

Pope urges bishops to clarify uses of general absolution

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh
Vatican City (NC) — Bishops' conferences should stress that general absolution without individual confession of sins can be used only in cases of grave necessity, Pope John Paul II said April 17.

"In not a few individual churches, cases of abuse have been noted" in this area, the pope added.

Pope John Paul cited canon law which states that general absolution can be used only in very limited circumstances. He said bishops' conferences should "clearly establish" the norms for its use.

The pope, who also criticized the practice of postponing first confession until after first Communion, spoke during a meeting with participants in the April 15-17 meeting of the Vatican Congregation for the Sacraments.

He said pastors should see that "the faithful are not confused" regarding general absolution and individual confession.

Pastors must make a special effort "to make the faithful understand the reasons which justify the need to individually confess serious sins to the minister of the church, even after one has been absolved" through

general absolution, the pope said. Individual confession is not just an obligation, he said, but a "right to a more personal meeting with the crucified Christ who listens, understands, pardons."

The pope also urged that young children receive the sacrament of reconciliation and said that, when approached with the right attitude, the sacrament "does not become an experience of a judgment which condemns but one of a love which pardons."

"How can one not see the great help which the appropriate administration of this sacrament can be, even for children, in the progressive and harmonious development of conscience and self-control, in the acceptance of appropriate limits?" the pope asked.

The pope added that confession is not meant "to engender frustrations or traumas."

Priests should be specially trained to understand the stages of human development and have a correct understanding "of sin and forgiveness, not insisting so much on the seriousness of one's guilt as on the generous response to the limitless love" of God, the pope said.

Trumansburg man jailed after protests against nuclear testing in Nevada desert

A Tompkins County grandfather is fasting in a Nevada jail to save his grandchildren from nuclear war.

Frank Carver, 63, was among 80 protesters charged April 8 with trespassing and resisting arrest after they entered a U.S. Nuclear Weapons Test Site in the desert near Mercury, Nevada, shortly before a scheduled test.

He was arraigned and released, but prompted police to rearrest him by reportedly lying across the roadway and blocking traffic at the test site.

Carver also refused to give his real name or cooperate with police and court officials and so had to be carried from place to place. Sentenced to a 25-day contempt of court sentence, he threatened to begin an open-ended fast. He is scheduled for trial Thursday, May 15, in Nye County Court.

Shortly before his arrest, Carver was said to have read a statement, which said in part: "Years ago I was known by the number 10 as a high school athlete and, though I was never astonishingly successful, it remained a special number and becomes so again at age 63."

"I am John Doe #10, the name given to me by arresting officers here and by which I was tried and convicted in Judge Sullivan's court, Beatty, Nev., for trespass during the Lenten Desert Experience in March, 1985. John Doe symbolizes the namelessness of millions and millions of humans on this planet whose holocaust is prepared here in today's weapons test. I hitchhiked from Trumansburg, N.Y., to support the joint action of Greenpeace, the Great Peace Walk

and the American Peace Test; the purpose of my journey is so my family does not surrender our eight grandchildren to nuclear arms. Even if it means my imprisonment, we will defend them from the worldly and the unworldly forces whose idolatry is nuclear weaponry and whose faith and trust rests in the delusion that our world can survive another Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

In his statement, Carver also said he would begin an open-ended fast to symbolize the urgent need for a nuclear weapons test ban.

Carver retired three years ago from the Ithaca School District, where he was a teacher. He and his wife, Mary, are the parents of 10 children ranging in age from 21 to 35.

According to his wife, Carver has phoned the family several times from Nevada, but she has not spoken personally with him since he left.

"He's been at this (activism) for some time now," she explained. "He's the type of person that if he believes something is right, he follows his mind and conscience no matter what anybody says."

While studying at Notre Dame University in Indiana, during the 1940s, Carver became involved with a Catholic Action group, his wife said. After graduating in 1944, he returned to his family's farm in northern New York state, where he was involved in the "back to the land" movement. Carver and his family later moved to Trumansburg, where he took a teaching job.

"He has always been intensely involved in the Church, but since he retired it's become his whole interest," Mary Carver said.

Brother Flanagan to lecture on strife in Northern Ireland

Brother Patrick T. Flanagan, S.J. will be the featured speaker at a program sponsored by Hibernian Division #2 on Friday, May 16, at 8 p.m. The lecture will be at the Knights of Columbus on Thurston and Brooks roads in Rochester.



Brother Flanagan will discuss his views on the current situation in strife-torn Northern Ireland. Immediately

preceding his lecture, the Hibernians will hold a brief memorial for the 16 men executed 70 years ago this month following the Easter Rising.

Brother Flanagan spent 1977-78 working and living with families in West Belfast. He has written extensively on his experiences for both local and national publications. Before coming to Rochester, he worked as co-director of the Jesuit Office in New York City. He is an alumnus of St. John's and New York Universities.

