

Dear St. Dominic parishioners,

I just read a reflection that brought home the point that at the first Easter there were no packed churches, there were no altar flowers nor robed choirs singing “Alleluia”. Rather, there was an empty tomb and a small group of followers huddled together in fear. The reflection went on to provocatively propose that this coming Holy Week and Easter in the time of the COVID-19 crisis may actually be the closest we ever get to the experience of that first Easter in our lifetimes. It is a thought truly worthy of consideration and prayer.

One thing I know is this: even in the uncertainty and fear of this time Christ is still risen and Christ is still Lord! Nothing can change this fact and this is what unites us even as we have to be apart and separate.

Yet, this will be a strange Holy Week and Easter for all of us. We will not be able to gather, pray and celebrate as we usually do yet I encourage all of us to walk these days with our Lord and know that our Lord deeply desires to spend these days with us, his followers.

A few notes that I would like to share as we enter into Holy Week at St. Dominic Parish:

The Masses for Palm Sunday (8 am), Holy Thursday (7 pm), Good Friday service (7 pm), Easter Vigil Mass (7 pm) and Easter Sunday (8 am) will all be livestreamed and will not be open to the public out of concern for the health and safety of all. Livestreaming allows people the option of watching live or viewing later. The livestream will be available on our parish website and Facebook page. Having said this, I fear that every church in the country may be livestreaming at the same time those days so you may experience delays and buffering if you watch in real time. Just be aware of this possibility and know that, if need be, you can watch later.

Due to concern regarding contagion and community spread, we will not be placing palm branches out for people to pick up. Rather, we will be sharing via our website and Facebook page a family prayer for the placing of greenery for Palm Sunday. Please keep an eye out for this.

As requested by the Bishop we have been exposing the Blessed Sacrament on the main altar daily. This has been done to allow people the option of private prayer in the church. This exposition will end at 6:00 pm on the evening of Holy Thursday. On

Easter Sunday we will have the Blessed Sacrament exposed from 9:30 am to 5:00 pm. After Easter Sunday we will reevaluate this practice depending upon any possible developments in shelter in place regulations.

Stations of the Cross prayer booklets are available for use in the vestibule of the church and people are encouraged to individually pray the Stations.

Some suggestions to enter prayerfully into these days of Holy Week: pray with the Scriptures set for each celebration during Holy Week, pray the Divine Mercy Novena which begins on Good Friday, pray the Jesus Prayer, find a cross or crucifix in your home that you can adore during the Good Friday service, continue to pray for our Church and our world in a special way at this time.

Please know that Fr. Emmanuel and I are praying daily for our entire parish community. I am grateful to our parish and school staff who continue to find creative ways to continue their ministry during these days. I am also grateful for all of the parishioners who have continued their financial support of our parish and diocese. If you are not already doing so, please consider signing up for our parish online giving. Continued financial support of our parish is critical at this time. People are also welcome to mail in or drop off parish envelopes and donations if you wish to support that way.

Due to the increase in local cases of COVID-19 and community spread we have locked the front doors of the parish administration building and have limited ourselves to only having one staff person in the office at a given time. Please call or email if you have any business with the parish office rather than just stopping by.

I come back to the one thing I know. Christ is risen and Christ is Lord! This is the truth that unites us and this is the great truth we celebrate during Holy Week and Easter!

May God continue to pour out his blessings upon our St. Dominic Parish!

In the hope of Christ,

*Fr. Michael*