

Dear Our Lady of Ransom Family,

Over the past week, I've had to say to you things I never expected to say in my entire priesthood, let alone in my first year as your pastor. As you probably have already heard, the Archdiocese of Chicago has told us that no public Masses will be celebrated on Holy Week or Easter. To be honest, I feel like the darkness of this dark Lent of 2020 just grew a little more ominous.

Yet, at the same time, we are an Easter people, as Pope Saint John Paul the Great famously remarked. And while the holiest days of our year will now only be celebrated privately by priests behind closed doors, it in no way diminishes the truth and power of the bodily Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is Risen, and no virus can change that!

In his Letter to the Romans, Paul proclaims the centrality of the Resurrection: "For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection." (6:5) In this way, Paul describes what Lent *should* be. Lent offers us a path to die to self – or, more accurately, to our false self – so that we can live in the newness of life that comes through the Resurrection; a new life that begins in part in this world, and finds its fullness in the world to come.

We have, almost overnight, entered into a dying to old ways of doing things, a dramatic shift in how we live our lives. The world is different. At least for now, maybe for a while. No matter how we began our Lent, we are living in this dark Lent of 2020 in a way that we couldn't have imagined. Because of that, we live in a very graced time. As Paul said, the more we grow into union with Christ through a death like His, the more we will experience the beauty and love of the Resurrection. As dark as this Lent is, the joy of the Resurrection will be ever-the-more bright.

Beyond emergency sacramental situations, our resources are being funneled primarily into two areas of pastoral care:

- 1) We are putting together a way to provide basic needs to those who are isolated at home, whether due to their own risk factors or due to actually having contracted the disease. Many people are involved in this effort, but I'd especially like to thank Jackie Demo and Tom Collins for coordinating our response. If you are interested in donating goods or money to this effort, please go here. If you or someone you know are in need of basic food supplies or hygiene products, please go here. We are putting together both times that you can pick up supplies without contact with others, and a process where we are able to drop supplies outside of your door.
- 2) As you may have already realized, we are developing a variety of resources to help you continue deepening in your relationship with Jesus Christ. From chanted evening prayer to our own Brad Koenig leading us in the rosary, we have already shared many resources and will continue to do so.

Here are some important things you need to know:

- 1) The Archdiocese of Chicago has suspended all public Masses until further notice. That will at least be the case through Easter, and possibly beyond that time.
- 2) We are still celebrating funerals, but they can have no more than 10 people in attendance, and individuals in vulnerable populations are encouraged not to attend. This is a strict number and we are not allowed to compromise on it.
- 3) Baptisms will continue but are limited to parents, their children, and godparents only.

- 4) At the end of business today (Friday), the Ministry Center will be closed to all visitors. You will still be able to get in touch with us and calls will be taken as normal. No staff or volunteers will be allowed in the Ministry Center without a prior conversation with me, and only on a limited, as needed basis.
- 5) Please keep a very close eye on our website: [www.olransom.org](http://www.olransom.org). We are posting updates and resources to help you in this challenging time.
- 6) Make sure you sign up for our Flocknote email distribution list, and regularly keep an eye on our Facebook page.
- 7) Many of you have asked about the financial situation of the parish in a time like this. I appreciate that you're thinking of that. Obviously, this is very challenging for us. I would ask you to consider signing up for electronic giving via Give Central. As of right now, our only source of income is electronic giving and the few people who are mailing in their contributions. Thank you for that.

I also want to tell you about the heroic work of our staff. Paul Matijevic, Isabel DuPont, Brad Koenig, Colleen O'Dowd, and Fr. Dan Flens have showed a level of dedication to you that is amazing. You may not see it, but their work has been without rest, and I am both proud to work with them and humbled by their loving sacrifices for you. Please say an extra prayer for each one of them.

Even though it has only been a week, I miss you. The normalcy of seeing you in the gathering space, of running back and forth two minutes before Mass desperately trying to find additional communion ministers, is gone. In a certain way, the parish is now too quiet. But this quiet is the quiet of newness, the quiet of the tomb, a quiet that is a prelude to the explosion of new life that comes through the Resurrection. Apart, and yet together in the Mystical Body of Christ, may we all experience a passionate desire for that great and joyful day of Resurrection.

In Christ,

Fr. Matt Bozovsky