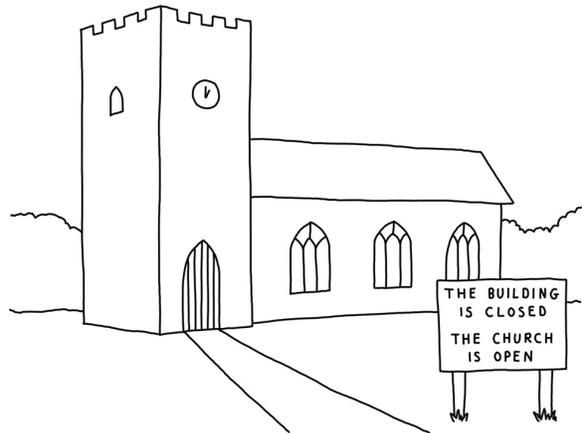


November 14, 2020

Brothers and Sisters,

Often, I find that it's in the small things that goodness and graciousness make themselves so readily manifest.

As pastor, I try to keep up with the goings-on of most things taking place around and about the parish. This is particularly true if something is taking place or happening on the parish campus. I keep an eye to the automatic on and off times of the lights, internal and external. I monitor the movements of people as appropriate. I take note of the efficacy of the sprinkler system. These regular day-to-day things are what they are.



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In addition, there are an incredible number of things that go on without too much attention on my part, but only because others see needs, step up and just take care of them. I keep abreast of them, but I know enough to trust the goodness and care of God's people. There is a silent brigade of volunteers who are constantly at work for the good of our community without making any fuss. They take care of things because they have chosen to serve the community quietly in so many ways. These people go about their work without anyone explicitly noticing their efforts.

Sometimes, the cooperation of a group of people makes the effort more manageable. Just this morning, immediately following the mass that was live streamed from Church, a couple of parishioners dropped off and placed some baking soda in the vestry closets. They've been doing this for a long time, as a small part of their contribution to community life. It serves to keep our liturgical vestments "fresher". There are others who quietly enter the vestry, take the soiled vestments and tend to their cleaning, returning them just as quietly as they removed them. Others continue to tend to the altar linens. Still others keep an eye on the candles used at the altar, tending to their care in case they burn too low, or unevenly. The candle that stands sentinel at the Blessed Sacrament Chapel has been religiously tended to throughout these past months. The flowers and shrubs that surround and adorn the church are cared for diligently. The altar "ware" is regularly cleaned. Changes to environment, in keeping with liturgical feasts and seasons, are subtly undertaken.

All of these things may seem "small" against the backdrop of the larger concerns of our world, but taken together, they serve the greater purpose of preserving the quality and consistency of our worship during these days of upheaval. These contributions to the life and well-being of our parish community are as significant as they are unsung. So today, I want to lift up and honor all

our parishioners - you know who you are - who get on with being church, who live lives of quiet and committed discipleship without any expectation of recognition or favor, and by whose efforts we all enjoy a better experience of worship here at Our Lady of Lourdes. I've used the above image before, but it's good to be reminded that while both are important, there's a distinction to be made between gathering *in* church and actually *being* church. It's for each of us to determine which is most important for us.

Awaiting the Fulfilment of the Kingdom of Heaven (Rev 3.0.17)

"I never got your weekly email this week."

"The website isn't working."

"I can't get into the Zoom room."

"I couldn't hear anything. There's something wrong with the sound"

"I keep seeing last Sunday's mass on the website instead of this Sunday's."

"I tried three times to pre-register and finally just gave up."

With our parish having to pivot to the much-more-intentional use of technology because of COVID-19, we have faced into the abyss of our technological poverty. At times it's incredibly frustrating. At other times all I can do is laugh at myself as I blunder my way through different "fixes". When I get notes from folks who are struggling with tech as much or even more than I do myself, I feel oddly comforted. That's my consolation of not being the only one kicking in.

On the other hand, as the pastor, I want to try to make sure that we're doing all that we can reasonably do to help and to serve those who are reaching out to us for zoom events, for live streamed liturgies, for anything in which technology is involved. The reality is that we don't have full-time tech people on staff, and our use of technology is much like everyone else's, in that we're all trying to figure out and make it work for us.

Sometimes, here at the parish, we goof. There's no denying it. It's part of being human. I have to confess that I, myself, am one of the biggest goofers on staff. This is a constant reminder to me that we haven't yet arrived at the fulfilment of all things... our tech skills are not perfected... (yet). At other times, we are as frustrated with third-party applications as everyone else is. Sometimes things happen that are beyond our control, or beyond our efforts to remedy. Like many of us, I imagine, we get confused when we press a button or click on something and whatever it is we thought we were doing seems to go surprisingly awry.

