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April 5, 2020

A Message from Fr. Howard

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

As I write this column, I take note that this is the second weekend that we have not been able to gather together for the public celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. By the time you read this column, it will be the third weekend. I know that this absence has been painful, challenging, and difficult for many people, and it has been for me as well. As I have mentioned to several parishioners over the past week, it is a pain like none other for a Pastor to be “cut off” from the people, and I look forward to the time that we can all gather together again. Nonetheless, please be assured that I am united with you in prayer, and that I continue to privately offer the Mass on a daily basis, as well as other prayers, for the benefit of each of you and of your families. Unless instructed otherwise by the Archbishop, I am also continuing to maintain the regular confession schedule for both parishes. In addition, I am happy to schedule confessions by appointment, especially since, as with a Sacramental Communion, it is important to be in a state of grace before making a Spiritual Communion. I am usually reachable at either the Pastoral Center or at the Rectory to assist you with this or to assist you with any prayer requests and other spiritual needs.

In this column I would like to share with you some brief words of consolation, which is based upon the Holy Father’s meditation during the prayer service on 27 March 2020. If you are interested in reading the full text of Pope Francis’ reflection, you may access it at www.vaticannews.va.

In this meditation, the Pope reflected upon the calming of the storm in the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, and, in fact, I would recommend praying over this passage (Mk 4:35-41). In particular, the Holy Father drew attention to the first verse, “On that day, when evening had come ...” (Mk 4:35). Pope Francis reflected that we are in the midst of the evening ... in the midst of a period of darkness that essentially has encapsulated our very lives ... in the midst of a darkness in which we might find ourselves to be afraid, lost, and caught off guard like the disciples who were “caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm.” He recognized that this storm “exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities.” At the same time, this darkness ... this turbulent storm ... has helped us to realize that we are in the same boat. We are all in this together!

Indeed, it might be rather easy for us to recognize ourselves in the story of our Blessed Lord calming the storm on the sea, especially during such a turbulent time in our lives and in our world. In this meditation, Pope Francis also offered a brief reflection on Jesus Christ’s attitude in this Gospel scene ... how our Blessed Lord places his trust in God the Father ... how he questions his disciples, asking, “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” (Mk 4:40) ... how he more than anyone cares about the disciples and cares about us ... how he is calling us, like the disciples in the boat, to faith. The Holy Father also pointed out that faith is not so much believing that God exists, but rather, it involves coming to Him and trusting in Him, especially during this time. To such an extent, Pope Francis said that we are being called upon “to seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing* ... a time to choose what matters ... a time to separate what is necessary from what is not.” In short, this is a time for us “to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.”

In the challenging and consoling words given by Pope Francis during his reflection, we are invited to invite Jesus Christ into the boats of our lives, and to hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them as we remember that the Lord “brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.” The Holy Father also provides us with some very beautiful words in this reflection:

We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love. In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side.

As Pope Francis further reflected, “Embracing his cross means finding the courage to embrace all the hardships of the present time.”

My dear brothers and sisters, this is a time that we have been invited to embrace the cross of Jesus Christ, and to place our faith in him by seeking him out and trusting in him. As I have mentioned to others, this can be one of the most spiritually powerful Lenten seasons of our lives, that is, if we allow it.

The Fifth Sunday of Lent marks the beginning of the last phase of Lent, which was traditionally known as Passiontide. During this period, there is the custom of veiling crosses and images in these final two weeks of the Lenten season, and some churches continue such a tradition today. And, such a practice, in a sense, constitutes a “fast from images” that serves to foster greater focus and concentration on the great essentials of our Lord’s marvelous work of Redemption. Although our statutes and images are not veiled, our beloved churches are, in a sense, veiled. To such an extent, this is perhaps both a challenge and an opportunity for us to focus greater, and to concentrate, more deeply on the Holy Mass and Sacramental Communion ... to intensify our desire for it ... so that when we are able to gather together again for public liturgies, we will be able to enter into this marvelous mystery with an even greater appreciation of how blessed we truly are as sons and daughters of Almighty God.

During this time, we join ourselves in special way to the Passion of our Lord. Yet, as with every Lent, we know how the Passion will end ... with the Triumph of the Cross ... with the triumph of life over death. My dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us together place our trust God, to remain steadfast in our faith, and to not be afraid, for we remember that God is with His people!

Please be assured that I continue to pray for you, and please remember to pray for me.

Over



Spiritual Communion

(Since you are unable to receive Holy Communion during this time, you can make this Prayer of Spiritual Communion, a source of grace in the midst of difficulty.)

**My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.**

**Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.**

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.



