



Embracing God's People • Equipping Disciples • Accompanying Believers

December 05, 2020

Brothers and Sisters,

I spoke with Bishop Gerry on the phone this morning. When I asked how he was doing, he remarked that he was “up and taking nourishment”, and so felt like he had it better than many! I enjoy his banter, and not to be outdone, I responded he’d better keep doing that, because he’s going to wake up one day next week and it’ll be Easter! Of course, I jest, but it does serve as a reminder, nonetheless, that time moves along. I found myself earlier this week struggling to keep track of the days. For some reason, Tuesday was my preferred day of the week. I seemed to want it to be Tuesday most days of this week. I had no particular reason for that, that I’m aware of.



There’s a lot going on in these days, and there are many efforts being embarked upon today where effects won’t be immediately apparent, but whose results will be well into our future. This is true in our parish, in our families and in our world. It prompts me to reflect on so much of the way I receive news reports these days that tell of COVID-19 numbers - infections, hospitalizations, deaths - the reports with which we’re all far too familiar by now. But alongside those numbers, I also read reports of vaccines being prepared for distribution, and of ongoing work around the world to distribute the much-anticipated game-changer in our efforts to combat the pandemic.

It at least appears that there has been an unevenness and lack of clear messaging and concrete information which can help us make informed decisions. This has made it difficult for us all, and this difficulty is exacerbated by an ongoing erosion of public trust. We live in a time where “facts” are “negotiable”. But right now, in our local community, we are entering upon a particularly precarious time in which we are facing choices that will have implications beyond the immediacy of a given moment. Our hospital ICU capacity is approaching capacity in LA County. In my lifetime I have no recollection of being in such a situation before.

Those of you who know me well, know I appreciate the importance of taking responsibility for the choices I make. I guess I expect that in others too. When it comes to making an informed choice, I do my best to ascertain the circumstances of a situation, and then make a choice not only for my own well-being, but for the overall good. In my limited experience, laying my choices off on others, or ascribing fault to the information that others give me after the fact is usually unproductive. I make the choice. I live with the consequences. In these complicated times, though, I must also consider that the choices I make involve others having to live with the

consequences of my choices. This is why I am particularly sensitive about the care I take around others, and make every effort not to expose them to anything I might have contracted. While some might consider me foolish, or overly protective, I would simply say that my “household” includes two beloved priests in our parish who are “vulnerable”, and I would not easily forgive myself were I to pass anything along to them. My care extends beyond them to those in our community who seek to avail of in-person celebration of the mass, for confessions, for baptism, for funerals, for marriage, for anointing of the sick, etc.

I am certain that the grace of God has been a large part of our lives these past months, and by that grace we have not faced any out-of-the-ordinary health issues. I am also aware that grace builds on nature. As such, I understand that my cooperation with God’s grace has been expressed in my exercising care by washing my hands regularly, wearing face coverings, and keeping physical distance. This has been an important part of our journey together. While I share the weariness and frustration experienced by so many, I return to my conviction of God’s goodness, and the overall goodness I see manifest in our community. My weariness and frustration lead me often to turn to God in prayerful agitation, and the words of this morning’s first reading resonate. The prophet Isaiah reminds me that there are many voices clamoring for my attention, from both within and without, but it is the Lord’s voice I strain to hear and to which I seek to respond. In affirming the presence of God, and the presence of God’s own counsel, the prophet reminds me:

While from behind, a voice shall sound in your ears:
“This is the way; walk in it,”
when you would turn to the right or to the left.” (Is. 30:21)

THIS WEEKEND, While we continue to offer sacrament, *I invite people to be particularly discerning about being physically present for mass in light of the need for increased care and attention to our being around others who do not live in our household.*

Our Lady of Lourdes, Northridge



GOAL: \$125,656.00

PLEDGED: \$121,041.00

PAID: \$112,768.89

Our annual [Together in Mission](#) appeal began last February, just as word was breaking into our consciousness about the “Coronavirus”. We didn’t have the opportunity to follow-up on our appeal. Our last report was at the beginning of October. Here is an updated report to you about our progress towards our goal

These numbers are current as of December 1st, and I want to thank and celebrate all who have both pledged and made payments. At this time, Together in Mission is more essential than ever before, and the commitment of the parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes instills within me a pride and a joy for the goodness and generosity embodied by our following through with our pledges.



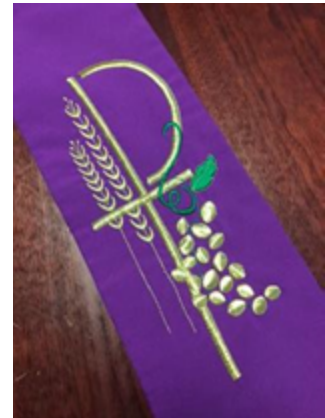
Drive by/Drop Off for our **Annual Giving Tree AND Christmas Food Drive** is taking place **this Sunday between 10am and 12:30pm**. Volunteers will be located at Stroup Hall for contactless collection of items. Please remain in your cars and volunteers will assist in collecting items you have placed in your trunk or on your rear passenger seats.

