

Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church

March 19, 2017/Third Sunday of Lent

PASTOR'S CORNER

Apparently some consternation was caused for some when they noticed the absence of the old confessional from the southwest corner of church. Rest easy: it has not been sold or destroyed. It's out on consignment for some refitting. It will be back. As anyone knows who has ever tried using it, it's very uncomfortable to use if you're any taller than a mid-sized munchkin. Confession isn't supposed to be comfortable, but we don't want to disincentivize the matter more than is necessary. So, an excellent millworker in the parish will be a) removing one of the pentents' sections so that it will fit against the back wall, not the side (and two sections are simply not necessary and can even be a bit, um, distracting); b) lengthening and widening the penitent's section that will be left; and c) sound-proofing it more thoroughly. We hope to have it back by Easter—though that might be too optimistic, given the time that quality woodworking requires.

I had said all this a while ago, and perhaps people forgot, but my plan is to begin using the old confessional (well, the new old confessional), and convert the other, roomier one into a "cry room." I'm sorry I forgot to give reminders. Be assured, it will be back, new and improved.

But about that anxiety that the confessional had been removed—one of my pastoral councillors said that a lot of people really love it for its beauty and the detailed filigree and all that. I understand that. It is indeed beautiful. But it's not there as a decoration for the back of the church. It's supposed to be used. By people confessing their sins. That's why it's called a confessional, after all, not an *objet d'art*. I hope the admirers of the fine woodworking on the exterior of this confessional will check out its interior from time to time, too. That's its most important part. Not to be too preachy or anything, but we've added confession times for Lent and we have seen scarcely an uptick in those availing themselves of the hours. On the first two Sundays of Lent, when we've been hearing before the 11 Mass, there were exactly three confessions between them.

I recently came across a photo online of some beautiful European church that has been since converted into a museum. In particular, it was a photo of the confessionals, roped off, with tourists leaning in to snap photos of this funny thing Catholics once used when—what's it called, again?—going to confession. Now, a museum is essentially a graveyard of things once alive but now defunct, things no longer of use. Churches become museums when people become too sophisticated for the faith of their fathers. The easiest way to ruin a home is simply to abandon it, and let it suffer from neglect, its floorboards growing creaky from want of daily usage, cobwebs filling rooms that once were living space. Don't let that happen to this church, or to your own soul. I won't deny we hear more confessions here at St. Thomas than some other parishes, but what is normal is a pretty low bar to clear. I'm writing a piece on the sacrament of Penance in this bulletin. It will be continued for the next couple of weeks.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP All parishioners should participate fully in parish life (*this especially means worshipping at Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation*), be registered here, and contribute to the support the parish to the extent possible. We often get requests for recommendations and permissions for parishioners to serve as godparents and sponsors. If we don't know you, we can't give that testimony on your behalf. You may have been baptized here (or gone to Catholic schools) but you need to be currently practicing and registered in your local parish (children are obviously registered with their parents; adults need to make their own arrangements). The Church requires that baptisms and marriages be celebrated in one's own parish. If one is not an active parishioner, problems could arise at those important times.

Baptisms Usually 1st and 3rd Sundays. Contact the pastor to schedule. First-time parents please also schedule a "pre-Jordan" preparation class—offered the 2nd Wednesday of each month, at 7:15 p.m. in the parish center.

Weddings Active parishioners contact the parish office no later than six months prior to the desired wedding date. Marriage preparation normally includes several meetings with a priest, several meetings with a mentor couple of the parish, a weekend of conferences offered by the diocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life, NFP training, and FOCCUS diagnostic. *If someone in your family is planning to get married*, please encourage them to speak to their pastor. The marriages of Catholics (whether or not they're marrying other Catholics) need to be conformable with Church law, and that requires that they receive suitable catechesis in preparation for marriage, and marry according to a certain rite.

Eucharistic exposition Wednesdays following the noon Mass until 7:00 p.m. Benediction. For information, and to volunteer to take hours of adoration, contact Regina Cano at (614) 582-8588.

Knights of Columbus Contact Trinidad Cano at (740) 819-8002. The K of C offer a hot breakfast every 4th Sunday following morning Masses, and lead the Rosary after the 11:00 Mass on 5th Sundays.

Choir We're always in need of more voices in the choir. Contact the parish office or the choir director Mrs. Adams. Weekly rehearsals are Wednesdays, after Benediction.

