



Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Catholic Community

5415 Fortuna Road, NW, Albuquerque, NM 87105
www.holyrosaryabq.org ~ hrparish@holyrosaryabq.org
Phone: 505.836.5011 ~ Fax: 505.836.7562

Third Sunday of Lent, 2020

Dear Holy Rosary Parish Family,

By now I am sure you have already heard of the decision on the part of the Archdiocese to suspend the public celebration of mass and other gatherings in our parish communities. I know there are high emotions during this time—fear, confusion, anger and uncertainty.

Please understand that the decision to suspend public celebration of the mass was not taken lightly. It is not a statement of fear or retreat. The Church is not diminishing the absolute centrality of the Eucharist. Rather, this decision stands as a witness to the primary meaning of the Eucharist itself—a gesture of sacrifice and service. Just as on Holy Thursday we recall Jesus washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper, we are refraining from public gatherings to protect and promote the health and the wellbeing of our most vulnerable populations—the elderly and those who already struggle with compromised immune systems. This requires us to sacrifice something of importance for ourselves for the sake of our neighbor. It is not a testament of lack of faith. It is an adherence to our faith.

I know for many this fasting from the Eucharist will be painful and difficult to understand. I believe, especially in this Lenten season, Jesus can see how our fasting contributes to the good of our neighbor and the hunger we carry in our hearts to know his love. If we journey through this difficult time as a community of faith driven by love, God will not forsake us. Jesus' entire journey of the cross up until his very moment of death was an unending testament to his refusal to not stop loving even if it meant his own suffering. Now as we walk not only in the desert of lent but in the uncertainty of this pandemic, we are given the chance to respond in love and obedience even when it may feel contrary to our own understanding and desire.

We as Catholics believe that truth cannot contradict truth. The scientific facts of the nature of the spread of disease cannot be ignored, and the methods at our disposal to address issues of public health are themselves inspired gifts from our Creator. We profess that our love of God is inseparable from our love of neighbor. Adhering to certain practices for the benefit of our neighbors guided by the best scientific knowledge at our disposal is in no way our attempt to forsake or undermine our faith in God. It is an affirmation of all the good gifts he has given us. Now is our time to assert ourselves in love for others as we recognize a sacrifice for ourselves. Indeed what Archbishop Wester has asked of us as Catholics is itself profoundly Eucharistic.

To help us hold one another in prayer and lift our hearts in praise during this difficult time, we will be offering a Sunday mass from Holy Rosary. You will be able to find it on our website www.holyrosaryabq.org. This will be a bilingual mass as a profession of the unity we share as one body. I would like to emphasize that as St. Pope John Paul II reminds us, no mass is celebrated in obscurity. The power of the sacrifice of the Mass is the same no matter how grand or how small. This mass is offered for the sake of our community and I encourage you to lift your prayers with me. I will also

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continue to offer a private daily mass for the intentions of our community. As St. Paul reminds us, nothing can separate us from the love of God, and thus from the love of one another.

Please take this time as an opportunity to deepen our own response in love to each other, our families, and our broken world. See this as a call to strengthen your own personal prayer life and how you gather and share faith as a family. In a way this is an invitation to grow our faith in the power of God, his mercy, and the efficacy of his sacraments that are not bound by time or space.

Let us continue to pray for each other, our world, and all those who are ill. Please know of my deep love and concern for each and every one of you. Just as the disciples could not conceive of the glory of the resurrection that would follow Christ's suffering and sacrifice, I believe in my heart of hearts that through this path of uncertainty we will be led to a renewed beauty when we reunite physically at the heavenly banquet table. Until then let us live the very truth of the Eucharist, knowing that we stay united in God's mystical love. Let us walk in trust, persevere in love, and above all know that the mercy and glory of God eclipses all our human frailty.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Graham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Graham