The lecture is open to the public and will be followed by a question/answer session.

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 20:19-23; (R1) Acts 2:1-11; (R2) 1 Corinthians 12:3, 7, 12-13.

Pentecost completes the Easter cycle, so an Easter gospel is used in the liturgy.

On Easter eve our risen Lord appeared at last to His apostles. Fear had locked the doors of the room where they had gathered. Fear had also locked out the words our Lord had previously spoken to them about His resurrection.

Fear can be a good thing: it can alert one to danger. But very often it can be a not-so-good emotion if we let it get out of hand and allow it to isolate us from others or to blind us to the truth — the love and fidelity of Christ for and to us. Often, fear is the child of sin.

However, fear was no barrier to the risen Lord. He walked through locked doors and unlocked hearts with His *Shalom alachem* — "Peace be with you." On the night before He died, He had promised this peace (John 14:27).

What turmoil, what misgivings, what inner guilt must have racked the hearts of the disciples on the first Easter day! All but John had abandoned Him on Calvary. He had appeared to the women and to others the whole day long — but not to His apostles! Had He abandoned them? Written them off?

On the evening of that first Easter day, He at last came to them and scattered the doubts and the inner misgivings with, "Peace be with you." It was as if He said, "All is forgiven you. I can, for I am He against whom you sinned; and I am He whose death has given me all power over sin and death. See my battle scars." Forgiveness dispelled their fear, and joy possessed their hearts.

In this context, when the disciples had experienced the need of forgiveness and tasted the peace and joy consequent upon it, our Lord instituted the sacrament of reconciliation. A second time, He said, "Peace be with you." This time it was given to them that they might give it to others through the forgiveness of the sins of others. "As the Father had sent me — as a savior from sins — so I send you."

Then He breathed upon them. This

was the pentecost of the disciples. That breath of the Lord was the Holy Spirit — His gift to them. "Receive the Holy Spirit," He told them. For as God had breathed new life into the first man, so the breath of God, His Holy Spirit, would breathe new life, new power into His disciples — the power to forgive sins.

John Paul II called this act "one of the most awe-inspiring innovations of the Gospel! He confers this power on the apostles also as something which they can transmit..."

How tragic for those who neglect this sacrament! For "they are held bound." Sin binds, shackles, enslaves, haunts, and taunts the sinner, locking us up with excessive fears and doubts.

John Paul II in his Pastoral Exhortation "Reconciliation and Peace" (Dec. 2, 1984) pointed out that the root cause of all the divisions that shatter the world's peace and unity today can be laid to one cause: sin. The recent *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* (April 5, 1986) said: "Man's sin...is the radical reason for the tragedies which mark the history of freedom. In order to understand this, many of our contemporaries must first rediscover a sense of sin" (No. 37).

Pius XII said, "The sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin." And John Paul asked, "Is it not true that modern man is threatened by an eclipse of conscience?...By a numbness of 'deadening' of conscience."

Who would ever have dreamed that one day Americans, so civilized, would defend, much less legalize, such perversities as abortion, homosexuality and hard-core pornography? In fact, so many see nothing wrong here. "Judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason."

The restoration of a proper sense of sin is the first step needed to face the grave spiritual crisis hanging over modern man today, like a sword of Damocles. One of the most effective ways to secure this restoration is by having frequent recourse to the sacrament of reconciliation.

Obituary:

James E. Barnett, 58, past K of C grand knight

A trustee and past grand knight of the Finger Lakes Knights of Columbus, James E. Barnett, 58, died Monday, April 21, 1986, at F.F. Thompson Hospital in Canandaigua. A parishioner of St. Mary's Church in Canandaigua, Mr. Barnett planned to retire in May after 42 years with the Burroughs Corporation.

"He was a deeply religious man," said Carl H. Colcord of Canandaigua, a longtime friend. "He was the epitome of somebody you'd be proud to know and have as a friend."

Born in Buffalo, Mr. Barnett grew up in Irondequoit and graduated from Aquinas High School. He began working for Burroughs even before graduating from high school and eventually became an electronic field engineer. He also served in the U.S. Navy and Air Force dur-

ing World War II. He and his wife, the former Corrine Merkel, were married in 1950 at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Irondequoit. Mr. Barnett was active in his parish, serving as a Eucharistic minister and member of the renovation committee.

In addition to his wife, Barnett is survived by four sons, James M., Thomas J., Martin J., and Daniel J., all of Canandaigua; four daughters, Patricia Krierst of Gorham, Suzanne Bruen of Stanley, Connie Ealey of Morin Heights, Quebec, and Nancy Reilly of Manlius. He is also survived by a sister, Theresa Root of Osteen, Fla., and seven grandchildren.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at St. Mary Church, Canandaigua, and burial was in Calvary Cemetery.

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