted, these sins are not only common among Catholics alone; but they also don't say much for our call to be the salt of the earth and a light in the darkness for the societies in which we live.

The fact is, a practice such as general absolution allowed us to become a non-reflective people who could skip along the surface of life without giving proper consideration to the consequences of our thoughts, actions, and screwed-up reasoning. For the most part, the introduction and practice of general absolution was done with good intentions; although I am personally well aware of instances in which it was promoted or offered as the only possibility out of either sheer laziness or out of a professed disdain for and a desire to torpedo the centuries-old practice of the Church. The evil one is clever enough to use either malice or good intentions to accomplish its purpose: to destroy an awareness of sin and to create endless confusion among people, especially the people of God. *Mercifully*, the faithful in steadily increasing numbers are reviving their appreciation for and practice of the sacrament of penance with very conscientious and communally-oriented but individual confessions. In doing so, they are expressing a renewed awareness of the fact that sin is not merely the breaking of arbitrary commandments, but the commandments are given because sin is harmful to us and those around us.

Putting stupidity to the test. The state of Washington recently passed a law allowing anyone who “identifies” as other than their biological gender the right to use restroom and locker facilities of the gender with which they identify. On February 8, a man walked into a woman's locker room in a Seattle park and began to undress. Women understandably became uncomfortable and complained to park management. Nervous officials are now wondering how to identify those who “truly” identify as something else, and how to restrict access when all restrictions have in fact been outlawed in order to help everyone feel comfortable. Obviously, far more people feel uncomfortable with the new law than feel protected by it. You nitwits! You HAD a law that sensibly protected the greatest number of people, and you overruled it with nonsense! And let's not be afraid to say to people who identify as “gender fluid” or one of the 57 other varieties of what used to be male and female, “You are messed up. Get help.”

So many of the geniuses who are busy crafting laws catering to such inconceivable nonsense are likely not familiar with a basic principle of law, at least of *canon* or Church law: “Law presumes the normal.” Of course, this presumes that there are norms and that there is a normal, which the moral relativists deny with all their pent-up energy. The normal is not only based on natural law or on a numerical average. The normal is also, for people of good will, a target to aim at or above. One might be below the norm or outside the norm (*ab-normal*) through no fault of one's own. It does not go hand in hand with guilt or innocence. The simple fact is that it is impossible to craft law to deal with every possible rational or irrational exception. The work of judges is, or ought to be, to weigh arguments pro and con and then to make a decision that respects both the law and common sense. Law itself cannot address an infinite number of variables. Can you imagine trying to do math if there were no common denominators? The Pharisees and Sadducees constantly tried to trap Our Lord by feeding him questions from *casuistry*, making up ridiculous and conflicting situations and asking him to resolve

them. He was always one step ahead of them. So whenever you hear or read something and say, “Well, that’s just nuts!” ask Our Lord, “Lord, help me keep my feet on the ground and my mind and heart penetrated by your truth.”

Michigan primary Tuesday! VOTE!! VOTE!! VOTE!! Discouraged by the choices? Pray hard, and do your best. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: “Dad understood that the deeper he went into his Catholic faith, the better a citizen and public servant he became. God blessed him with the desire to be the country’s good servant *because* he was God’s first” (Fr. Paul D. Scalia, funeral homily for his father, Justice Antonin Scalia, February 20, 2016.)