

Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church

March 26, 2017/Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday)

PASTOR'S CORNER

The following homily, by St. Peter Chrysologus, occurs in the Roman Breviary every third week of Lent, and it's a wonderful meditation on the interdependence of the three Lenten activities of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

There are three things, my brethren, by which faith stands firm, devotion remains constant, and virtue endures. They are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains, mercy receives. Prayer, mercy and fasting: these three are one, and they give life to each other.

Fasting is the soul of prayer, almsgiving is the lifeblood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them; they cannot be separated. If you have only one of them or not all together, you have nothing. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others you open God's ear to yourself.

When you fast, see the fasting of others. If you want God to know that you are hungry, know that another is hungry. If you hope for mercy, show mercy. If you look for kindness, show kindness. If you want to receive, give. If you ask for yourself what you deny to others, your asking is a mockery.

Let this be the pattern for all men when they practice mercy: show mercy to others in the same way, with the same generosity, with the same promptness, as you want others to show mercy to you. Therefore, let prayer, mercy and fasting be one single plea to God on our behalf, one speech in our defense, a threefold united prayer in our favor.

Let us use fasting to make up for what we have lost by despising others. Let us offer our souls in sacrifice by means of fasting. There is nothing more pleasing that we can offer to God, as the psalmist said in prophecy: A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; God does not despise a bruised and humbled heart.

Offer your soul to God, make him an oblation of your fasting, so that your soul may be a pure offering, a holy sacrifice, a living victim, remaining your own and at the same time made over to God. Whoever fails to give this to God will not be excused, for if you are to give him yourself you are never without the means of giving.

To make these acceptable, almsgiving must be added. Fasting bears no fruit unless it is watered by mercy. Fasting dries up when mercy dries up. Mercy is to fasting as rain is to earth. However much you may cultivate your heart, clear the soil of your nature, root out vices, sow virtues, if you do not release the springs of mercy, your fasting will bear no fruit.

When you fast, if your mercy is thin your harvest will be thin; when you fast, what you pour out in almsgiving overflows into your barn. Therefore, do not lose by saving, but gather in by scattering. Give to the poor, and you give to yourself. You will not be allowed to keep what you have refused to give to others.

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 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

Monday, March 27

Lenten Weekday

8:00am Mary Norris (+)
12Noon Myrna Snider (+)

Tuesday, March 28

Lenten Weekday

8:00am Richard Bowman Family
12Noon Dan Chuhna

Wednesday, March 29

Lenten Weekday

8:00am Marcia Dunkle (+)
12Noon Kay Hamme (+)

Thursday, March 30

Lenten Weekday

8:00am Madison Paul (+)
12Noon William Heil Family

Friday, March 31

Lenten Weekday (day of abstinence from meat)

7:00am In Thanksgiving
12Noon Bob & Bette Mattingly (+)
7:00pm Stations of the Cross

Saturday, April 1

Lenten Weekday

9:00am Tom Quinn (+)

Sunday, April 2

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (PASSION SUNDAY)

5:00pm (Sat.) Betty Haren (+)
7:00am Dolores Heil (+)
9:00am People of the parish
11:00am Dec members K of C Msgr. Dury Council

Weekly Calendar

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

Monday, March 27

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

Tuesday, March 28

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 29

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

Friday, March 31

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, April 1

Faith on Tap (following Stations)

Sunday, April 2

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

Parish Finances

Weekend of March 19

Main collection total\$7,466.38*
Weekly Budget11,538.00
This week's deficit- 4,071.62

Thank you!

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

Upcoming special collections

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

Please remember the parish in your will.

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The Sacrament of Penance (II)

I received some thoughtful replies to last week's piece on the Sacrament of Penance, including some more questions. This one is very practical:

How often are Catholics required to go to confession?

What exactly does the Church teach about this?

