

BULLETIN -- OCTOBER 18

It just ain't fare! In-depth news reporting by Channel 8 has uncovered the scandal of an estimated 27,000 free rides on The Rapid's Silver Line this past year. A bus ride here in the metro area ordinarily costs \$1.75, with a 50% discount available for seniors 65+ and for people with special needs. That's really a bargain. Pay \$1.75 and, with transfers included, you can ride from Rivertown Crossings to Soft Water Lake, or from York Creek Apartments to the Airport. It's a great service, and it's improved tremendously since the days when I was on the transit board begging in vain just to get the buses to run past 6 p.m.

But some people aren't content with the convenient service or the reasonable fare. The way the Silver Line is set up, it's an honor system. All the driver does is drive the bus. You get on the vehicle at one of two doors with a fare card that you have purchased in advance or at the individual bus stop station. (Anyone familiar with the subway systems in our larger cities knows how that works.) No one collects the fare card, you just keep it as a proof of purchase. The Rapids employs fare inspectors who ride the eight buses on the Silver Line at random and are authorized to ask people to show their ticket, just as a conductor does on a train. In an ideal world, the system would work beautifully.

The one thing that government and semi-governmental agencies like The Rapid so often fail to take into account is original sin. After all, according to some, admitting it would be an injudicious admixture of church and state, breaking down the Jeffersonian (but not constitutional) "wall of separation." Heaven forbid (oops, can't use *that* word!), anything that smacks of having theological roots must be absolutely disregarded. So we bravely face the world, comrades, without paying heed to a concept like "fallen human nature." And wow, do we get ripped off!

It's a dangerous thing to spring a concept like an honor system on a society which has been thoroughly schooled by its government plantation masters to expect everything for nothing. We're already several generations into "The Great Society," in which everyone would have a right to food, clothing, shelter, transportation, health care, and the freedom to do as they please without doing a stitch of work for it. Of course, that wasn't how the designers of the Great Society envisioned the results. Providing people the bare necessities they could not otherwise afford would, it was imagined, free them from poverty and give them a chance to become productive citizens. The sad result, however, has been to squash human incentive and initiative, stifle imagination, and spread the spirits of indolence and iniquity.

Fallen human nature might not be virtuous, but it remains innately clever. It doesn't take much to figure out that with only four fare inspectors on eight buses, your chances of getting caught without a valid fare card are minimal. (Mine, of course, are about 98%, so I pay the fare in order not to have a new photo series on MLive featuring "West Side Pastor Caught Riding for Nothing!!!" and "Recently Honored Priest Banned from Bus for Life!!!") There's been the usual swapping of statistics, with The Rapid administration claiming it's not a major problem and the media investigation pointing to perhaps \$40,000 in uncollected revenue. Not welcome publicity when public transportation is one of the favorite whipping boys of bloggers, social critics, and taxpayer watchdogs.

I don't have a whole lot of sympathy for the tightwads who are constantly carping about "empty buses." Sure, if you sit at the end of the line and watch buses pull in with one or two people, you are free to make an argument. But it doesn't take into account the many people anyone can see waiting at bus stops all over the community, all day long. I don't believe that people have a constitutional right to transportation. I *do* believe that the whole community benefits when those among us who for any reason cannot drive or get around on their own, or even who choose not to burn additional fossil fuel, have public means of transport to help them get to work, school, or social activities. I gladly pay taxes for that purpose, and consider it to be one of life's best bargains. \$1.75 to get from here to the airport, with no parking fees? Thank you, taxpayers, from a grateful fellow taxpayer. If you want to get your tax money's worth, why not *ride* the bus instead of throwing verbal rocks at it? But if you're going to ride the Silver Line, for gosh sakes, cough up the fare. It's about time we put on our big boy and big girl clothes and took some responsibility for our actions instead of expecting everything for nothing,

Recently overheard was a conversation about how the federal government now wants the President to issue an executive order about how much water a dishwasher can use. Supposedly it's been tried with the federally recommended amount of water, and the result absolutely will not get dishes anywhere near clean. As one of the guys said, "The feds have already invaded my bathroom, stay the heck out of my kitchen." One of the others guys picked up on it and said, "Yeah, the tiny amount of water that the new government toilets are allowed to use absolutely does not get the job done. You have to flush it 3 or 4 times, so where's the saving?" A third chimed in, "Well, it's not all bad. At least the new government light bulbs in the bathroom don't give off any light, so you can't see what you're trying to flush!!"

Rise up, O people of God! The generosity of a parish family has made available a very functional recliner-lift chair. Sit in the comfort of a recliner and use the electric control to raise yourself into a standing position and lower yourself automatically without "falling" into the chair. It's been used, but it still works. It's available to whoever asks for it first. Call Barb at 454-6000.

World Mission Sunday is being celebrated THIS WEEKEND, October 17-18. We encourage your prayer and generous support for the missionary work of the Church. Remember, you are part of something that goes well beyond the borders of our nation and continent, and is truly universal in nature. World Mission Sunday is "Our World on Mission," since it is a vital life line for the 1,150 mission dioceses across the globe. Following the example of the Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve, we place our lives and ministry at the service of the Gospel. World Mission Sunday provides us a unique opportunity to do so. There is great work being done in the missions to make Jesus known and loved. Your gift *can* and *will* make a difference to the poor of the world who long to come to know the hope and the love that only Jesus Christ can give. I personally ask your prayers and invite your generous contribution to help spread the best news of all--the Good News of Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: Never suspect a conspiracy when stupidity is an adequate explanation.