

To Immaculate Conception parishioners from Fr. Todd Lloyd:

In Christ,

In keeping with Bishop Duca's request, out of safety, and with hopes to stop the spread of COVID-19, our regularly scheduled Masses and devotions will not be offered publicly until further notice. Please know that I will be offering Mass privately, prayers, and fasting for all of you daily. This is a sad and hard time, but no suffering is useless if it is united to the suffering of our Lord on the Cross. Please join in offering daily prayers for the end to this pandemic, and for those already suffering from it.

It is easy in times like these to become angry or depressed. Please do not take to criticizing others, either Church or political leaders, for the hard decisions that are made. There will be time for constructive criticism later. But for now, pray for them, and trust that they are doing what they believe best for our safety.

One of my favorite books, *The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Rings* has a great quote about hard times. The main character, Frodo, says he wishes that a dark time had not come to pass during his life, and Gandalf responds, "*So do I, and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.*" This is the time that the Lord has given to us. Let us decide to make the best of it, not with useless worry, fear, or anger – but with faithful trust in our Lord's providence to make all things new, and to redeem not in spite of, but through suffering.

While we will not be gathering together physically to pray and offer the Mass, we can and should still do so spiritually. I not only invite, but expect all of our parishioners to take time daily for prayer, and to unite yourselves with me in the daily offering of Mass, a daily Rosary, and praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. You can make a Spiritual Communion by praying this prayer:

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.

I also invite you all to spend time during this Lenten hardship to meditate with scripture on the 7 Last Words of Jesus:

- 1. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)***
- 2. "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)***
- 3. "Woman, behold, your son. . . Behold, your mother." (John 19:26–27)***
- 4. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34)***
- 5. "I thirst." (John 19:28)***
- 6. "It is finished." (John 19:30)***
- 7. "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" (Luke 23:46)***

There are a lot of opportunities to hear and watch Mass on television and the internet. I advise everyone to make use of those. Even if you do not have the opportunity to do that, I hope that everyone will take time to read and reflect on the Sunday Mass readings.

Finally, I am still available and in contact through the office for anyone needing to go to confession or to be anointed. We are all together in this. Please keep me in your prayers, as you are in mine.

Totus Tuus,
Fr. Todd Lloyd

A prayer to Our Lady during a time of Suffering:

The star of heaven, she who suckled the Lord, has uprooted the scourge of death which the first parent of mankind planted. That very star is now worthy to encompass the world, whose wars cut down the people with the sore of dreaded death. O glorious star of the sea, save us from the scourge: Hear us, for the Son, denying nothing, honors you. Save us, Jesus! For us, the Virgin Mother entreats you.

V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray,

O God of mercy, God of forbearance, God of forgiveness, who was moved to compassion for the affliction of Your people, and who said to the Angel devastating Your people: Hold your hand. For the love of that glorious Star, at whose dearest breast You graciously fed against the poison of our sins; grant by the help of Your grace, the prayers of Your Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Bartholomew your beloved Apostle, and Saint Raphael your Archangel, that we may be safely freed from every disease and from an unprovided death, and that we may be mercifully saved from the assault of utter ruin. Though You, Christ Jesus, King of Glory, who lives and reigns, world without end. Amen.