Herewith the relevant canons from the Code of Canon Law:

Can. 987 *To receive the salvific remedy of the sacrament of penance, a member of the Christian faithful must be disposed in such a way that, rejecting sins committed and having a purpose of amendment, the person is turned back to God.*

Can. 988 §1. *A member of the Christian faithful is obliged to confess in kind and number all grave sins committed after baptism and not yet remitted directly through the keys of the Church nor acknowledged in individual confession, of which the person has knowledge after diligent examination of conscience.*

§2. *It is recommended to the Christian faithful that they also confess venial sins.*

Can. 989 *After having reached the age of discretion, each member of the faithful is obliged to confess faithfully his or her grave sins at least once a year.*

Strictly speaking, only mortal sins must be confessed sacramentally—and that only once a year. And the reason for that is so that one may make a worthy reception of the Eucharist yearly (during Eastertide). To receive any other sacrament worthily (i.e., to receive grace from the sacrament, rather than compounding one's poor condition), one cannot receive while being conscious of any unconfessed grave sin. So, before someone starts thinking, "oh, confession once a year is enough," consider whether receiving the Eucharist once a year is enough for you. The faithful are encouraged to confess serious sins promptly, without delay. For those striving for a deeper intimacy with Christ and greater self-knowledge, monthly confession is a general rule of thumb.

The once a year target is setting the bar pretty low. The question for anyone who really wants to grow spiritually is, *why would anyone go so seldom?* Of course, one possible reason that immediately springs to mind is the unpleasantness of 'fessing up to Father, but about that I've already written (last week). Many things in life are unpleasant, and we do them anyway. Think of athletes in training (an example St. Paul himself uses). They go through extreme deprivations and exertions for the sake of competing and winning "in the arena." That's just an analogy of a greater competition by far: the spiritual combat we're in as disciples of Jesus Christ. Our "competitors" are not other human beings but, as Paul says, *we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in*

the heavenly places. In other words, our struggle is against dark spiritual forces. Demons who have trained all their energy on trying to turn us against God but their subtle murmurings, as he did Adam and Eve: *Nothing bad will happen if you eat that fruit. God is just petty and envious and controlling. You don't need to pray: you don't need the Church. Break free of all that childish stuff and you will be like God.*

The Church does heartily recommend the confession of venial sins, also. Though venial sins can be remitted in other ways, naming your sins (even lesser ones) is a way of wresting power away from them the power they can hold over us and healing our memory. One thing I find very moving in hearing confessions is how older people can have an astonishing memory of the sins of their youth—speaking ill of others, lying and other forms of dishonesty. Sometimes they're very small sins indeed, like children's quarrels. In some cases the people have been haunted by pangs of conscience over what most people would consider small matters. But they are aware of having hurt others, often deeply, even if it was long ago and even if the people they hurt have long since forgotten the offense. God wants our hearts to be right, and that means detesting our sins even when others may hold no grudge or even remember our faults.

Now, about mortal and venial sin—there is no tablet somewhere that has all mortal sins under one heading and all venial under another. It's not that simple. Many kinds of wrongdoing (lying, stealing, e.g.) can be either mortal or venial, depending on the gravity of the particular case (how much was stolen, and from whom, etc.). Traditionally, the Church has taught that there are three qualities of a mortal sin: serious (grave) matter, sufficient knowledge, and full consent of the will. This means that there's one external criterion—the seriousness of the deed—and then two more or less subjective conditions, namely the knowledge and will of the person who does the action. If you know what you're doing is gravely wrong and you consent to it, it's a mortal sin. If you're in error or ignorance about some relevant truth or if your mind is clouded (say, you've been drugged), or if your freedom is compromised, then your individual culpability will be lessened. Such things should be confessed, anyway, and sooner rather than later, and submitted to the priest's judgment. It's a very dangerous business judging in our own case: the normal person's capacity for self-deception is prodigious. Sometimes we are apt to be very hard on ourselves, but more often than not we tend to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt and interpret things in our favor. There's a kind of "ignorance" that is feigned and thus a lame excuse for not taking care. Knowing or consenting, then we're playing games.



