

From the Pastor
March 22, 2020
The Fourth Sunday in Lent
Laetare Sunday

Beloved Faithful of St. Paul the Apostle,

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you this week. As you know, our little parish has had to take drastic measures in response to the spread of the COVID-19 (coronavirus). Unfortunately, these measures are not only material; they affect our spiritual lives, the public practice of our faith, the praise we want to give to our God and Master. But as our parish patron reminds us, We know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints. (Romans 8:28)

Few of us have experienced a situation like this in our lives. Suddenly everything has changed! In the blink of an eye, what we took for granted is now very special. Some feel threatened and insecure by a virus that has overturned public life around the globe.

We know that God rules all things with His almighty power! With our words we have always confessed this truth. Now, however, facing an inescapable threat, this truth is imposed upon us and it challenges us to learn it in reality. He, God, is the Master! We depend on Him. He alone knows how the crisis will develop. We will find out how it will affect us in time.

Even though we take all necessary precautions, for now, plenty is and will always be out of our control. We are in God's hands! Feeling insecure and aware of our powerlessness, how will we respond? Some, completely overwhelmed by fear, turn toward themselves: they empty the shelves in the stores, thinking of no one else. It is striking how egoism and selfishness blossom in such circumstances and how we become imprisoned by a merely natural approach. While some panic, others remain unconcerned. Many refuse to acknowledge the fact of their human frailty. They do not want to hear the Lenten advice: Remember you are dust and unto dust you shall return.

As Catholics we can take the threat as a real spiritual challenge. Let us learn to humble ourselves. We should turn to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary more fervently, giving ourselves in His hands. Let us recognize that God is in charge of this trial and ordeal confiding in Him with total faith. Even though He can enter our lives with a glove of iron, we know it is His loving hand that touches us.

DIRECTIVES

At St. Paul's we will adhere to the Diocesan Directives and the legitimate authority of the federal and state Government:

All Weekday and Weekend Masses will be suspended until (as of this writing) Tuesday, April 14th. All the Mass intentions that you have arranged will be honored since I will be offering Holy Mass each day as has been the practice of my whole life as a priest. I have missed offering Mass 3 times in my 39 years as a priest: once while traveling by train to Lourdes, and twice after surgery in Mercy Hospital. I have kept a record of every Mass I have offered. Today, it was my privilege to offer Mass for the 18,233rd time. In each Mass I bring all your intentions "for protection and deliverance".

1. Our beautiful Church will be open daily from 9AM until 2PM. Please visit the Church and pray before the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle and visit the shrines of Our Lady and the saints. Light candles as a sign of our prayer. (The Chapel will remain locked because of its small size).
2. Confessions will be heard on Saturdays from 4 to 5pm. As you know our confessionals do not provide the so called “face to face”. There is a fixed grill covered with material that is stronger than any mask. So, the Sacrament of Penance will be available.
3. Parents of Religious Education children have already been informed of the postponement of First Penance and First Holy Communion.
4. Finally, although we face this unprecedented crisis, the material needs of the Church are still a reality. Perhaps now is the time to consider e-giving or to mail your envelopes to the Church or drop them at the office or in a basket in the Church. Please go to our parish website www.stpaulsbrookville.org There one can find the simple directions for e-giving.
5. Although no bulletin will be published, the Pastor’s Letter will be available on the website
6. The blessed palms will be available on Palm Sunday for the faithful to come to Church and take them to their homes. I have confidence that no one will hoard the palms.
7. In some large parishes, the Mass is being streamed. (I do not even know what that means). Since our parish is a small one with limited resources and personnel, we will not stream the Mass. However, a televised Mass is available several times each day on EWTN and the Catholic Faith Network.

May God Our Lord show unto us all His Great and Abundant Mercy, and may Our Blessed Lady, Health of the Sick, intercede for us. Please try to pray the Universal Prayer (attributed to Pope Clement XI) each day. It is printed below.

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda

The Universal Prayer (attributed to Pope Clement XI)

O my God, I believe in Thee; do Thou strengthen my faith. All my hopes are in Thee; do Thou secure them. I love Thee with my whole heart; teach me to love Thee daily more and more. I am sorry that I have offended Thee; do Thou increase my sorrow.

I adore Thee as my first beginning; I aspire after Thee as my last end. I give Thee thanks as my constant benefactor; I call upon Thee as my sovereign protector. Deign, O my God, to conduct me by Thy wisdom, to restrain me by Thy justice, to comfort me by Thy mercy, and to defend me by Thy power.

To Thee I desire to consecrate all my thoughts, words, actions, and sufferings, that hence forward I may think of Thee, speak of Thee, willingly refer all my actions to Thy greater glory, and suffer willingly whatever Thou shalt appoint.

Lord, I desire that in all things Thy will may be done, because it is Thy will, and in the manner that Thou wilt.

I beg of Thee to enlighten my understanding, to inflame my will, to purify my body, and to sanctify my soul.

Give me strength, O my God, to expiate my offenses, to overcome my temptations, to subdue my passions, and to acquire the virtues proper for my state.

Fill my heart with tender affection for Thy goodness, hatred of my faults, love for my neighbor, and contempt for the world.

Let me always remember to be submissive to my superiors, kind and courteous to my inferiors, faithful to my friends, and charitable to my enemies.

Assist me to overcome sensuality by mortification, avarice by alms-deeds, anger by meekness, and tepidity by devotion.

O my God, make me prudent in my undertakings, courageous in danger, patient in afflictions, and humble in prosperity.

Grant that I may be ever attentive at my prayers, temperate at my meals, diligent at my employments, and constant in my resolutions.

Let my conscience be ever upright and pure, my exterior modest, my conversation edifying, and my comportment regular.

Assist me, that I may continually labor to overcome nature, to correspond with Thy grace, to keep Thy commandments, and to work out my salvation.

Discover to me, O my God, the nothingness of this world, the greatness of Heaven, the shortness of time, and the length of eternity.

Grant that I may prepare for death, that I may fear Thy judgments, that I may escape hell, and in the end obtain Heaven, through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.