A heartfelt "thank you" to all who have participated in this effort to make the Christmas holiday more enjoyable for so many.

Advent Reconciliation

Because of the growing 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.

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 are available for Confession/Reconciliation 3-4 pm at the Moran Center, and they will remain available until all penitents who wish it, 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 General Protocols indicate confession from 4-5pm, **please note the 3-4pm timeframe for Advent instead**)

We ask those seeking to avail of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to come properly **disposed** and to be **concise** in their confession. This is not a suitable time for spiritual counseling, arrangements for which can be made separately.

Emergency Calls in the event of someone *facing death and needing to be anointed*

We have contingencies in place to comply with appropriate health and protection guidance, and the Rite of Anointing has been modified accordingly. Call (818) 349-1500 and select option "0".

Please note that hospitals and care facilities have protocols in place affecting our ability to be physically present as we usually would.

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. Questions, call or email: 818-349-1500 ext. 101 / parishcenter@ollnr.org

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 **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 Orders

State and County health authorities continue to amend their guidance. In light of the ongoing developments, and increased need for care and caution to be expressed in our personal behaviors, we are paying close attention, and are being responsive. That said, I am confident in the protocols we have developed here at Lourdes, and am grateful for those who are patient and understanding. It is when we work **together** that we can be confident 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 ask for your help in cooperating with your fellow parishioners who are volunteering, and by observing 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 **physical distance** between individual households.

It is only when we collaborate together in this effort that we can maintain our in-person services.

Our **Sunday Schedule** at this time (12/05/2020) is as follows:

- >> Saturday Vigil 7:00pm, live stream, Spanish <<
- 8:00am - Outdoors, in-person
- 9:00am - Indoors, live stream
- 10:00am - Outdoors, in-person
- 11:00am - Indoors, live stream
- >> 12:00noon - Outdoors, in-person, 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.

The Further Adventures of Mollie Loftus

There was a little rhyme that I learned as a child that ran:

*"Christmas is coming
and the geese are getting fat.
Please put a penny
in the old man's hat.
If you haven't got a penny,
a ha'penny will do.
If you haven't got a ha'penny,
God bless you."*

The words popped into my head as I saw Mollie engaged in helping her Mom and Dad get started on the decorating of the house for Christmas. Christmas is coming. Wreaths are appearing on doorways. Lights are going up on homes. Cards are in the mail (This is Anna's very first Christmas card ever).



I noticed a little while back that there are a lot of people engaged in some extra efforts this year, to enhance their Christmas preparations. For some, this is motivated by an increased awareness of the importance of family. For others, they're so jaded with everything related to Coronavirus they are looking for ways to spread more positivity in the world. For others still, there's a desire to celebrate Christmas well, as though to protest the pandemic and to proclaim that it will not get the better of us. I'm pointedly aware these days that whatever motivations we have for celebrating Christmas, and in whatever manner we will celebrate it this year, all are wonderful and good.

In the midst of all this, I can't help but turn my mind to the call of the prophet Isaiah: "prepare the way of the Lord!" I am looking forward to the day when "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together," and for the moment, I am happy to be thinking of the vaccines that have been shipped and that are being prepared for shipment all around the globe.

I read the words of the prophet when he proclaims "Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord God!", and in my mind's eye I see doctors and surgeons who have been laboring to exhaustion these long months.

I read the words that describe God's care for us: "Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care." I read these words and I think of the nurses and caregivers, and all those anonymous souls who have accompanied our brothers and sisters making their way across the threshold of life, giving solace to the dying, and comfort to loved ones and friends who were unable to be present in the moment.

In so many very human realities I see the kindness of our God being lived in the bones of women and men who express the best of our shared humanity in extraordinary ways. I recognize the kindness of God, and I am reminded of the salvation that is ours in the person of

Jesus, whose compassion and tender care for his brothers and sisters brought us all to see something in our humanity that perhaps we had heretofore been unable to easily recognize.

The Lord comes to greet us! In 2020, as in every year before, it is for us to determine “what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion”, as the apostle Paul puts it. This “holiness and devotion” is naturally going to look different in different people, as we each are called to different ways of living such in our respective lives. What is certain, however, is that “according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth”, and how we wait indeed!

So, as we prepare for Christmas, be mindful of one another and hold one another with the love of the Lord Jesus. “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”

Happy Advent.

Fr. David

And for something a little different, perhaps...



<https://www.thesoraya.org/calendar/online-performances/>