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Understand the ENTIRE BIBLE!



A 24-Part Study Featuring Jeff Cavins



Dates, Times, Location

Begins Thursday, April 20

6:30 PM

Parish Center

Cost/Registration

\$34.95 plus shipping

(shipping costs to be announced)

*****Deadline to register is April 10th*****

For More Information

For further information or to enroll, contact Mary Baker:

Phone - 740-297-5851

Email - marytbaker@hotmail.com

The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation is a fascinating Bible study that will take you on a journey through the entire Bible.

Go deep into each period of salvation history and discover the amazing story woven throughout all of Scripture. Using a unique color-coded system, you will see how all the major people, places, and events of the Bible reveal the remarkable story of our faith.

"I never would have read the Bible if it wasn't for this, and now I simply adore scripture. It has given me such insight into the Catholic faith and helps me to understand its true beauty."

—Kyley Drach



Visit BibleStudyForCatholics.com to learn more!

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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 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

Holy Week Triduum 2017

Holy Thursday, April 13

Mass of the Lord's Supper 7:30 p.m.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament until 10 p.m.

Good Friday, April 14

Celebration of the Lord's Passion 3:00 p.m.

Stations of the Cross 7:00 p.m.

Holy Saturday, April 15

Easter Vigil Mass 8:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday, April 16

Regular Sunday Mass Schedule, i.e.,

7:00, 9:00, & 11:00 a.m.

A Plug for Bishop Robert Barron By now everyone in the parish is probably familiar with FORMED.org, the website where you can have access to great Catholic videos and other digital media. Let me also recommend something else very highly: Bishop Robert Barron's website www.wordonfire.org. He has a blog and all kinds of helpful resources, but I especially encourage watching his videos, which he puts out about once a week, on average. They're very thoughtful, topical, interesting, and often even profound. Bishop Barron combines folksy and deep in a way few can, and that makes him accessible in a wonderful way to people of very different backgrounds. He's one of those Catholic figures who is doing all he can to exploit modern communications media to the hilt, and we should be glad to have him around.

And we all could probably do a better job of using media like that, for the good. Technology by its nature is morally ambivalent—it has only the moral worth of the end to which it's put by its human master, for good or bad. Medical technology can be used to heal, but in the wrong hands it can be used to kill more efficiently. Atomic energy can be harnessed for good, and also to level entire cities. And then there's the Internet: there are some dark and loathsome seams in that mine, yet it's a technological tool and can also furnish great blessings. Many people have become Catholic because of what they've read and seen online. May the Lord help us be clever as serpents and innocent as doves in navigating the perils of our technological age.

And it's not just parents with small children who need caution when handling a tool like the Internet—we all do. The number of people—primarily adult males—who have become habitual consumers of Internet pornography is astonishing. Many have become dependent on that "fix" as on a drug, and marriages have suffered as a consequence and in many cases, destroyed. Yet, as I say, technology is morally ambivalent, and a report back in the mid-2000s revealed that the two most visited types of websites were pornography and religious—and a large subset of those who visited the one kind of website were also visiting the other! Whatever that may say about human nature—we are complicated, fraught beings to be sure—it certainly confirms that technology can be employed for good and bad, the excellent and the depraved. Let's use it for the best, always, while being aware of the toxic stuff flowing around out there. (And it's not just the outright porn sites that are toxic: social media favorites can be veru accommodating arenas for disgusting offenses against justice and charity. Be a discriminating user of such sites.)

But to return to Bishop Barron: check out that website (his videos can also be accessed on YouTube through his channel). He's got a lot of great stuff. And not just his site, but many other Catholic websites are worthy of frequent visits for their discussions on issues of the day, trying to make sense of life in a hostile world, and in general, trying to lead a good Catholic life.

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