Community life is “changed, not ended” during quarantine

Growing in intentional community life: the hard way

We’re probably all feeling the effects of social distancing and self-isolation by now, but this time of challenge means we’ve got another opportunity for growth. In the movie “Evan Almighty,” God (in the person of Morgan Freeman, of course) asks a family: “When you pray for patience, do you think God gives you patience, or the opportunity to practice patience? If you ask for your family to be closer, does he make them closer, or give you the opportunity to become so?” We’ve got a great opportunity right now for many things.

While under the order to shelter in place, families have no school and few jobs to spend their days at; gyms, bars, and restaurants are closed to the public; and even gathering together for worship at church on Sundays is illegal, for the good of the public health during this crisis.

In the absence of our regular abundance of community, we feel its loss keenly – but perhaps this is an opportunity to practice it more intentionally, albeit differently. Our Thursday morning Bible Study has met online for the past two weeks (photo above). Pastoral Care ministry continues with regular phone calls. Sunday Mass sadly isn’t open to the public right now, but in some ways has become more easily accessible to the homebound with Santa Maria’s videos.

Please let us know how else we can continue to support you in your parish and community life. You are in our prayers always!
**We’re open for prayer!**

Although we’re unable to celebrate public Masses or provide hospitality in person in the Parish Office, our church remains open 9am-5pm every day. Feel free to stop by for a few moments of private prayer and to sit with the Blessed Sacrament. All we ask is that you continue to maintain a generous social distance if someone else happens to be present when you are.

**Parish life while sheltering in place**

While our county is under the order to shelter in place, our Pastoral Team is still hard at work running our parish as best we can while working remotely.

To that end, we will be available by phone (925-254-2426) and email during normal working hours; continue publishing the weekly bulletin online for you; run Faith Formation, MSYG, and Confirmation in creative ways; provide resources for your Sunday worship at home (see pages 4-5); and more. Please let us know if you have any suggestions or recommendations for us as we journey through this time of sheltering in place together.

**Collection reporting updates**

We are changing the frequency and manner of reporting our Sunday collection income, because the weekly income reports are no longer giving a meaningful picture.

This is due to several factors: more people are using Faith Direct and making their contributions on a monthly basis, and others contribute bi-monthly, bi-annually, or even annually to the Sunday plate. Our weekly reports are showing extreme swings in income because of these factors, such that they no longer give a useful picture of the state of the plate.

Going forward, we will try a monthly report that will hopefully help smooth out some of those swings to give everyone a more useful picture of our income.

**Lenten Regulations**

Lent is a time of prayer and penance. Our Church has a few ways of practicing these things during Lent:

**Fasting**

Catholics aged 18-59 are bound to fast on both Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. This means consuming at most one full meal that day, while taking other smaller quantities of food at the other customary mealtimes is permitted. Food and drink between meals (excepting water) is not permitted on fast days.

**Abstinence from Meat**

Catholics aged 14 and up are to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, all Fridays of Lent, and Good Friday. This means refraining from eating meat products, although eggs, milk, and fish and shellfish are permitted.

**Lenten Practices**

All the faithful are encouraged to receive Holy Communion, participate in penance services, take part in public and private exercises of piety, give generously to works of religion and charity, perform acts of kindness toward the sick, aged, and poor, and to pray more fervently. All of these practices will help you have a more fruitful and holy Lent!

**FAITH FORMATION**

**Youth Ministry is hosting online gaming**

Yesterday, Joe and Megan
hosted a live-stream on Twitch.tv of video game play for Middle School Youth Group. Next week, we’re figuring out how to gather together for a tournament.

We’re doing our best to keep everyone connected and engaged in our faith and community lives while we’re all stuck at home – but we need your participation to make that happen! Keep an eye out on Instagram (@smyouthmin) and on your/your parents’ email for activities, Bible Studies, videos, and more you can share with your family.

Reaching out to the sick and homebound

While we’re unable to visit the sick and homebound at this time, Sister Magdalene and our Pastoral Care Ministers will be reaching out by phone to those who regularly receive visits.

