



# Our Lady of Lourdes

Embracing God's People • Equipping Disciples • Accompanying Believers

August 1, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On Wednesday last the pastoral staff of our parish came together for a pastoral staff meeting. Of course, we used a video-conferencing platform for our gathering, adapting as we do to the circumstances of our times.

After we prayed together, and shared faith together, one of our agenda items was to share thoughts and reflections on a recent document that was published in Rome, relating to the nature of parish life. We just began to read and reflect on the document, which we'll continue to reflect on in later meetings. It's full title is quite a mouthful:

*"The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the Church"* (If you managed to read all of that without gulping, you're a better believer than I am.) The title of the instruction notwithstanding, there were some very insightful ideas contained in the brief document, and it gave the pastoral staff some opportunities to share thoughts and insights as we considered the document and its contents in relation to our own parish here at Our Lady of Lourdes.

Personally, I was taken by the novel ways in which the document spoke about the parish with a contemporary language that I haven't seen before in a Roman document, at least not in relation to the nature and structure of parish. It spoke of the traditional understanding of parish, but then also acknowledged that mobility and technology have rendered the traditional geographical understanding of parish somewhat inadequate.

"The territorial configuration of the Parish, however, must confront a peculiar characteristic of our contemporary world, whereby increased mobility and the digital culture have expanded the confines of existence. On the one hand, people are less associated today with a definite and immutable geographical context, living instead in "a global and pluralist village"; on the other hand, the digital culture has inevitably altered the concept of space, together with people's language and behaviour, especially in younger generations."

The document then goes on to observe:



“It is noteworthy how such cultural changes and the evolving territorial ties are fostering within the Church, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, a new discernment around community, “which consists in seeing reality with the eyes of God, with a view to unity and communion”. The whole People of God must urgently embrace the Holy Spirit’s invitation to begin the process of “renewing” the face of the Church.”

It occurs to me that as parishioners, stakeholders in Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, you may well want to take a few minutes to read the relatively short [document](#) for yourselves. If you’ve got comments or thoughts on what you read, feel free to reach out in an email to myself, or indeed to any of the pastoral staff.

### LA County COVID-19 Numbers - Personal Realities

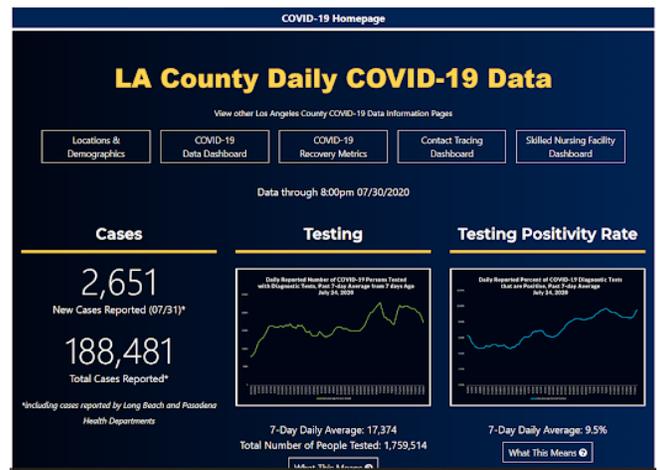
At first blush, the recent numbers relating to COVID-19 in Los Angeles County are not at all encouraging. With a daily increase in cases of 2,651 and with COVID-related deaths numbered at 69, day on day, the likelihood of the current restrictions being relaxed anytime soon grows less probable. As the numbers go up and down, it can be difficult to understand their significance for us. According to the LA County Department of Public Health, last week’s average of daily deaths was just under 38, but a week later, the daily average is climbing.

This past week has also been a time when a few of our parishioners have shared with me that their own lives and the lives of their families have been directly affected by COVID-19. This is as good a reminder as any that all these numbers, while we struggle with their significance for ourselves, are actually representative of people like ourselves. Yesterday I visited an LA Times web page that recounts [the pandemic’s toll](#) as it narrates the stories of lives of people who are no longer with us. Reading through the stories was a sure reminder to me of the very human toll in terms of lives lost, or ordinary men, women and children. So once again I renew my invitation to you all to please keep in your prayers the intentions of those who are grieving the loss of parents, spouses, children and friends. Pray too for those who are living with COVID-19, and who are struggling to regain their health.

As always, I remind and encourage everyone to remain vigilant. If you must gather with people who are not living within your household, do so with care, observing appropriate social distancing, wearing masks, and exercising the habits of healthy hygiene and hand-washing.

### Deacons to Be Ordained Priests

Next Saturday, Archbishop Gomez will ordain 8 transitional deacons as priests for service in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. One of those to be ordained, **Filiberto (Fili) Cortez**, will be taking up his first assignment here at Our Lady of Lourdes in the near future. For those who would like to view the ordinations taking place at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angeles in Los Angeles next weekend, the event will be livestreamed. Point your device’s browser to <http://lacatholics.org/ordination> at 9am on Saturday, August 8th.



Screenshot captured 8/1/2020

To get to know a little more about our incoming Associate Pastor, I invite you to browse over to [The Angelus](#) in the course of the coming week, where they are providing profiles of the soon-to-be-ordained in the days leading to their ordination. Those who receive the print edition can enjoy the profiles in print.

