

Dear friends,

Today the bishops of Washington state e-issued a special alert about a Washington State Senate Bill (SB 5280) that will be voted on by the state House of Representatives. The original version of this bill maintained the clergy-penitent privilege in the confessional while making clergy mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect outside the confessional. However, **the latest version of the bill, if passed without changes, would require priests to break the seal of confession.**

Our bishops support many aspects of this bill, but the seal of confession is an essential part of our faith & worship. To violate the seal of confession would be a violation of the rights of every Catholic. So seriously does the Church take this that any priest who reveals information obtain in the confession is excommunicated, prohibited from receiving sacraments, and prohibited from celebrating them.

I ask that every member of our community **take time right now to contact your state representatives** and urge them to preserve the clergy-penitent privilege. You can find information about our representative, along with talking points, and an online letter that can be sent on your behalf at the link below. **Please also spread the word!** The seal of confession is both vital to our practice of the faith while also providing an environment where priests may urge offenders to turn themselves in.

Finally, I want to assure you all that priests are dedicated to preserving the seal of confession, no matter the threats it may face – many saints given up their freedom and even their lives rather than betray the sacrament of reconciliation.

Let us together witness to the sanctity of this sacrament given to us by the Lord, safeguarding this opportunity to come to Him and receive His forgiveness.

Yours in Christ,  
Father Maurer

Take action now at the Washington State Catholic Conference website:  
<https://www.wacatholics.org/be-an-advocate/action-center>

Please also share this video from Bishop Schuster encouraging us all to take action:  
<https://vimeo.com/813401577>

P.S. Another witness is to *go to* confession! Confessions may be heard tonight (5pm-6pm) and tomorrow (3pm-4:30pm). There will also be several hours of confession time next week: Good Friday (noon to 3pm) and Holy Saturday (3pm-4:30pm).