

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Friends of St. Catherine,

“I thirst.” This year when we hear Jesus speaking from the Cross to us and saying the words, “I thirst,” they will sound even more profoundly in our hearts. The thirst that we experience, thirst for the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, thirst for each other in prayer, thirst for hope, and thirst for safety of our loved ones, echoes even deeper in our hearts during this Lent of 2020. But let us not forget that this thirst is just an echo of a thirst that God has for us. It is out of this longing for our holiness and our happiness that God became man and surrendered himself on the Cross to the Father, surrendered unto death.

This present Lent, more quiet and more lonely than others, could also become a gift. As Christians, apart from correctly worrying for our world, our culture, and our communities, we also have to ask ourselves a question: What does God want to tell us through the experience of this disease? Maybe he wants us to go to the desert, to the solitude of our inner room physically and spiritually, to hear him speaking to our hearts. I also believe that as it has been the case in the story of Israel and the history of the Church, God is looking for our faithfulness to his love. God is thirsting for our faithfulness. Being faithful in the deepest possible way, in our hearts and in our minds, striving with a humble heart to look through His eyes, and uniting ourselves with Him on the Cross will always be correct answers to God’s invitation.

As of this week our Lent became even deeper. Due to the development of the disease and the increased level of emergency in our country and state, the bishop of Salt Lake City elevated the health and security measures in place at our churches. Everything we do in our diocese and in our churches is in full unity with our bishop, the apostle among us, and he acts in unity with the Holy See. Here are his major directives concerning the rest of Lent and Holy Week:

1. The public worship will be suspended until further notice.
2. All the celebrations of Holy Week will be celebrated, but in empty and closed churches.
3. The Rites of Christian Initiation are postponed until further notice. That means that Baptism of adults, First Communion, and Confirmation cannot take place. An announcement will be made when these are scheduled.

In unity with Pope Francis’ and our bishop’s suggestion our church could become a spiritual “Field Hospital.” Of course all the physical precautions must still be maintained. Persons who are sick, who know they have been near sick people, are immunosuppressed, or otherwise at increased health risk (as established by the medical community) should not come to St. Catherine’s, and instead should contact us directly for confession or anointing of the sick. Based on current CDC recommendations, we advise persons over 65 not to come to the church. We have significantly reduced access to the church (main entrance only), restricted accessible spaces, and reconfigured the chapel under expert medical review so as to exceed current CDC recommendations.

1. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be available every evening starting Sunday, March 22nd from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. I will ask you very humbly not to congregate, to maintain proper distance, and to follow the common sense practices given to us by health officials. Wear warm clothes.

2. Private confessions will be available every day from 6:30pm to 7:30pm. Again, you must maintain and keep all the necessary precautions as mentioned above.
3. Since our bishop invites us to deeper unity and contact also through modern media, we have put a link on our website to the Holy Masses at the Cathedral of the Madeleine.

I know that this time may bring to you also a lot of financial worries. Many people are in need so please keep your eyes open for the needs of your neighbors. Be generous and courageous especially in helping the elderly and those who find daily toil particularly challenging. At the end I would like to ask you to not forget your parish in your generosity. Since there are no Masses in our church our only way of receiving your support is online or through the mail. We are able to continue functioning because of the many sacrificial gifts you have made through the years, for which future generations will owe you their gratitude and prayers.

God bless us all,
Fr. Jacek Buda, OP
Fr. Cody Jorgensen, OP
Fr. Francis Le, OP