



# The St. John's Communicator

## February 14, 2020

### Roser's Reflection . . .

Dear Friends,

Our Online Book Club has been reading the book *Thank, Praise, Serve, and Obey: Recover the Joys of Piety* by Pastor William Weedon. On pages 88 and 89, Pastor Weedon writes the following: "Sadly, many Lutherans today have never experienced this private Absolution, which their ancestors in the faith treasured as such a great gift. This is such a shame! In fact, the Lutheran Confessions flat out assert that it would be wicked for the private Absolution to be taken out of the Church. Yes, we have been wicked. And the result is that we have left many Christians all alone to struggle with the sin in their lives, rather than bathing them in the comfort of personalized forgiveness addressed to them in their tangible struggles." (Weedon, 88-89).

Most Lutherans have at times heard the phrase "that's too Catholic." It has most commonly been spoken when pastors have tried to return their congregations to more traditional Lutheran practices which had been previously eliminated. During the middle of the Twentieth Century, many Lutheran leaders in the US tried to "scrub" their congregations of those practices which were distinctive to Lutheran, Anglican, and Roman Catholic parishes. This was a part of an ongoing struggle among many Lutherans to distinguish themselves from Roman Catholics in order to declare "we're Americans while those Catholics are immigrants." I'm sure that it sounded really convincing being spoken by someone with a German or Norwegian accent! Lutheran seminaries and pastors in the latter part of the Twentieth Century (when I attended seminary) tried to undo the damage that these changes had caused by reinstating the practices which had been previously deemed "too Catholic."

One of the congregations that I served in Pennsylvania lamented that their pastor in the 1950's convinced them to remove the beautiful life-sized crucifix from Germany that had hung for 6 or 7 decades in their chancel. This beautiful piece of church art was replaced by a plain wooden cross suspended from the ceiling by two cables. No one knows where the crucifix ended up. As heart-breaking as this was it pales in comparison to the loss of individual confession and forgiveness!! In my ministry, I have worked to rekindle this practice in my congregations. Because this is a sacred rite performed in secrecy, parishioners who do not come for confession have no idea that it is happening. I cringe to tell you that it has been very common over the years for me to hear people's confessions who were confessing sins that they had been carrying as a burden for twenty and thirty years. Sometimes over those many years they would feel forgiven and then the doubts would creep in. In those cases, tears filled my eyes as I showed them what is taught in John 20 and announced accordingly that the word of forgiveness that I pronounce upon them is from God Himself and nothing can undo it. I have never been more confident of anything in my life than the forgiveness won by Christ upon the Cross!

It has been beautiful for me to see the relief play upon their faces as they received God's word of forgiveness - unburdening their hearts and minds forever. It has also been nauseating for me to witness this knowing that they should have been unburdened decades ago if the Lutheran churches would have been doing their job. I have read about editions of the Small Catechism that were printed in the Twentieth Century in America that moved right from Holy Baptism to the Sacrament of the Altar - completely eliminating Individual Confession and Forgiveness. How Luther would have assailed them for robbing the people of such a miraculous gift from God!

We do well to apologize to the people of God for our gross negligence, and to do everything possible to educate our members on this great treasure. As Pastor Weedon notes, Lutherans have retained the practice of Individual Confession (private confession) for the sake of the Absolution (word of forgiveness). If you are carrying burdens that you yearn to be free of, please read John 20:19-23 and give me a call. We often try to hide our sins, deny our sins, and even justify our sins - but these are not the ways to handle sins. The God-ordained thing to do with sins is to drag them into the light where they lose their power over us and we can hear that declaration from the pastor that they have been drowned to death in Christ's shed-blood and washed away. Hear what the Holy Spirit spoke through King David of old, "As distant as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our rebellious acts from us." (Psalm 103:12). If you are able to believe this - fantastic; if you're not, give me a call.

In Christ Jesus,

*Pastor*

#### Celebrate Tomorrow!

Oscar and Mildred Wedel and their family would like to invite members of St. John's to a celebration of Oscar's birthday. God has blessed Oscar with a long life; he will turn 100 on February 17. There will be an "open house" with a light lunch from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm on Saturday, February 15 (snow date is February 16) in the church basement. Come help us celebrate!



