

SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH + YORKVILLE

April 14, 2024

Newsletter no. 213

Since the middle of February we have been discussing the sacrament of reconciliation, otherwise known as confession or penance. In last week's newsletter we talked about the so-called penitential books and other writings that were produced from the sixth century on and that were intended to help priests who heard confessions to categorize sins and impose the proper penance on those who had committed them. While penitential books and other such manuals may no longer be in use, the Code of Canon Law, which is the Church's official legal compendium, has a lot to say about the sacrament of reconciliation. There are thirty-nine canons (nos. 959-997) that deal with this topic, and the most relevant of them for us are the following:

The first canon (no. 959) describes the sacrament: "In the sacrament of penance the faithful who confess their sins to a legitimate minister, are sorry for them, and intend to reform themselves, obtain from God through the absolution imparted by the same minister forgiveness for the sins that they have committed after baptism and at the same time are reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by sinning." This definition includes three of the four components of the sacrament that were mentioned at the beginning of our discussion in February—namely, the confession of one's sins to "a legitimate minister" (in other words, a priest); sorrow for those sins, which implies the intention not to commit them again; and "absolution imparted by the same minister." A later canon (no. 981) adds the fourth component, which is the imposition of a penance: "The [priest] is to impose salutary and suitable penances in accord with the quality and number of sins, taking into account the condition of the penitent. The penitent is obliged to fulfill these personally." A "salutary and suitable" penance implies making restitution when a person's sin has harmed others. In the case of theft, for example, that would mean restoring what was stolen; or, in the case of damage done to someone else's reputation, it would mean retracting what was said or done with regard to that person. Thus, this would be part of the penance that would be required of the penitent, and the priest could—or even should—withhold absolution if the penitent refused to make restitution.

In the penitential books, which gave precise instructions regarding penances for various sins, the penance was almost always a fast that could last anywhere from several days to several years. But, in what now must sound shocking to us, a penitent could ask someone else to fast on his behalf in return for a donation. Or a Mass, or a certain number of Masses, could substitute for a fast, but the priest who said the Masses would have to receive recompense for the Masses that he said. This meant, of course, that a person with money could hire someone else to carry out his penance for him. But what kind of penance would that be which sinners didn't perform themselves but had others perform for them! Although no one would think of paying someone else to carry out his penance nowadays, this discredited practice is probably behind canon 981's admonition that penitents are obliged to fulfill their penance personally.

We will continue our discussion of the sacrament of reconciliation from the perspective of the Code of Canon Law in next week's newsletter.

Sincere thanks are due to all those who contributed to the unforgettable celebrations and the decoration of our church from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. For the music, a huge debt of gratitude is owed to Alistair Reid, our music director and organist, and to the choir that he directed, especially our soloists, Elise Brancheau, Melanie Long and Anthony Webb. Working with a small crew, Jordon Carroll masterminded the palm and floral arrangements in the sanctuary and elsewhere. Thanks to Jordon and her doughty crew! It wouldn't have been the same without our eucharistic ministers, lectors and altar servers, and we are grateful to them. The altar servers for Palm Sunday and particularly Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil had to learn new rubrics for those special days, and they learned them marvelously. As for the Easter Vigil itself, our two parishioners who received the sacraments for the first time—Charles Huff and Dana Emery—brought joy to our parish, and for that we thank them with special warmth. Finally, thanks to all those, both parishioners and visitors (some of whom came from quite a distance), who were part of these holy days and who contributed to St. Joseph's by their attentive presence and their generosity.

Father Boniface

Mass intentions for the period from April 13th to 21st

Saturday-Sunday, April 13th-14th

4:00 pm: José Aragones (D)
8:00 am: Virginia Taylor (D)
10:00 am: James Patrick O'Brian (D)
12:00 noon: Susan Miller (D)
2:00 pm (Hungarian): Valarie Kurcz (D)
6:00 pm: St. Joseph's Parishioners

Monday, April 15th

7:00 am: Flora Jarvis (D)
12:15 pm: Nicholas Chrissides (D)

Tuesday, April 16th

7:00 am: John O'Boyle (D)
12:15 pm: Kenneth Feeney (D)

Wednesday, April 17th

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: Therese Berthold (D)

Thursday, April 18th

7:00 am:
12:15 pm: Leonard Kreppel (D)

Friday, April 19th

7:00 am: Elisabeth O'Connell (D)
12:15 pm: James Chambers (D)

Saturday, April 20th

8:00 am: In Thanksgiving to God
12:15 pm: Helena Grant (D)
4:00 pm: Robert Zelasinski (D)

Sunday, April 21st

8:00 am: Virginia Taylor (D)
10:00 am: Patricia Gatens (D)
12:00 noon: Antonia D. Ong (D)
2:00 pm (Hungarian): Peter Geosits (D)
6:00 pm: St. Joseph's Parishioners