

Dear parishioners of Our Lady of the Lake and Saint Joseph the Worker,

At this present moment, in the midst of the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, we find ourselves in a very surreal, unprecedented and seemingly unbelievable time. In the midst of a National State of Emergency throughout our country, and closer to home with a Massachusetts State of Emergency, we find ourselves suddenly thrust into the unknown. Schools are being closed for many weeks, if not longer; employees are being asked to work from home wherever possible; international and national travel is being shut down; people are rushing to the stores to stock up on food and supplies. To make matters seemingly even more dire, our normal routine of weekly and daily public worship of God in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has come to a screeching halt. We are all understandably shell-shocked, disorientated, and looking around as though lost in the dark.

Many years ago, while in the United States Air Force, the motto for the base to which I was stationed was “Ad Explorata.” As a flight testing base for almost every type of newly designed jet aircraft, that motto was very appropriate. It literally means “Into the Unknown.” As exciting as it was back in the day, so many years ago, it was to work on research and development of new technologies that would enhance the defense of our country. Today, I suddenly find ourselves going “into the unknown” in an area for which we have very little control, very little knowledge or understanding, and very little anticipation of how long this situation will last. Unlike the aftereffects of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks; unlike of the Blizzard of 1978; unlike World War II or other wars that have taken place on completely separate continents; and unlike the Great Depression, we find the entire world being unified in the midst of a pandemic that may literally impact every single person on the face of this earth. How striking to me that a virus, a microbe, so small and imperceptible to our daily life, could suddenly lead the entire world to suddenly stop in its tracks!

We need to ask ourselves, “How do we walk forward ‘into the unknown’?” seeking light in the midst of this seeming darkness. There are so many questions we all have; so many fears, not knowing what tomorrow may bring. We worry about our children and their schooling; we worry about employment; we worry about food and basic supplies; we worry about what to do with ourselves during idle times.

I have said for many years that whenever we seek answers in our daily lives, we need to “always go to Sacred Scriptures.” Although Sacred Scripture is clear regarding God’s view of this world, and of the world to come, unfortunately some will turn to passages that can instill fear and panic, being caught up in darkness and a path of hopelessness, such as the following:

“When the Lord saw how great the wickedness of human beings was on earth, and how every desire that their heart conceived was always nothing but evil, the Lord regretted making human beings on the earth, and his heart was grieved. So the Lord said: I will wipe out from the earth the human beings I have created, and not only the human beings, but also the animals and the crawling things and the birds of the air, for I regret that I made them.” (Genesis 6:5-7)

“See! The LORD is about to empty the earth and lay it waste; he will twist its surface, and scatter its inhabitants.” (Isaiah 24:1)

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18)

“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21)

Thankfully, however, Sacred Scripture is also filled with many other encouraging passages which draw us out of darkness, into wonderful light, such as:

“He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.” (Psalm 107:20)

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened,* and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.” (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” (John 8:12)

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6)

Fortunately, as Christians, “...we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven... So we are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:1,7).

Faith in our Lord is so very important, especially in this time of the Coronavirus. Paradoxically, at a time when we should be seeking out our Lord Jesus, most especially in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, we find that we must temporarily suspend all

weekend and daily Masses in an attempt to limit community spread of this pervasive virus. As a people of Faith, we are also a people of Reason. This does not mean that our Lord has abandoned us! Far from it. Our Lord has promised to be with us through the end of time, and Jesus is still truly with us, especially now. Monks have a saying: “You are never *less* alone, than when you are alone!” With all worldly distractions put to the side, and placing our Faith, our Hope and our Love in our Savior Jesus, it allows us to recognize the presence of our Lord, especially at this time.

“What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him...” 1

Corinthians 2:9

Despite the significant challenges in our country and throughout the world in which we now find ourselves, we are still a People of God, we are still a Collaborative of families praying for one another and supporting one another. God will lead us through this period of uncertainty. As we continue in our Lenten Season, one which affords us the opportunity to listen more closely to the Lord, I would urge an increased life of prayer, individually and within your families. Through prayer in the morning and evening hours, and the recitation of the Holy Rosary, we will find that we can listen to, and will hear, the voice of Lord speaking to us in the very silence of our hearts, as we read in Sacred Scripture: “‘Be still and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth.’ The LORD of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob” (Psalm 46:11-12), for “Our help is in the name of the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 124:8). It is in this way that I am confident we can truly go “into the unknown” with faith in our Lord Jesus who has promised to be with us at all times.

If there is anything our Collaborative staff can do for you or your family, please know we remain committed in our Lord to be of service to every one of you.

Asking the intercession of Archangel Saint Raphael, patron of Healing, and especially that of our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of the Lake, and her spouse Saint Joseph the Worker, be assured on my continued, and daily prayers for you and your loved ones.

Sincerely in our Lord Jesus,

Fr. Mike Hobson

I would like to highlight the following actions that are currently being taken, especially within our Collaborative:

1. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will continue to be celebrated by our priests (and priests throughout the world), offering reparation for sins of the world, but also seeking the Love, Mercy, Healing and Forgiveness of our Lord who gave his life upon the Cross. Streaming of the daily private Masses will soon be posted on the Collaborative YouTube Channel which can be accessed through our websites.
2. Our churches will remain open during usual hours for those who would like to pray before the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Tabernacle. Those times are:
 - a. Saint Joseph the Worker
Sunday through Saturday 7:00am-7:00pm
 - b. Our Lady of the Lake
Sunday 7:00am-11:30am
Monday and Friday 8:00am-4:00pm
Saturday 8:00am-5:00pm
3. Confessions will still be available at the usual following times:
 - a. Saint Joseph the Worker
Wednesday 6:00pm-8:00pm (during Lent)
Thursday 6:00pm-6:30pm
Saturday 3:00pm-3:45pm
 - b. Our Lady of the Lake
Saturday 3:00pm-3:45pm
 - c. By appointment
4. Anointing of the Sick will be available. Please contact the main parish offices for Saint Joseph the Worker at 781-293-3581 and Our Lady of the Lake at 781-293-7971.
5. Bulletins will continue to be posted on the Collaborative web pages at www.stjosephtheworker.org and www.ourladyofthelakehalifax.org as well as announcements on the Collaborative Facebook page at "SJTW & OLOL Collaborative".