You can livestream Mass (closed door)

**from the Cathedral of St. Peter-in-Chains on the Internet daily by going to
www.stpeterinchainscathedral.org**

scroll down to

Live-streamed Mass Schedule

(Mass is streamed live Monday-Saturday at 8 a.m. and Sunday at 11 a.m. or watch anytime.)

Holy Week at Home

The following link may be something that families might like to do at home during this Holy Week beginning with today, Palm Sunday.

[https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3788244/Holy_Week_at_Home%20\(1\).pdf](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3788244/Holy_Week_at_Home%20(1).pdf)

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Bringing the Faith Home

With kids out of school and public Masses and religious education classes temporarily suspended, parents may feel cut off or overwhelmed with how to teach and share the beauty and joy of the Catholic faith. To help with this, the staff of *The Catholic Telegraph* has identified 7 fun resources to help parents and children learn and live their faith at home. Find these at <https://bit.ly/CTFaithHome>.

Holy Week from the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains

For your planning purposes, the following is the Holy Week schedule at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains.

These will all be livestreamed:

- Tuesday, April 7, 1:00 Chrism Mass (Archbishop Schnurr, celebrant)
- Thursday, April 9, 5:00 Mass of the Lord's Supper (Archbishop Schnurr)
- Friday, April 10, 5:00 Good Friday of the Lord's Passion (Bishop Binzer)
- Saturday, April 11, 5:00 Easter Vigil (Archbishop Schnurr)
- Sunday, April 12, 11:00 Easter Sunday (Bishop Binzer)

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio have extended the temporary suspension of all publicly celebrated Masses/liturgies at least through and including Sunday, May 3. The Bishops of Ohio dispense the Catholic faithful who reside in their respective dioceses and all other Catholics currently in Ohio from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass during this period. (See attached.)

Palms: Due to the public health concern surrounding COVID-19, and the recent instruction by the Holy See, the blessing of palms will not occur on Palm Sunday in parish churches. There will unfortunately be no blessed palms available for pick up.

Good Friday: This Friday, April 10, is a day of abstinence from meat and also a day of fast, that is, limited to a single full meal. The law of abstinence binds all Catholics 14 years and older. The law of fasting binds all Catholics from their 18th birthday until their 59th birthday.

Good Friday Collection for the Holy Land has been moved to a second collection on September 12-13 weekend.

Easter Flowers: Since we do not know when we will be permitted to resume the celebration of public liturgies, all orders for Easter flowers have been cancelled. If you made a donation for the purchase of Easter flowers and you would like your donation to be returned, please call or email the Parish Office and your donation will be returned to you. Thank you.

Eucharistic Adoration will not be held during April at either parish.

Confessions: At this time Father Howard will be hearing confessions Thursday evenings at St. Louis Church beginning at 7 p.m. and on Saturday mornings at St. Nicholas Church from 9-9:30 p.m., or by appointment.

Stations of the Cross books are available at each church if you would like to pray the stations on your own time. The churches are open during the day if you would like to stop in for personal prayer.

There are lists available with shut-ins at the entrance of the churches if you would like to send Easter greeting cards.

Are you celebrating a significant wedding anniversary in 2020? 25, 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, or 75 years...Go online to <http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/ministries-offices/family-life/wedding-anniversary/> to request a certificate from the Archbishop by April 12. If you are married 50 years, the date of the Golden Anniversary Mass is August 1 at 4:30 p.m. at either St. Peter in Chains Cathedral, Cincinnati or at Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Dayton.

Century Farm Awards: Catholic Rural Life is seeking families who have farmed the same land for 100 years or more and are eligible for the award. Winners will be recognized at the Rural Urban Farm Mass on July 16. For more information, go to catholiccincinnati.org/ministries-offices/catholic-social-action/rural-life-ministry/. Applications are due by April 20.

Baptism & Beyond Class will be held Monday, June 22 at 7 p.m. in the St. Nicholas Church basement. All couples are to attend before baptism. Call 419-582-2531 to register.

CCD News

First Communion at our parishes is tentatively rescheduled for June.

May Crowning at our parishes is cancelled this year.

CCD classes are cancelled for the rest of the year.

Please call or email the office to register your child who is in kindergarten at the present time for first grade for next year.

Want to stream movies through your Internet service? FORMED has movies for your viewing pleasure that can also help you grow in your Catholic Faith. There are movies for kids and families. To register go to nsoregion.formed.org and sign up.

Thank you to those who are continuing their weekly contribution to our parishes!

Contributions

Since all public Masses and liturgies have been temporarily suspended, the question has arisen regarding how a person might continue to offer their gift of financial participation and support to our parishes, so that they, like every other household, can continue to meet their expenses.

For those members who would like to continue to financially participate in their support, Parish envelopes may be dropped off at the Osgood State Bank, in their night deposit at any time, or mailed to:
The Pastoral Center, P.O. Box 9, Osgood, Ohio 45351.