Funeral luncheons Contact Mary Margaret Murphy at (740) 452-4454.

Rental information To reserve Rosary Hall or Activity Center (i.e. the school gym) contact Mary Ann Ewart at maewart@gmail.com or (740) 319-2449.

Pregnancy counseling Heartbeat Family Center/Pregnancy Distress: (740) 450-5437, www.heartbeats.org.

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MASS INTENTIONS

It is a holy and pious thought to pray for the dead.
cf. 2 Maccabees, 12.



Sunday, March 19

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

5:00pm (Sat.) Carolyn Awalt (+)
7:00am Ephraim Heil (+)
9:00am Dominican Order
11:00am People of the parish

Monday, March 20

ST. JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (S)

8:00am Herb & Emma Noll Family
12Noon Mary Jo Dooley (+)

Tuesday, March 21

Lenten Weekday

8:00am Julia Jeffrey (+)
12Noon Mary Norris (+)

Wednesday, March 22

Lenten Weekday

8:00am Sandy & Lou Matt
12Noon Mark Stephen Thompson (+)

Thursday, March 23

Lenten Weekday

8:00am Gerry Kuhn (+)
12Noon Ted Paulus

Friday, March 24

Lenten Weekday (**day of abstinence from meat**)

7:00am Marvin Arnold (+)
12Noon William Heil Family
7:00pm Stations of the Cross

Saturday, March 25

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD (S)

9:00am Mary Lou Cush (+)

Sunday, March 26

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (LAETARE)

5:00pm (Sat.) Mark Stephen Thompson (+)
7:00am Charles & Betty Kline (+)
9:00am Bob & Bette Mattingly (+)
11:00am People of the parish

Weekly Calendar

Sunday, March 19

CCD after 9:00 a.m. Mass
RCIA after 11:00 a.m. Mass
Coffee & doughnuts follow 9 & 11 Masses

Monday, March 20

7:00 p.m. Finance Committee
7:00 p.m. Scouts (Parish Center)

Tuesday, March 21

2:00 p.m. Bible Study with Fr. Luke (Book of Revelation)
6:00 p.m. Rosary for Life (church)
7:00 p.m. Catechism (Rosary Hall)

Wednesday, March 22

Eucharistic exposition following noon Mass
7:00 p.m. Benediction (*Confessions follow*)
7:10 p.m. Choir rehearsal (church)

Friday, March 24

7:00 a.m. Mass time begins for Lent
6:00 p.m. Soup supper (Rosary Hall)
7:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross (*Confessions follow*)

Saturday, March 25

Faith on Tap (following Stations)

Sunday, March 26

CCD after 9:00 a.m. Mass
RCIA after 11:00 a.m. Mass
K of C Breakfast after all Sunday a.m. Masses

Parish Finances

Weekend of March 12

Main collection total..... \$6,581.43*
Weekly Budget..... 11,538.00
This week's deficit - 4,282.62

Thank you!

** This figure includes envelope and loose amounts. It does not include automatic electronic donations.*

Upcoming special collections

Next weekend Catholic Relief Services
Apr 14 Good Friday/Holy Land Christians
Apr 23 Catholic Home Missions

Please remember the parish in your will.

St. Thomas Aquinas parish is FORMED: go to www.formed.org and enter our parish password **DHDYBY**

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The Sacrament of Penance (I)

As promised in last week's bulletin and mentioned in this issue's pastor's corner, I'll be writing a few pieces on the sacrament of confession/penance/reconciliation. I've done this before, and one person wrote me saying I talked about confession "too much." I asked that person if he was in the habit of going to confession and he wouldn't answer. Truly, I don't think this sacrament can be discussed too often, if it really is what the Church teaches it to be: the sacrament by which serious sins after Baptism are forgiven. As the Catechism of the Council of Trent puts it, *If the diligence of pastors should be proportioned to the weight and importance of the subject, we must admit that in expounding this Sacrament they can never be sufficiently diligent*: which is another way of saying we can't talk enough about it.

