



# Our Lady of Lourdes

Embracing God's People • Equipping Disciples • Accompanying Believers

November 28, 2020

Brothers and Sisters,

Once again we enter upon a new Church year, as we celebrate the first Sunday of Advent. We leave 2020 behind, and enter upon the Year of Grace 2021.

I know that “year of grace” is not how most of us might characterize 2020. I’ve seen all sorts of memes ranging from the witty to the sublime, all indicative of a desire to just move on from a year marked with so much upheaval. I think it was last April when I saw my first “let’s move on from 2020” meme. Still, I can’t help but give voice, to the abiding faithfulness of God throughout.



This morning’s first reading, the final week-day reading of the Liturgical year offers an image:

“An angel showed me the **river of life-giving water**, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the street, On either side of the river grew the **tree of life** that produces fruit twelve times a year, once each month; the leaves of the trees serve as **medicine for the nations.**”

If ever there was an appropriate image for our days, this one that speaks of God’s healing flowing into our lives, has to rank right up there.

Amidst all the talk these days about vaccinations, we look also to the healing we need in the deeper places of our lives that have little or nothing to do with COVID-19. This is a time of the year for reflection on our lives and for engaging our better selves in and for our families, our communities and our world. Fresh from our celebrations of Thanksgiving, when we naturally share with the world our sense of blessing and goodness, Advent offers us a time for self-reflection and affirmation of that goodness, along with an encouragement to continue to grow into the holiness to which God calls each of us.

## **Advent Reconciliation**

Because of the restrictions in place relating to the public health orders, we will not be joining in our traditional Communal Penance Service this Advent. Our primary means of approaching the sacrament at this time is by simply calling or emailing the parish office and making an appointment with one of the parish priests. While LA County remains in the “Purple Tier”, this will continue to be the most workable arrangement.

Nonetheless, because this is a time of the year in which we are accustomed to making the extra effort to share in the sacrament, we want to expand the possibility of this happening by supplementing confession by appointment with having priests available to hear confession on the Saturdays leading up to Christmas.



**Priests will be available for Confession/Reconciliation 3-4 pm** at the Moran Center, and they will remain available until all penitents have had the opportunity to enjoy the benefit of the sacrament. Those wishing to avail of the sacrament are encouraged to be proactive and to make the necessary personal arrangements for its timely celebration. A review of the [protocols for Confession](#) in a time of COVID-19 is **recommended**. (**NOTE:** The Protocols indicate confession from 4-5pm, **please note the 3-4pm timeframe for Advent instead**)

### Christmas Poinsettias

Advent is that time when we also begin to think of our Christmas floral decor in Church. Would you like to have flowers placed in the Church this Christmas to honor a loved one? For a donation of \$15 per poinsettia, per person, these beautiful plants will adorn the altar for our Christmas season. Anyone who wishes, may collect their poinsettia at the Parish Center during the week following January 10th. If you wish to participate, please provide the information in our [online form](#) before December 17th, 2020. Each plant will be tagged with the name of the person you choose to honor, and their names will be included during the mass intentions throughout the season of Christmas. Call or email the parish office with any questions. 818-349-1500 / [parishcenter@ollnr.org](mailto:parishcenter@ollnr.org)

### OLL Thanksgiving Celebrations

This year our celebration of Thanksgiving began on the Sunday before Thanksgiving Day, when our parish joined congregations and faith communities across the Valley for a prayer service sponsored by the Interfaith Solidarity Network. A recording of the event is available on their [website](#).



The following evening, OLL hosted our our more local interfaith prayer service, shared with Temple Ramat Zion, Northridge United Methodist Church, and the Northridge Islamic Center. This, too, may be enjoyed in [video](#) on Our Lady of Lourdes Vimeo Channel.

On Thanksgiving morning itself, at 9am, a group of parishioners gathered on the parking lot where we celebrated Eucharist together. The beautiful November morning saw our little but energetic congregation learning to “sing” with our bodies, as movement and gestures replaced our voices in giving God thanks and praise for all his blessings.



We also livestreamed a liturgy from Church at 10am, which featured a video reflection that was specially prepared for the day. The brief reflection begins at time-stamp 49:38 on the [video](#) of the liturgy which was presided over by Fr. Fili.

## Looking Ahead - Christmas

If you would like to share a **current seasonal photograph** of yourself and/or your family beside your **Christmas tree**, your **crib/creche**, or in your living room, to be included in a video we are preparing for Christmas, please email them to [awing@ollnr.org](mailto:awing@ollnr.org) **before December 15th**. We hope to include images of our parishioners as we prepare a video for sharing at our Christmas livestream mass.

## Updated Health Order

LA County Department of Public Health yesterday announced [additional modifications](#) to its health orders to go into effect on this coming Monday. Cutting to the chase, it seems the new modifications will not impact our current activities here at Lourdes with respect to worship.

At Lourdes we continue to exercise care and vigilance, and even though many of us are more than a little jaded, we nonetheless continue to make our sacrifices for the good of the broader community. We are confident in the practices and protocols we have in place and it is good for us to occasionally review them for ourselves. It's worth remembering that the protocols we have in place were developed with the understanding that we are doing all we reasonably can to *mitigate the chances we might unknowingly communicate an infection to others*. This is distinct from efforts people may take to prevent themselves from getting infected. Our efforts are an act of **service toward our neighbor**. To that end we observe the following:

- **Pre-register** for outdoor Sunday Mass (make it easier to be contacted by parish staff in the event of an outbreak associated with Church)
- Wash **hands** frequently (Sanitize on-site)
- Ensure your **mask** is properly in place, covering nose and mouth (minimizes our droplet spread)
- **Leave a parking space** between vehicles (to avoid breaking social distance as we return to our cars at the same time)
- Repeatedly engage in **symptoms checks** (taking personal responsibility for self-care and care of others)
- **Maintain** a minimum of 6' of **distance** between individual households.

