



Embracing God's People • Equipping Disciples • Accompanying Believers

March 13, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Faith:

As I write these words in the face of the public health threat that is COVID-19, or “Coronavirus”, I find myself torn between two seemingly contradictory poles. On the one hand, I like to think of my world as one in which there is a certain order. Things are in their place. On the other hand, there is chaos in my world. There are things that happen over which I have no control, and I am reminded of my need for other people in my life, and of course, I am reminded of my reliance on God. The more chaotic things are, the more I am inclined to either double-down on my efforts to bring order from chaos, or to trust that God will remain faithful and true even amidst the chaos. I am reminded of Proverbs 3:5-6, which reads: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths.”

As I listened to the President announce the restrictions on travel from Europe to the U.S. earlier in the week, I couldn't help but think of my parents and siblings in Ireland. They're safe and well, but being apart from them isn't easy in a time of challenge and crisis. My heart and my prayers also turned to my Lourdes family, and to all those whom you hold dear, both near and far. We find ourselves now in a time of challenge and crisis which for the moment seems to be so great that we can't see around or through it just yet. This inability to see resolution can lead to fear and anxiety, with which some people struggle more than others. I want you all to know that I, the other priests in the parish, as well as our parish ministry leaders, are committed and resolved to pray daily for each and every one of our parishioners. Our prayers are also accompanied by some practical efforts.

Here at Lourdes, we are carefully monitoring and preparing responses to various scenarios and situations as they emerge. I am not relying on my own wits, but drawing on the resources being made available to us through the coordinated efforts of Archdiocesan officials who are in daily communication with health and other officials from the State, County and National bodies combatting the health threat to our communities.

Between the announcements in church in recent weeks, and the modifications we've made to how we do what we usually do in church during mass, you'll have noticed that we're already adapting to our new and unfolding situation.

In the immediate moment I can say that we have increased our attention to cleaning and sanitizing surfaces that are commonly used and touched. Increased precautions include more thorough cleaning, as well as increased staffing devoted to the work. If you see this taking place, please don't be alarmed. We have no

known incidents of infection with coronavirus at the parish, but we would rather be proactive in our approach than not. At the same time, we don't want to cause any panic or inappropriate concern.

Recognizing the grave cause of the current public health emergency, Archbishop Gomez has dispensed all the Catholic faithful of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and all Catholics currently in the Archdiocese from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass for the weekends of March 14-15, March 21-22, and March 28-29.

As we go forward, we are canceling non-essential activities such as meetings that could be replaced with phone calls or emails, or even some prayer gatherings with which we are familiar and are used to taking for granted. We will consult with those who participate onsite, but in making such decisions, we will adhere to the guidance offered by Archdiocesan officials, and we will follow the recommendations of local civic and health authorities.

Going forward, feel free to check out our website for how we here at Lourdes are responding to the circumstances in which we find ourselves <https://ollnr.weconnect.com/>. As the State issues guidelines, and revises them, we, too, will be updating our responses to align with the guidance we receive.

A thought, too, goes out to those in our community who are perhaps most vulnerable, either because of advanced age or because of pre-existing medical conditions. I can only imagine the fear that may be heightened in these days. I encourage everyone to give care to the more vulnerable, and perhaps offer to assist in simple tasks such as grocery shopping, prescription fulfillment, etc.

Later today we will update information concerning immediate upcoming events such as Sunday Mass schedule, scheduled gatherings, etc.

Please be mindful that I pray blessings on you and those dearest to you, and appreciate your prayers for your parish leadership and their families.

Fr. David