Sadly, the reality is that most people who identify as Catholics rarely go to Confession more than once a year; some not even that; some make their first Confession (because their parents want them to) but then never make another sacramental Confession again (because their parents stop caring about it after first Confession). So, the question that should arise is this: is this sacrament indeed what the Church claims it to be? If so, why don't more people go on a regular basis? (And if it's not, why be Catholic?) Obviously, there's something decidedly unglamorous about confessing your sins to a priest (who himself needs to go to Confession), but who ever said salvation is supposed to flatter us? Or even be pleasant?

What follows here (and over the next couple of weeks) are some frequent objections to and questions about this sacrament. And some answers, I hope.

Thanks but no thanks. I feel no need to confess my sins to a priest. I pray to God and tell him in my own way that I'm sorry and I love him, and that's good enough, I think.

First of all, congratulations on becoming a Protestant. Because that attitude toward the sacraments and the Church is quintessentially Protestant—it's a notion alien to Catholic tradition. One of the theological fundamentals of Luther and other Reformers was the private nature of salvation, the whole relationship between Christ and the soul, and the relatively *unimportant* nature of the Church. Also, the private interpretation of Scripture, which is obviously a kindred notion. Older Catholics may remember the Baltimore Catechism teaching that the Church is a "visible reality" rather than a merely "invisible reality," as Protestants hold: its an affirmation of the importance of the public, institutional aspects of the practice of the faith. The Catholic Church teaches that we're not saved as individuals but as a community, a Church. While our relationship with Christ is surely *personal*, it isn't *private*. And there are some things about our life and actions that are not left to our choice. (By

the way, I would ask this person: is it *every* sacrament that you feel that way about? Or just Penance? Because if you don't need one of the sacraments of the Church, you must not need any. Anyone who doesn't confess his sins sacramentally shouldn't presume to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist. Or marriage. And so on.)

But to reply directly to this objection, it is necessary to state flatly: no, it isn't enough to confess your sins privately to God. Not if you're a Catholic Christian. The Lord Jesus himself has laid down a particular sacrament to heal us when we fall into serious sin after Baptism: Penance, which involves the oral confession to one of the Church's authorized ministers of the specific sins we have committed. Forgiveness, after all, is God's work in us, and only he has the right to determine how that forgiveness will be imparted to us. It seems obvious at first blush that confessing on our own to God in the privacy of our own room would be less daunting than confessing to a priest—but would it, really? If we truly believe that God himself hears us when we pray, and is present to us, shouldn't that beget in us tremendous awe? If we're willing to lay our souls bare before God without pretensions, having a priest receive our confession of sin shouldn't matter in the slightest, since it's only God's judgment of us that counts for anything. If our faith were what it should be, that's the only thing that should concern us. A priest once asked me why I had let so long go without making confession. I said I found it difficult to confess to any of the priests I lived with in community. He just laughed and said, "yeah, I had to get over that too. Now I just worry about clinging to Jesus. Nothing else matters." Good words.

There's one more thing we could ask about this attitude. *how do you know you're really sorry and love God, if you refuse his sacrament?* What assurance to you have of being forgiven? One of the age-old challenges for those seeking to pray is the tendency to slide into talking to ourselves. It happens all the time. Prayer itself is difficult, because God is almighty and invisible, and we are very small and not terribly bright—and we're sinners. And so it often happens that prayers in our head become words bouncing around an echo chamber. We prefer not to listen to what God says, because it might challenge us. And if we keep speaking directly to him we know he'll draw us in, so prayer to God can become a soliloquy, and then a daydream, and then, *whoosh*, that connection we thought we had with God is gone. Recall that in the parable about the tax collector and the pharisee, the prayer of the pharisee was not heard because of his pride and lack of mercy: *I thank you, God that I am not like the rest of mankind: grasping, adulterous, sinful: like this tax collector here. I fast twice a week and tithe on all I earn*, etc. But there's a significant detail that often escapes attention: before the words



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of the pharisee's prayer, Jesus mentions that the pharisee is speaking to *himself*: "The pharisee stood and prayed to himself like this: 'O God,'" etc. The reason is not so hard to grasp: if you've offended someone and haven't yet made things right, you avert your glance in pain if that other person walks in the room. If you're caught in a lie, you change the subject. And if you're in a state of sin and refuse to humble yourself before the Only One who can heal you, you wind up praying to yourself, even if you don't know it.

