

An unprecedented situation – Prayer, contact and trust

22-3-2020 Laetare Sunday

Dear Parishioner,

On Ash Wednesday we started to prepare ourselves for Holy Week and Easter. We made our Lenten resolutions and started to work on the liturgy and music for Palm Sunday, the Easter Triduum and, of course, Easter itself. We were busy with this year's Lent Appeal and the First Holy Communion and Confirmation classes. But now everything has ground to a halt, even the Sunday and weekday Masses. This is unprecedented. Those who can remember it, say that this did not even happen during the war.

The entire world has been affected by this unknown phenomenon. Who could have predicted just a few weeks ago that all those things that we take for granted such as socializing with each other, playing sports, travelling, going to a restaurant, shopping and so much more, would, for the time being, no longer be possible?

And the unknown can also make us fearful: how is this going to end? Who will it affect? What is going to happen to our jobs and what about the financial consequences for businesses? We are worried about our loved ones, those who are old or in poor health, our children and ourselves.

At the same time we can see a new kind of solidarity emerging: health-care workers admirably carrying out their tasks, people volunteering to help in the care sector, neighbours spontaneously offering to do the shopping, young people helping older people, China sending doctors to assist in Italy, employees working round the clock where needed...

The situation at home has also changed: family members are in the house 24/7; children and students are following lessons and continuing their studies on the internet. However, there is also a new sort of loneliness and the oppressiveness of waiting for what might come.

We can still carry on

Although most of the activities that we are used to have stopped, we still need to 'carry on'.

We would like to encourage you to:

- continue to follow **Sunday Mass** either on television or via the internet in a prayerful way for example by adopting the correct postures such as standing for the Gospel. Spiritual Communion is a wonderful way to connect with the Lord (and with each other!).
The priests of the parish celebrate Mass every day in your name and on your behalf.
- Spend some time each day in a **moment of prayer and reflection**. Our bishop has recommended saying the Rosary and reading the Scriptures (Year of the Word!). For example, you could follow the daily readings to experience the season of Lent.
- **deepen your faith**. You probably have unread books on your shelf or a book that is worth reading again. The internet is a good source of information and there are some lovely contemplative programmes on EWTN. Look on the parish website and that of your own church!
- continue to prepare the candidates for **Confirmation and First Holy Communion**. Bas will be issuing some guidelines for this.
- go into one of the churches that are still open for a moment of prayer. You can also leave something for the Food Bank.

We have already noticed that this gives many people great comfort. **The churches are *not* closed**, but communal worship is currently not possible.

The Harteburg Church and the Goede Herder are open daily. Saint Joseph's is open on Sundays from 2 to 4 pm for Eucharistic Adoration and may open more frequently during the week.

Keep in touch!

We hear about all sorts of initiatives for people to keep in touch with each other. As the weeks go by, this will become even more important. We don't see the people that we used to meet in church anymore. So it is a good idea to phone people or send a message.

You can also reach us, the Pastoral Team, by telephone or email (see below). Where possible we can talk face-to-face online via Facetime, Zoom or Skype. So please don't hesitate to contact us! From our side, we will also be actively trying to stay in touch with you.

Time to reflect

Our current situation is unprecedented. A world that was happily getting on with its business has now been stopped in its tracks. The local Church that was also 'just getting on with things' has now been shut down. Everything has been reduced to the bare essentials and therefore this is also a time of self-reflection.

Do I really find comfort in my relationship with God? What does going to Mass on Sunday really mean to me? Am I really able to remain faithful in prayer? Am I really ready and willing to aid others when they need my help?

But perhaps it is even more fundamental. It is a time in which we may be able to discern the direction in which God is guiding us when this is all over.

Holy Week and Easter

We will not be able to celebrate these days in public. But we are going to celebrate them. We will let you know how you will be able to do this at home in due course.

A time of collective faith and prayer

We would like to ask you again to join us in the collective prayer that is taking place throughout the world. For God has it in His power to turn the tide.

For example:

- Follow the weekday Eucharist on Radio Maria (9 a.m. and 7 p.m.) and on Sundays on NPO 2 (starting with the "Geloofsgesprek" (Faith Interview) at 9.45) or via other media. EWTN broadcasts in English.
- Pray **The Rosary** together with your family. There may be the possibility of doing this shortly with other parishioners and members of the Pastoral Team via the internet.
- Don't forget the **Bishops' Prayer** (see attachment)
- Pay a short visit to one of the **open churches** (and think of the Food Bank!).

Let us together ask for the grace to place our trust in God. **Whatever happens, we are in His Hands.** He protects us and preserves our life even in death.

After Good Friday and Holy Saturday comes Easter.

Sincerest greetings and united with you in Christ,

Father Broeders

Father Smith

Deacon Clavel

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An act of spiritual Communion

My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite
myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.

The Bishops' prayer

God, refuge in our need,
strength in our despair and fear,
comfort in sickness and suffering.
Be near and merciful to us, your people,
now that we are all experiencing the consequences
of the outbreak of the corona virus.

Be a Protector to those
who have this virus.
We pray for them for hope and healing.
We pray for those who have died as a result of this virus,
that they may come safely home to you.
We pray for all who work
in health care and public administration,
that they may experience your nearness and blessing in their work
in the service of all society.
Make us realize how great your love is for each of us
and that You are with us now that we experience
the vulnerability of our existence.
Strengthen our faith and our hope
so that we may always and without hesitation surrender ourselves
to your paternal providence.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.