Treasure

Please see the note on page 2 regarding collection-reporting updates.

Pastoral Team
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Reverend Christopher Fadok, OP
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Pastoral Care

Reaching out to the sick and homebound

While we’re unable to visit the sick and homebound at this time, Sister Magdalene and our Pastoral Care Ministers will be reaching out by phone to those who regularly receive visits.

Mass Intentions

All Mass Intentions scheduled for the week of March 23-29 will be rescheduled as soon as the order to shelter in place has been lifted.

To request a Mass Intention, please contact Mirna in the Parish Office.

Prayer Intentions

For the Sick: Liduvina Acosta, Sonny Acosta, Mary Beth Alban, Joan Artmann, Shoaib Aryan, Kristy Blackey-Taylor, Kathie Brady, Cara Bradbury, Maria Carmen, Fred Chavaria, Grace Parent DeBoo, Rich Delany, Lorna Elliott, Anne Emery, Nora Enriquez, Emidio Fonseca, Liam Foley, Patricia Fox, Bridget Gallagher, Noreen Gillham, Doris Hale, Florentino Ibabao, Brian Kelly, Mason Kelly, Aileen Kelly, Michael Kelly, Jim Kennedy, Jerry Kirk, Lawrence Knapp, Carol Koupus, Judy Lazarus, Jim Marchetti, Rose Mary McPhee, Robert Nick, Arsi Orihuella, Deacon Jim Pearce, Kathleen Pelz, Ann Powell, Mark Ricci, Ben Richey, Patrick Sheehy, Jean Wells, Faye Young

Would you like to add yourself or someone else to the prayer list? Please contact Mirna in the Parish Office at 925-254-2426 or at mirnawong@smparish.org.
Sign of the Cross
Opening Prayer

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Gospel
Jn 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

The sisters of Lazarus sent word to Jesus, saying, “Master, the one you love is ill.” When Jesus heard this he said, “This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise.” Martha said, “I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.”

He became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Sir, come and see.” And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him.” But some of them said, “Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?”

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said,
“Take away the stone.” Martha, the dead man’s sister, said to him, “Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me.” And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, “Untie him and let him go.”

Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

Gospel Reflection

After hearing about the Samaritan woman at the well to whom Jesus described himself as Living Water, and the healing of the blind man to whom Jesus declared himself to be the Light of the World, today we hear a passage about death and the raising of Lazarus, where Jesus declares, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Living Water, Light of the World, and Resurrection and the Life – three important images of Jesus that all emerge from the Gospel of John. Each of the events relate to Jesus’ response to some physical need: thirst, blindness, and death. However, in each case, Jesus not only responds to the physical need, but also reveals a truth about himself that leads people to belief.

The raising of Lazarus marks a turning point in John’s Gospel. This chapter concludes with the plot to arrest Jesus, and the following begins the final week of Jesus’ life in Jerusalem. In going to save the life of his friend Lazarus, Jesus knows that he is journeying toward his own death. In fact, the end of this chapter cites some witnesses complaining about the raising of Lazarus to precipitate the action against Jesus.

This episode effectively signs Jesus’ death warrant. In the Gospel of John, it is very clear that Jesus gives up his own life so that Lazarus may live.

Faith Sharing Questions

What aspects of your life do you need to “die” to or let go of to enter into a fuller, richer life?

How has sheltering in place offered you insight into what you could let go of for a richer life?

Intercessions

For the Church: that God will transform our fears into hope, selfishness into love, and death into new life.

For an end to the pandemic: that God will guide everyone working to curtail the virus.

For all who are experiencing divorce or the death of a relationship: that God will heal their pain, help them to face the issues with courage, and give them hope for their future.

For our RCIA Elect, Tim and Anthony: that God will lead them from the death of sin to newness of life through Baptism.

For those who have died or who are ill due to the Coronavirus.

For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts.

The Lord’s Prayer

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 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.

Silent Prayer

Sign of the Cross