



St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Community

A Message from the Pastor *March 18, 2020*

Dear Parishioners,

These days I feel like Moses in today's 1st Reading at the Mass:

Moses spoke to the people and said:

*"Now, Israel, hear the statutes and decrees
which I am teaching you to observe,
that you may live, and may enter in and take possession of the land."*

We are being asked to follow the directives of those who are seeking the common good and the safety and health of all. It is difficult to lock down our lives, especially when we live and breathe freedom and faith. We are hearing the dire reports from the Governor that we may not see schools open before the Fall. We are being told that the impact of the virus will not really be felt for many more weeks if not months, especially if citizens do not exercise prudence and responsibility.

Again, I must emphasize our own social and moral responsibility **NOT** to be the causality of lengthening the impact of this disease by our own lack of obedience or selfish dismissal of our civil and ecclesiastical directives.

I am attaching to my update today a wonderful little reflection on "*Pandemic Gratitude*." Sometimes we need to look for the so-called silver lining in the uncertainty of daily life these days. I thought this reflection directs us to ponder a few points as we continue our Lenten journey, especially if our "Lent" is prolonged beyond the calendar date of Easter. If that is going to be the case, let us just remember that there was **ONE EASTER**: The only Easter when Jesus **DID** rise from the dead leaving behind the empty tomb and conquering the finality of death and introducing resurrected life. As we face the Cross, may we come to know His peace anticipating the promises he gained for us in the ever-embracing mercy and love of our God.

Know of your priests' daily prayers for you as we journey together.

Please visit our Parish Website for continued COVID-19 information related to parish activities and previous e-communications: <http://stluketemplecity.org/covid-19-notice>.

Blessings,

Fr. Mark

PANDEMIC GRATITUDE?!

“Pandemic Gratitude?” It seems like an odd thing to say during these times. What are we supposed to be grateful for - supply shortages, long lines, widespread cancellations, fear, uncertainty, panic?

While these reactions are very understandable, let's take a step back and look at this through our Lenten lenses. While the COVID-19 virus is causing one pandemic, how about Lent causing a pandemic of a different kind, one of gratitude and action. Each Lent we are called to **Pray, Fast and Give Alms**. We are grateful for the opportunity to focus on the gifts we have been given, reflect on how to use these gifts responsibly for the furthering of God's kingdom here on earth, and then act. So, firstly, for what can we show gratitude?

We are grateful and PRAY for...

- Government leaders who have taken bold actions to keep us safe.
- The technology that allows us to stay informed and connected - even when we are encouraged to maintain social distance.
- Medical science and the researchers who are working around the clock to find a cure.
- Medical personnel, doctors, nurses and first responders who are on the front lines risking their own health to care for those who are affected.
- School administrators and teachers who are working to continue the education of our youth as seamlessly as possible.
- Custodial, maintenance and cleaning staff who work endless hours to disinfect and sanitize our buildings.
- The Pope, Bishops and all our Clergy who continue to provide for our spiritual nourishment.
- All those who are actively placing the common good ahead of personal gain.
- The return to health of all those affected, their caretakers, medical providers and those working for a cure.

While we can pray and be grateful for all of those who are working to ensure our health and safety, it is natural to feel overwhelmed and, perhaps, that there is nothing we can do to help. But, in reality, there are many ways to use our gifts given to us by our generous God to come to the aid of others.

Continuing our Lenten journey, we can FAST from...

- Selfishness by purchasing more than we really need so that others can have what they need.
- The panic and anxiety that surrounds us and remain calm and responsible.
- Negative thoughts and trust in the Lord's love and strength for us to move forward following the advice of our local leadership.
- Self-centered actions fueled by fear and turn ourselves outward to contribute to community awareness and solutions.

And finally, we can practice GIVING ALMS and performing acts of charity to...

- Assist our neighbors, especially the elderly and most vulnerable, by shopping for them and taking care of their errands when they cannot.
- Remember to wash our hands for at least twenty seconds. Instead of singing, why not pray The Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary? *That will be a bit longer than twenty seconds, but a few more moments of prayer won't hurt!*
- Be mindful that while many of us cannot attend Mass at this time, we can still save and mail our offertory gift to our parish or bring it with us when we are able to return, to continue the mission of our Church.
- Stay home if we don't feel well or if we are instructed to do so.

Do you recognize something here? Aren't these all things we are called to do anyway as responsible members of society? Yes, there is fear and uncertainty, but it is also a time to focus on the scriptural mandate to **“Be Not Afraid.”** For in these times, and all times, we know and trust in God's Word, **“the light that shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.”** (Jn 1:5) It is a time to use our gifts responsibly to face not only this, but all the challenges in our lives.