To my point, however... I want to thank everyone who has supported and helped staff to learn, to grow, and to make things technologically better. Thank you to those who inform us about broken links on our web pages. Thank you to those who alert us when sound or pictures aren't coming through on zoom or on livestream. Thank you to those who email us back to let us know that you'd accidentally hit your mute button. Thank you to everyone who shows patience and consideration when we goof. Thank you to those who shared their zoom experience with us and helped us zoom better. Thank you to those who stepped up to share their gifts and insights related to live streaming. Thank you to everyone, for taking the time and energy to learn new computer skills, and learn new ways of engaging with and being engaged as the people of God here at OLL. We're in this together, and our efforts in the office are only made better by the feedback and supportive ideas that we receive, as well the offers to assist and share expertise that are happily accepted.

Msgr. Peter continues to improve and recover following his hip procedure. This past week he began to wander outdoors, to walk with the assistance of a cane, and to engage once again in some of the activities that he's been missing. He's making great progress, and continues to appreciate your prayers and thoughtful well-wishes.

Preparing to Celebrate Thanksgiving

There are **two** virtual interfaith events that are planned in anticipation of the celebration of Thanksgiving this year.

On **Sunday, November 22**, at 4pm, the Valley Interfaith Solidarity Network will be hosting a virtual Thanksgiving Prayer Service with the theme: "It is Good to Give Thanks (Ps 92) Even in Difficult Times". Twenty-seven clergy representing forty-nine congregations and organizations (including OLL) from across the Valley are participating in this year's event.



The event will run from 4pm to 5:15pm, and access may be requested by clicking on the [RSVP link](#) ahead of time.

The following evening, on **Monday, November 23rd**, here at Lourdes at 7pm, we will be hosting a modified interfaith prayer opportunity together with our local partners in the community, Temple Ramat Zion, Northridge United Methodist Church and the Islamic Center of Northridge. The event will be livestreamed on Monday evening, and all those interested in joining the wider community in prayer at this particular time, are invited to tune in. More details next week.

Worship in the Time of COVID-19

Our Sunday Schedule at this time (11/08/2020) is as follows:

- 8:00am - Outdoors, in-person
- 9:00am - Indoors, live stream
- 10:00am - Outdoors, in-person
- 11:00am - Indoors, live stream
- 1:00pm - Indoors, live stream, Spanish

In these days, we continue to observe protocols developed for our parish to ensure compliance with the guidance we have received from both the LA County Department of Public Health and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. We will be observing all our usual protocols which progressively mitigate the chances we might unknowingly communicate an infection to others:

- Wash **hands** frequently (Sanitize on-site)
- Ensure your **mask** is properly in place, covering nose and mouth (minimizes our droplet spread)
- Repeatedly engage in **symptoms checks**
- **Maintain** a minimum of 6' of **distance** between individual households.
- **Pre-register** for outdoor Sunday Mass (make it easier to be contacted by parish staff in the event of an outbreak associated with Church)

WEEKDAY mass, Monday through Friday, takes place at 6:30am on the Church Patio. Usual protocols are followed, with an adaptation to the pre-registration protocol.

Mass is live streamed Mon.-Sat. at 8:30am: <https://ollnr.weconnect.com/livestream-mass>

The **SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION / CONFESSION** at Church continues to be “by appointment” for the time being. While LA County remains in the “Purple Tier”, this is the most workable arrangement. However, in light of the upcoming **Advent Season**, we may supplement this with an additional “drop in” opportunity, even though it is possible, if not probable, that we won’t have returned to the “Red Tier” by then.

UPCOMING & ONGOING EVENTS

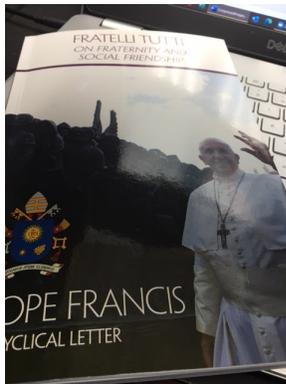
THIS SUNDAY, November 15, we are busy getting into some of our wonderful annual traditions here at Lourdes.

From 10am to 12noon we are hosting a **Thanksgiving Meal “drive-through/drop-off”**, during which we are collecting non-perishable food items for distribution through **MEND**, the **Guadalupe Center** and the **Rescue Mission**. A list of suggested items is available [here](#).