God knows what we need; he knows what ails us and he knows what's good medicine. Yet many Catholics pretend to know better, to their great harm. Unconfessed sins fester, and though we can scarcely understand the connection, there is still a connection. All the virtues are connected, and so are our sins. Modern psychology teaches us to "name our demons" to exorcise traumatic memories; is it so surprising that Jesus our Savior was aware of this long before Freud and Jung, with the knowledge of the God who made us? When we name our sins—not just metaphorical demons but real, honest-to-God bad things we have thought, said, and done—they are put to flight and lose their power over us. For whoever humbles himself will be exalted. And whoever exalts himself will start praying to himself.

How can priests forgive sins? They're sinners themselves, aren't they? Don't they need forgiveness too?

Yes, priests are sinners, too, and yes, they need forgiveness, too. The same priests who hear confessions have to confess their own sins to other priests. They can forgive sins only by the power given them to do so by Jesus Christ. In an episode of the Gospel that's very telling, Jesus tells a paralytic man that his sins are forgiven—everyone in the room says, "who does he think he is? Only God can forgive sins!" They were right. And Jesus *was* that God. So to make clear that he had authority to forgive sin, he showed that he exercised divine lordship over material creation, too, and told the man to rise and walk; which he did. The sacrament of Holy Orders received by priest (presbyter) empowers a priest to absolve people of their sins. To understand how this is possible, we'd have to offer a little catechesis of Holy Orders, but suffice it for now to say that it actually transforms a man and changes him as much as Baptism changes a hitherto unbaptized person. A priest does not celebrate the sacraments on his own but *in persona Christi capitis*, in the person of Christ as head of the Church. All the baptized are a priestly people, but there is a profound difference between the common priesthood of the baptized and the special priesthood of the ordained. Those powers are given for service to the Church and reconciling sinners to God—and all the while ordained members of the Church are every bit as much in need of the mercy of God and the ministry of the priesthood as anyone else.

From the "you think you've got it hard" department—check out this story from last July, in the Limerick Leader. Here's a parish the Irish Dominicans withdrew from after—wait for it—nearly 800 years. Fr. Ralko pointed this article out to me.

End of an era as Dominicans mark last Mass in Limerick

It was the end of an era in Limerick city on Sunday as the last Mass held by the Dominican Order took place.

St Saviour's Church was packed to the rafters as people came to say goodbye to the Order, which is withdrawing from the city after close on 800 years. The Limerick Diocese is to take on the running of the church – retaining a Mass at 1pm each day – while nuns based in Nashville will move into the building later this summer.

But despite this, there were tearful scenes from clergy and congregation alike, as the priests of the Dominican order filed out following the Mass of thanksgiving and farewell.

The Dominican order arrived in Limerick in 1224, setting up a church in 1227, and have been based in Glentworth Street for 200 years.

Addressing the congregation in his homily, Fr Francis Downes, prior of the community, said: "In times of strength, of weakness and great persecution, we remained steadfast, thanks to the support and generosity of you and your ancestors, the people of Limerick. Our presence in Fish Lane, off Sir Harry's Mall dated back to 1755 when the Roche family of Mary Street gave refuse to the Friars in their back garden."

Before this, the Dominican's of St Saviour's, although having no chapel of their own, lived in Gaol Lane. They moved to the present site in Glentworth Street in 1816. Sharing her memories of St Saviour's Church, Patricia Hogan, now of the Pennywell Road said: "When I was at boarding school, we took the train from Nenagh to Limerick, and we had time before we caught the next train to Ardrahan. So we used to come in here to the Dominican's and pray. We're going to miss it terribly."

Monica O'Brien-Smith, who grew up near to the Dominican's, added: "This was the best church, absolutely. I'm just so sad. It has formed so much of my spiritual life than anyone could ever know."

Eoin Mulqueen, 27, of the Hyde Road, was an altar boy in the church. He said: "It's not hit me that they are moving out yet. My fondest memory would be each Christmas helping my Dad put out the Christmas tree and the crib."

At the end of the Mass, Fr Downes handed the keys to the church to Fr Eamonn Fitzgibbon, representing the Diocese.

