

Dear Friends of St. Catherine of Siena,

“Human beings thirst and look for water wherever they think they will find it.”

-Jean Corbon, OP

The above quote is the opening line of one of the most important books on liturgy written in the 20th century. What do celebrations in the church have to do with the desert and with thirst? In the mind of Jean Corbon they express the deepest meaning of our liturgy. We are the people lost in the desert, thirsting for God’s love. We are the ones looking for the refreshing sources of living water of God’s presence. The water that is life-giving and healing.

As of this weekend our lonely and very private Lent became even more secluded. Due to the new decisions of the civil authorities and the Diocese of Salt Lake City, the liturgies of Holy Week and Easter will be held without the physical participation of the faithful. Does it mean that we should abandon the life of prayer? Obviously not. But how can we celebrate sacraments if we do not have physical unity. Isn’t physical unity fundamental for Christian worship? Hundreds of years of experience of hardship and persecution of the Church comes to our aid. They allow us to understand that Christian liturgical prayer is not simply some sort of social event. Christians at prayer are not simply consumers of media content. Our liturgy is an action of the Spirit that is manifested in time by the words and gestures of a person. When the fullness of the sacraments is not available to us, we can still enter into the Church’s prayer even in the solitude of our homes.

I would like to invite you to celebrate this Holy Week differently than any other year. We all will celebrate in seclusion, but we can be united by the gestures and words of the liturgy.

Time

Time of the celebration is very important. It is also important that the times of prayer create a rhythm. If you are unable to pray at the same time as the liturgies in the church, please find some other regular time as long as it helps to create a rhythm of prayer for you or your family.

As recommended by the bishop, our Holy Week celebrations in an empty church will take place as follows:

- Palm Sunday, April 5th, 6:30pm
- Holy Thursday, April 9th, 6:30pm
- Good Friday, April 10th, 6:30pm
- Easter Vigil, April 11th, 9:00pm
- Easter Sunday, April 12th, 10am

Space

We must create a physical space in our lives for prayer. Just as we do it we build the church, we can the same at home. The Crucifix, or a holy icon, should be central to that place of prayer. The living fire of a candle symbolizes the presence of the Holy Spirit and, if possible, I would strongly recommend using actual candles around the Crucifix or icon. Additional elements (palms – Palm Sunday, thorns – Good Friday, white flowers – Easter Sunday, etc.) can help to express the particular character of the different liturgical days.

Word

Faith comes from listening, as Jesus said to his Apostles. Since the very beginning of the Church, the living word was the main way of prayer in community. The Holy Scripture would be read aloud, the faithful would listen; the Apostle would preach, and the faithful would respond with a profession of faith or a hymn. This structure could be preserved in our family celebrations. Even if you celebrate alone, say the words of the Scriptures and prayers aloud.

This Sunday, March 31st, begins Passiontide, the liturgical time of meditation on the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. The dominant color changes from purple to red, and the Gospels bring us closer to the actual event of crucifixion. Let us now enter this time, together remembering in prayer, before the Cross of Jesus all those who suffer due to the pandemic and all those who live in fear as well as those who risk their lives daily trying to help others.

We continue to pray for you and your families in our Masses. Please remember us in your prayer.

Fr. Jacek Buda, OP

Fr. Cody Jorgensen, OP

P.S. Please check the Cathedral's website for the latest postings from our bishop.