We are also working on our **Annual Giving Tree, beginning this weekend**. Stop by Stroup Hall, collect a giving tree “ornament”. Then, on November 29 and December 6, look forward to dropping off your gift for the children and families of our community who rely on our help and support at this time of the year. More information is available [here](#).

Fratelli Tutti Reading Group



Last Monday, November 9th, we launched a virtual reading group, which will continue into the coming weeks. The subject matter of the group will be the latest encyclical letter of Pope Francis, entitled “*Fratelli tutti*”. By way of preparing for participation in the group, copies of the printed text can be ordered online at the [USCCB website](#) or at other online booksellers. Alternatively, the document can be found online at the [Vatican Website](#), and a [PDF of the document](#) can be downloaded for free.

Virtual gatherings take place on Monday mornings at 9am. To reserve your “seat” in the group, email [Karen Akana](#). As moderator of the group, Karen will share the ZOOM information with participants directly.

“**O Come, All Ye faithful**” will be an evening of family Advent Fun and Prayer. Members of the community are invited to attend a night of prayer and fellowship as we prepare our hearts and homes by making and blessing Advent Wreaths. ALL are welcome to attend. Plan on joining us on Tuesday, November 24, 6:45-8:00 pm on ZOOM. Check out the [parish website](#) for more details.



The Further Adventures of Mollie Loftus

I confess to a certain ambivalence this week with the news of increased and climbing COVID infection numbers. I've shared in other emails of my hopes that we'd be back in our Church building for worship before Thanksgiving, and certainly before Christmas. Our Parish School submitting a waiver request embodied the hope of our return to on-campus, in-person, education. Developments in LA County (and beyond), suggest these hopes being fulfilled look less and less likely. I am reminded of how much I miss, and yearn for, the sight of the faces of the people I was so used to seeing in Church. I long to hear the voices of our community lifted in prayer and full-throated in song, in praise of God, and of children playing on our yard. I struggle with the inadequacy of our (my) efforts with funerals, and sacramental moments which ordinarily would be cause for gathering and reflection, celebration and mourning. This week had reminders of what is not.



And yet there were also reminders - not a few of them - of what is... Encounters with people that were (surprising) occasions of goodness and grace... Meetings with staff and others who have been thinking about how we might do this or that during the holidays to reach out to and support some of the more vulnerable in our community... Planning for liturgies that won't be everything we'd wish, but which can still be significant, and focused on the hopes and realities of God at work in our lives.

While I am aware enough not to succumb to the shadows that always seem to lurk at the edges of circumstance these days, I am consistently blown away and dragged back to focus not on my own immediate concerns, but rather to a place where I can see that what is given to me to do is blessing. I am given to understand that the world is filled with the goodness and grandeur of God. And above all else, as you have heard me say many times, God is always faithful and God is always true. Sometimes it is just enough for me to remember this abiding truth.

This faithfulness and goodness is seen in how I recognize people reaching out to one another and looking after one another with love and care. It is evidenced in the unlooked-for text message and email of support, encouragement, and an anticipation of getting together again sometime. People have been sharing stories of their experiences and I see the joy, grace and beauty of humanity writ large in their lives, and I praise and thank God for this.



I enjoyed some video-chat with Mollie this week... she played, danced, sang, interrupted conversations, and generally melted my heart. Her sister, Anna, kept trying to grab the screen that showed my face, and stuff it into her dribbly little mouth. My nieces brought great joy to me this

week. These moments and the pics that came to me speak of the ordinary and the importance of the ordinary they portend. Eating and really enjoying dinner... spending time together... and ultimately curling up in bed with Lion, Owl and Monkey to sleep in the security that loving parents and home provide.

In these images I see the goodness of God who blesses us with so much in our lives, and I wonder do I fully enjoy (with gusto) all that God places before me for my good. Do I really "lick up" every last morsel of goodness from the plate that is my life?

And when was the last time I let family, friends and compatriots explicitly know that I appreciate the times we just enjoy together, whether working on something together, or enjoying a meal or an adult beverage over zoom in these days, or shooting the breeze, or just hanging out for the sake of hanging out? The gift of presence is not one to be taken lightly, and can have very positive impacts on both the giver of the gift as well as the one receiving the gift.

And finally, to rest secure in the knowledge of the goodness of God... To share all that we are and have with others, knowing that God's grace in our lives is never going to run out, because God is always faithful and true, and desires only our blessing. The truth is that our blessing is one of abundance, not of scarcity. Scripture testifies to it, and Jesus affirms it over and over again. This allows us to make room in our places of comfort and security for others.

Be blessed, friends, secure in the knowledge and love of God made flesh in our discipleship of Jesus.

Fr. David