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Please pray for the home-bound of the parish:

Margaret Gladys Abbott, Nancy Arledge, William & Jan Barry, Mary Batteiger, Gertrude Bell, Madelyn Bronkar, Mathilda Clark, Bart & Josephine Cooper, Mary Cowden, Herman Crock, Michael Curtis, Jeanne Dittmar, Frances Feerick, Evelyn DiVincenzo, Betty Fedor, Beverly Foley, Isabel Gilchrist, Mary Ellen Grafton, Florence Herbert, Sandra Honeywell, Patricia Huck, Eileen Johnston, Mike Kline, Dorothy Loewendick, Henry Long, David Macenko, Dolores Mahon, Josephine Marshall, Patricia Perone, Alice Pitcock, Mary Polascak, Mary Postlewaite, Mary Rosta, George and Barb Ridenour, Joe and Barbara Ritchey, Mary Lou Scott, Barbara Schumacher, Loretta Silfko, Theresa Tracey, Theresa Woods, Terri Woods

CHURCH CLEANERS We have a crew of dedicated church-cleaners who work one Saturday morning per month to keep the interior of the church (and sacristy, restrooms, etc.) ship-shape and glistening. More help is needed. If you're willing and able to assist, contact Karen Lyon at karen_lyon@yahoo.com.

Service hours can be credited to students for this work

THURSDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY UPDATE

Bible study will resume April 20 (after Easter), not March 30. This time: Bible Timeline by Jeff Cavins. For more information, contact Mary Baker at (740) 297-5851 or marytbaker@hotmail.com.

Festival News: Planning is underway for the annual St. Thomas Aquinas parish festival, which will take place June, 8-10. We are looking forward to a great festival, but we need help. Our food and children's game booths require many volunteers. Please call or text Amy Nern, (740) 704-5489, if available. Also, we'll be asking for 2-liter soft drinks, gently-used stuffed animals for children's games, and homemade baked goods for the cake wheel. Our next meeting is Wednesday, March 29, 6:00 p.m. in the Parish Center. Anyone who wants to help in any capacity is welcome and encouraged to attend.

CATHOLIC MEN'S MINISTRY: All men 16 and older are welcome to hear a reflection on the true meaning of Christian masculinity by Fr. Don Franks and Deacon David Lozowski, at 7 p.m. Monday March 27, at St. Mary's Church in Nashport. The evening will include a short video, discussion, Eucharistic exposition and Benediction, and refreshments. For more information call Dave Bonifant at (740) 763-4647 or Mike Stickle at (740) 258-3138.

A **HEALING MASS** and service will be celebrated this **Monday, March 20, at 6:30 p.m. at Saint Joseph Cathedral**, 212 East Broad Street, Columbus. Following the Mass, a Service of Healing will begin with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Veneration of relic of the True Cross of Christ, followed by an opportunity for each person to speak individually with a priest and receive a prayers of healing for what they seek; the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick will also be available. The Service of Healing will close with Benediction. All persons who seek Christ's healing are invited – especially those who suffer with physical illness and infirmities, in addition to those in seek emotional and spiritual healing. All caregivers, family members, and members of the medical community are invited as well. Parking is available at the rear of the Cathedral accessible off East Gay Street; handicap accessible elevator is located in the courtyard (west side of the Cathedral) on East Broad Street. **Bi-monthly Healing Masses take place at the Cathedral on the third Monday of the month. During the remainder of 2017 they are scheduled for: May 15, July 17, September 18, and November 20.**

If you have any questions about this special Mass please call the Cathedral: (614) 224-1295.

FAST and ABSTINENCE DURING LENT

"Fasting" means eating just one full meal, and no more than two other meals, both light. It also entails no eating between meals.

"Abstaining" means refraining from eating meat.

- All Catholics aged 18-60 are bound to **fast** on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
- All Catholics 14 and over are bound to **abstain** from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent.

This is one of those years when, alas, St. Paddy's Day falls on a Friday. Since it is not a solemnity for the general Church, the law of abstinence from meat still applies (and don't even think about using tofu). As you can see from the ad on the preceding page, we're having our parish feast the following day. Hold out 24 hours and we'll make it worth the wait.

Please take advantage of our increased opportunities for the sacrament of Penance this Lent. We are now hearing Confessions seven days a week—yes, including Sundays, before the 11 a.m. Mass, in case you hadn't caught it yet. We're also hearing every other day of the week as well, and twice each on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Two of those times are evening hours (Wednesday after Benediction and Friday after Stations). Consider those two penance services in your parish each week!

St. Thomas Aquinas parish is FORMED: go to www.formed.org and enter our parish password **DHDYBY**