Closing out this little segment on our newly ordained, I ask that you keep our new Associate in prayer. Feel free to craft a prayer of your own, use one of the many prayers for priests that can be found online, or avail of the following:

*Gracious and loving God,  
we give you praise and thanks for the gift of our priests.  
We call these men and set them apart for service in our community,  
in the name of Jesus Christ, our High-priest..  
Through their service we come to enjoy your presence  
made real for us through the celebration of the sacraments.  
We ask that you help Fr. Fili to be strong in his vocation.  
Ignite in his heart a fire of zeal and love for your people.  
Gift him with the wisdom, understanding and courage  
he will need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.  
Grace him with a reverence and a passion for building up your kingdom.  
Fill him with a love for your word,  
and bless him with the gifts he needs to spread the Gospel of Jesus,  
your Son, and our savior and brother.  
Comfort him in those moments when he is alone in his care for your people.  
Give him the grace to grow ever stronger  
as a sign of your comforting presence among your people,  
and let him find joy in becoming a sign of your incarnate grace.  
We ask all of this in the name of Jesus Chrst, our Lord and Savior,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

### **Outdoor Liturgies on the Way**

As you know from prior letters, we have been working toward plans that will make possible the celebration of some of our liturgies outdoors. We have already developed a solid set of protocols for gathering as safely as we reasonably can, and it won't take much to adapt those for outdoor liturgical gatherings.

As I also noted before, we anticipate making arrangements for early-morning liturgies before temperatures rise too much above the mid-70s, and perhaps late evening liturgies, when we can avoid direct sunlight and avail of the usual breeze that rises. Avoiding direct sunlight is a challenge given the orientation of our campus and the location of its buildings, however, we can safely gather on the church patio for weekday masses, and in the grotto area by the Moran Center for Sunday masses. Early morning and late evening offer the best opportunities to avoid direct sunlight and the more intense heat of the day.

I would like to invite your participation in a brief and simple [survey](#) to help us in the final steps of our planning process for a Sunday Mass outdoors.

<https://forms.gle/49nmAoFvkSH8fJbA6>

Partially closing some of the parking lot for seating only, will provide enough space for people to bring deck-chairs, shades, blankets, etc. We can erect an altar near the grotto, and plug in to the outdoor sound system which is built into the Moran Center. It might all sound a little chaotic, but I think those who are willing and who want to make this happen, will find a way to make things work. As we did when we initially re-opened the Church building, we will adapt as need suggests, and we will gradually move into what works well for our overall community.

At this time, the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** or **Confession** continues to be made available in person. Because of recent COVID-related developments, and in light of continuous changes to county protocols, confessions now take place outdoors and by appointment. Please email [parishcenter@ollnr.org](mailto:parishcenter@ollnr.org) or call (818) 349-1500.

As we move into this new arrangement, we will also begin to move toward the celebration of other sacraments outdoors, so please continue to view the parish website for the most current information.

### **Parish Office Hours**

The recent setbacks related to the spread of COVID-19 have not only impacted our ability to conduct liturgies in the Church building, but they have also impacted our staff, and the parish staff's ability to conduct its work on-site. Just as our initial re-opening of the Church building has been dealt a set-back, so too has our re-opening of the parish office. Consequently, we have arranged to return to remote staffing of the office. As before, anyone calling during regular office hours (8:30am - 5:30pm) is likely to receive a call-back pretty quickly. Likewise, email inquiries are being addressed regularly.

Staff, including myself, continue to be available for meetings with parishioners by phone or by zoom video-conferencing.

### **The Further Adventures of Mollie Loftus**



Many of you continue to enjoy the exploits of my god-daughter, and have taken delight in following along each week with an update on her shenanigans. This past week saw Mollie enjoy the opportunity to visit a farm near her home. While Dad (my brother) remained home with Anna, Mollie and her mom got to head out for their outing together.

Since her birth, Mollie's mom and dad have read stories to her every evening at bedtime. Every time I travel home and bring gifts for my god-child, I always include a book (or two or three), to support this exposure to reading.

Many of Mollie's books tell stories about animals. Indeed, some of Mollie's favorite stories for the longest time, told of George the Giraffe. Other stories include tales of perhaps less exotic

animals. In light of all these animal stories, it's no surprise that Mollie seems to have developed a real interest in, and love for, animals.

When Mollie came to visit last year on the occasion of my 25th Anniversary of ordination, we introduced her to my little cat, Zacchaeus. She ran towards him on her first day, but "Z" is far too clever, however, and he bolted away from her eager, outstretched, grasping arms! Mollie's reaction was adorable to me. She turned to me with tears in her eyes to tell me "He doesn't like me". I reassured her that he would learn to love her as soon as he got to know her, but that I've taught Zacchaeus not to talk to strangers until he gets to know them.

Mollie enjoys visiting with her animal friends, but with the passing of time she seems to have learned to meet them on their own terms more and more.

I guess that's a value I've been working on for most of my own life, and one I continue to strive to live into... Firstly, learning to accept myself as God has made me to be... and then learning to meet others on their own terms, just as God made them to be.

I take my inspiration from the gospel narratives that depict Jesus always seeming to meet people "where they're at". This Sunday's gospel affirms that whenever Jesus met folks, and wherever he met them, "*his heart was moved with pity for them.*" It's not always easy to meet others without projecting our needs and hopes and wants on to them. But just as Jesus teaches me, and as Mollie seems to be growing to understand for herself, it may not always be easy, but it is the Christian way.

God's continued blessings on you all.

*Fr. David*