

Letter from Father Len

June 18, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ:

As summer begins, I'd like to thank all of you who have worked so hard "behind the scenes" to help encourage parishioners and others during the time of this COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is very real and dangerous and is not likely to go away anytime soon so we have to continue to be vigilant in observing all the regulations, guidelines and protocols that are so correctly and highly encouraged by scientists and health care experts. Along with Dr. Anthony Fauci and other medical experts, we have tried to implement everything we can to protect all of you and your families. We are doing all we can to safeguard all of you and I am grateful for your wonderful cooperation, common sense and deep concern for the well-being and the common good of all. We must keep in mind that although it seems to be relatively safe, our gatherings even with all these restrictions and protocols are not completely safe and there is definitely a risk involved in them so please continue to be careful and respectful of others-especially the most vulnerable among us. As Catholics, our primary concern must always be not just for ourselves but "for and with others" and for the "common good". Thank you for your cooperation.

I assure all of you that we continue our Masses and prayers for you and for all who suffered death from COVID-19 and related illnesses and for those who have endured so much. I know families and loved ones can feel a deep sense of loneliness and isolation during these times of the coronavirus. Each day here at the parish at least three Masses are celebrated. The 9:00 a.m. daily Mass, Monday –Saturday is livestreamed for those who wisely realize they should not come to public gatherings in this time. Our 8:00 a.m. daily Mass in the Parish Center is carefully monitored so that it is as safe as we can make it and as reverent as it must always be. Music is provided and homilies and teachings are given and our usual devotions still find some expression in our hearts as we call upon the goodness of the Lord and remain united in Christ.

Sunday Masses occur at 4 p.m. on Saturday (Vigil) and 8 a.m., 10 a.m. and 12 noon in Padua Hall of the school where flexible seating and other arrangements make the area as safe as we can accomplish. Once again, I remind you that the "obligation" or "duty" to attend Mass is not in place and for now is indefinitely suspended. No Catholic is required to come to these public Masses and once again I remind you that they are not absolutely safe and still do involve a level of risk you should carefully consider especially if you are in a vulnerable condition. Thus, the Sunday Mass is livestreamed at 9:30 a.m. for those who realize that it is not wise for them to come to the public celebrations. Remember, we are all united spiritually together and we can make a "spiritual communion" knowing that Christ is not limited to the Eucharist if anyone opens their minds and hearts to him. During these times, I ask that we all pray for those who are working to help eliminate the COVID-19 pandemic so affecting our global human family.

The COVID-19 pandemic also affects our parish, school, the roof project (currently on hold) and diocese. Financial implications are grave for all and I know that many of you are finding these times especially difficult. Our love, concern and prayers are most definitely with you. I thank everyone who continues to support our church and school and urge you not to give up on the roof project for the Church. The situation is getting worse and worse and I fear that the church eventually may have to be closed to the public completely-something I am trying desperately to avoid.

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On-line giving (We Share) and mail in donations are the best ways to sustain the Church in these challenging times. I thank all who continue to care about our wonderful and special parish family by your on-going financial support. About 1,500 families out of our 4,100 registered families form our “core supporters” carrying the parish forward by their faith, kindness and generosity. I thank you on behalf of the Lord for caring about his mission that we received in the living waters of the Sacrament of Baptism. I pray that the others may use these COVID-19 times as opportunities to grow in love of God and deepen their desire to labor in the Church for the fuller coming of God’s kingdom across the faith of the earth and for the salvation of all people. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused and will continue to cause financial havoc for the years ahead.

As we pray and work for healing from COVID-19, we also join our prayerful support for all who stand for peace, those working for greater social justice and an end to personal and systemic forms of racism, prejudice and hatred, police brutality, social violence and all injustice. The recent cold-blooded murder of Mr. George Floyd and the many murders that preceded him have surfaced in our polarized nation both the best and the worst in people. When we stand for life, we know that “ Black Lives Matter” and that his life matters. Our rich Catholic social teachings on these matters are plentiful and no other body of religious teachings on earth today is more profound, numerous, prolific, vibrant and meaningful. Now is a good time to draw upon these rich theological masterpieces. Do not tire of doing good, proclaiming and working for social justice, trying to eradicate systemic racism and all other forms of hatred and exclusion. May the Lord bless your efforts to promote harmony, dialogue, awareness and social change.

By now, I hope you all have America Media/Magazine of the Jesuits, your “Give us this Day” prayer books, some spiritual and Scriptural writings and are sharing the stories of the Lives of the Saints. Pope Francis, our great Jesuit pope, continues to offer daily renewal for all of us in these challenging times filled with opportunities which help us on our spiritual journeys. A lot of people have joined Catholic Book Clubs and are viewing countless Masses and retreats on-line. Varied on-line Jesuit sources of information and formation are so plentiful. Be sure to take advantage of them. The Catholic universities also have Masses, lectures, classes, reflections and podcasts. Use this time as retreat time and make a difference in the world. Pray for those who no longer pray. Support those who feel God has abandoned them. Make your home a “domestic church” and do not fear or lose hope for God is with us and all who stay close to the Lord will not be abandoned.

May God bless all of you and your loved ones as we try to adjust to the “new normal”. Be at peace always. Celebrate life each day. May the love and prayers of Mary, New Eve and Mother of the Church accompany you in this life until the day of Lord when we are all safe in our final blessed home.

Together with you in ministry,

Father Len

P.S. I really appreciate (we all do) your kind notes, cards and prayers. We are in this all together!