If someone has a coat rack they aren't using, I would very much appreciate having one in our Church Office.

Thank you.

Berta Eddy,

Administrative Assistant



### Who Wants to Win a Culver's Gift Card?

We have a number of avenues we use to keep you apprised of the opportunities and events here at

St. John's: The monthly Messenger, the weekly Communicator, the Facebook page, the Web page, the Sunday Bulletin, and (first and foremost) the Worship service. Many times we will repeat the information in more than one of the venues in an effort to make sure the information is reaching everyone. But how can we tell if the announcements we're providing are getting through and being remembered?

#### How about by playing a little game each month!

The last weekend of the month, watch for a list of four questions whose answers can be found in the one or more of the Messenger, Communicator, Sunday Bulletin, Facebook page, Web page, or during the Worship Service during that month. Submit the answers either in writing or by email to the church's Administrative Assistant by noon the following Friday, and a winner will be drawn from the entries with the correct answers. The winner gets a gift card for some delicious Culver's food!

### Youth Event

Sunday, Feb 23

12:30 p.m.

Our Savior, Roscoe

The St. John's School Staff gives thanks for Dawn Roser, who kindly provided lunch for them on Wednesday, February 12th.

Erin and Jon Pingel will host a Youth Event showing of The Passion of The Christ movie.

This 2004 blockbuster Christian film covers the passion of our Lord in the years and days leading up to Jesus' crucifixion.

The film will be shown on Saturday, March 7 from 3:30-7:30pm at their home at 879 East Erin Circle, Beloit, WI.

There is limited space so please RSVP to Erin by Sunday, February 23. Her cell is 608-290-6159.



Did you know if you miss a regular Sunday Worship Service, you can watch it in its entirety on YouTube!

Just use this link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCw9-9SrlBpZwdB2bPj-7Stg>

### In the Event of Inclement Weather

**Snowy days and other winter weather conditions can present motorists with risks that should be avoided whenever possible. To that end, we urge our members to exercise caution when choosing to attend worship and other parish activities during such conditions. Since we have no way of alerting all worshipers of cancelations, I do not cancel worship services. Of course, exceptions to this policy will be made when there is a safety concern in the building, itself. However, I do not want worshipers and worship leaders to "gamble" with their safety, and perhaps their lives, in order to attend worship when roadway conditions advise against it. This is to say, regardless of the weather, I will always be present to offer worshipers God's Word through Scripture reading and preaching, and the Lord's Supper. This does not mean that anyone else is expected to be present when weather conditions present serious challenges to your safe arrival. In terms of other activities, we will make every possible effort to inform members of cancelations.**

#### Those serving the Lord and His people this week:

**Elder:** Chris Peterson  
**Acolyte:** Kayla Thompson  
**Music:** Bill Cunningham  
**Communion:** Chris Peterson, Randy Bauling  
**Altar Guild:** Nancy Nohr & Dolores Steil  
**Greeters:** Larry and Marlene Nolte  
**Ushers:** Mahlon Hemerley, Levi Bartz, Harold Bauling, Kevin & Richard Rindfleisch, and David Koebernick  
**Counters:** Beulah Knutson, Sandy Saunders  
**Sound Technicians:** David Koebernick, Chris Peterson, and Justin Behm

#### Those serving the Lord and His people next week:

**Elder:** Ron Kassal  
**Acolyte:** Maddy Hoenig  
**Music:** Bill Cunningham  
**Communion:** Ron Kassal, Wally Prins  
**Altar Guild:** Jeanne Ludeman  
**Greeters:** Harold and Garnet Bauling  
**Ushers:** Mahlon Hemerley, Levi Bartz, Harold Bauling, Kevin & Richard Rindfleisch, and David Koebernick  
**Counters:** Beulah Knutson, Sandy Saunders  
**Sound Technicians:** David Koebernick, Chris Peterson, and Justin Behm

*Ash Wednesday*

*February 26, 2020*

*Worship Service 6:30 p.m.*