Our **Sunday Schedule** at this time (11/21/2020) continues to be 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

**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>

While I have not received any further instruction or guidance from civil or church authorities suggesting we may need to further modify our public worship, should circumstances change, I will be sure to communicate with everyone promptly. I encourage people to constantly check the parish website for updated information.

## Together in Mission & “Giving Tuesday”



This Giving Tuesday, why not consider “Together in Mission” as the beneficiary of our goodness and generosity. The undertaking of “Together in Mission” is more vital than ever in these days. While we have all had to adapt and shift in order to continue our mission and ministry here at Lourdes, so too other parishes in less fortunate circumstances than ours are really struggling. Please consider giving today to support the poorest

of our schools and parishes in the Archdiocese. *If you choose to give, don't forget to note that your gift is to be applied to Our Lady of Lourdes, Northridge, in fulfilment of our 2020 goal.* Thank you for your consideration, and continue to pray for the school and parish communities that rely more than ever on Together in Mission in these unprecedented times.

## Annual Giving Tree



**Drive by/Drop Off** for our annual Giving Tree is taking place **this Sunday between 10am and 12:30pm**. If you're still looking to pick up an “ornament”, come on by and pick one up, and there's still time to drop off your gift next Sunday, December 6. On behalf of 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](#).

**A CHRISTMAS FOOD DRIVE** is taking place on **next Sunday, December 6th** at Stroup Hall. Non-perishable food items are welcome, and a [list of items](#) is available for ideas on the parish website. Also, we received word this week that gifts of men's socks would be most welcome.



## The Further Adventures of Mollie Loftus

This week saw Mollie make a debut on our livestream, here at OLL. Many people have remarked to me that they enjoy reading of her exploits, and the reflections that she prompts in her uncle all these miles apart. I have reason to suspect that this might be the only part of the weekly letter that many people read at all! 😊

Along with the rest of the family, Mollie, too, has been experiencing increased restrictions and modifications to behavior relating to the public health response to COVID-19. People in Ireland, too, have been struggling with outbreaks of infections and the concomitant quarantines, hospitalizations and deaths.



This week I was marvelling at how well little ones adapt and move on. I'm grumbling about not being able to go out for dinner, or kicking myself for forgetting to put on my mask and having to go back into the house to get it again. Mollie, by contrast, seems to take all these things in her

stride. When anyone she's not familiar with comes close, she knows to put her hands up in front of her and say "Social distance! Social distance!" She accepts that she can't go on play-dates as easily as she used to. Her behavior at home is typical for a three-and-a-half-year-old... occasionally angelic, often demonic. She enjoys those occasions when there's a family outing in the car to go for a hike, or a visit to a local farm to see the "sheeps and donkeys". During the livestream from OLL on Thanksgiving morning, I had given the family a heads-up that Mollie had a small part in the special video, and so they were all tuned in. I have to tell you all that Mollie was nonplussed when she saw Fr. Fili and remarked "Come on, Uncle David, you are late!" Still, when her moment came at the end of the video reflection, she did a little twirl at home in front of her parents, realizing that she had done something good, though perhaps not fully appreciating how or what. It was enough for her to see herself, and to know that her family (including her Uncle David) were all thrilled and delighted for her. How will we ever learn to put adequate language on all we experience as our hearts are uplifted by this child who brings so much into our lives?

So we learn to adapt, and to get on with our lives. We begin to familiarize ourselves with opportunities to take enjoyment out of whatever blessings come our way. We endeavor to be of service to one another and to our neighbors in new ways. We remember what we used to do, and we consider what we can do. We explore ways to do differently, at times creatively. We adapt. We grow.

Occasionally we are prone to throw an adult temper-tantrum, to vent on someone or something, and to unleash our frustrations on someone... anyone... We find someone or something to blame for impinging upon our behaviors or our freedoms. Our sense of being inconvenienced, and even oppressed, gets the better of us and we have to let it out somehow.

There is no doubt that it can all be very wearying. Yet, we remember the heroism of our doctors and our nurses, those who stand and care for our loved ones, our neighbors and our friends, especially when we can't be present to hold their hands or give them comfort because of the virus. We remember the scientists and technicians, the vast army of people the world over who are and have been working for months on vaccines. We hold in our prayers those whom we know who have had their livelihood impacted or taken completely away. We reach out to them with compassion and care and love, and we remind them of our being there with them, supporting them and lending them our strength... strength born of the hope that is ours.

And there is much to hope for, as St. Paul reminds us:

"we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (Rom 5:3-5)

So once again I find myself considering all that you are and do with and for one another, and for those whom we don't even know, personally. Thinking on our involvement in supporting local charitable groups and outreach organizations, 'Operation Gratitude', our 'Giving Tree', our food drives... Thinking on our recent work with the local Jewish Temple, the Islamic Center and the Methodist community across the street... Thinking too on the words of encouragement and prayers of support shared with myself, with the priests of the parish, and with the entire parish staff, my heart is filled with gratitude, and this weekend's second reading is so appropriate:

“Brothers and sisters:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always on your account

for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus,

that in him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge,

as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you,

so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift

as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son,

Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Cor 1:3-5)

God remains faithful and God remains true. Be blessed, friends, secure in the blessing and love of God in one another.

Happy Advent.

*Fr. David*