

March 13th, 2020

Dear All,

I'm grateful for everyone's continued patience, and for your support of the parish throughout this confusing and difficult time. By now you'll have seen the letter sharing Bishop Marc's instructions to suspend all "public" services throughout the Diocese for the remainder of March, and our intentions to LiveStream a small "private" service at 10am on Sundays from the altar of St. Mark's, with myself, the wardens, our music director George Emblom, and a server or two. You can tune in to that LiveStream simply by following this link [{LINK}](#); we'll start broadcasting about 9:50am, and keep broadcasting until a few minutes after the service concludes.

The service bulletin, which you can find attached below, contains everything you need to follow along, including the music for the hymn we'll sing together. Please, do join in saying the prayers out loud at home and in singing the hymn! Every small, public act like that, even if done by yourself in the privacy of your own home, will help draw us together in a spirit of prayer and thanksgiving, even while separated physically from one another. Also, please note, while we are using Facebook Live to broadcast the service, you do NOT need a Facebook account in order to watch; just follow the link and that should take you straight to the broadcast.

Last Sunday we had received instructions from the Bishop not to administer the Chalice at the Eucharist at all. In light of that, the "visual" aspect of communion, especially when it comes to the Chalice, becomes elevated higher than usual. In response I used a different Invitation to communion, which draws special attention to that visual aspect as well as to the healing qualities of the Sacrament. Those instructions remain in force, and now that most of us will be joining in by Livestream, the visual and healing aspects of what we're doing together at the altar will only grow in importance. I will continue using that Invitation throughout Lent, and for as long as we need to Livestream the service. The text is, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him that taketh away the sins of the world: Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my soul shall be healed."

This invitation, especially in its Rite I syntax, offers a particularly intimate, even tender gloss on what we do in the Eucharist: while it is a public act of worship, and occurs at the intersection of heaven and earth where we join all the saints and archangels of God in adoration and worship, the Sacrament is also a deeply personal occasion: something we take into our own bodies, the word of grace which speaks healing and forgiveness to the most hidden wounds of our souls, a moment for each of us to enjoy the whole attention of God, as we turn our hearts to behold that love from which we were made and to touch that Body who gave himself up to death for our sakes. This is a love which death cannot contain, and whose resurrection springs not just from his empty tomb, but from within each of our own souls, from the place where his sacramental presence has commingled with our own bodies. Of course the primary commingling happens as we digest the physical elements of the Eucharist; but sight and hearing are no less physical than taste or touch, and we digest his presence in the synapses of our minds, through the gates and windows of our eyes and our ears, as much as through anything else. I hope this new language at the invitation these next few weeks will not be a barrier or block to any of you, but a moment to pursue further intimacy with God even from the remove of your computer screen, where you might all the more truly "behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sins of the world."

Included in Bishop Marc's instructions for the suspension of public services is the suspension of the Daily Office of morning and evening prayer. These Offices are the cornerstone of our praying life here at St. Mark's, and it is a special sadness to me that they cannot publicly continue. I will continue to say them myself in the chapel, and will continue to pray for each person on our parish prayer list as we've been in the pattern of doing. I invite all of you to join me in saying one or both of the offices from home, and in any case to join me in praying through our parish prayer list at least once daily. This is a great opportunity to get more comfortable using the Book of Common Prayer: everything you need to say the offices at home is in the prayer book (and a Bible for the lessons). Believe it or not, it really does work just like a "choose your own adventure" novel, crossed with the script of a play. Just start at the beginning of the office, and keep reading; the rubrics will tell you what to do, and if you get stuck, just write down where you get stuck and keep going. Email me your questions and I'll be happy to answer them!

One frequently asked question: how do I know which psalms to read, and which lessons? You can tell which psalms to say because they are noted within the text of the Prayer Book's psalter itself — today, the 13th of the month, the psalms for evening prayer begin on p. 679 (you can see the note, "Thirteenth Day: Evening" — start

there and keep going till you see “Fourteenth Day: Morning,” which is where you’ll pick up tomorrow morning. We repeat the whole psalter on a 30-day cycle, pegged to the numbered days of the month.) You’ll need a Bible for each of the two readings, but you can find which readings to use by looking at the Daily Office Lectionary for Year Two in the back of the prayer book, starting today with “Friday in Lent 2” on p. 953. There are only three readings assigned for each day; you might read the Old Testament and the Gospel in the morning, and then the Epistle and the Gospel again in the Evening.

Alternatively, you can use a Daily Office app online that more or less approximates what we do here at St. Mark’s, by following this link: (<https://dailyoffice.app>)

Why so much emphasis on prayer when what’s really happening is a public health crisis? Because while we are doing what we can on the public health front, and the isolation it requires feels really limiting in what we can and can’t accomplish for the public benefit (let alone our own), prayer is an active good we can accomplish even from the middle of a quarantine or a hospital bed. Remember, we do more in prayer than simply share our wants, cares, and desires with God, though that’s a crucial starting point. In prayer we also enter the presence of God, and by the Holy Spirit are wrapped up in the work of stitching more tightly together the fabric of creation, raising the whole thing up into the glory of God — where God sees, and loves, and heals, and restores, unmediated by matter or sense, and operates solely by illimitable joy. We can’t always see the good prayer does, but God works through our prayer nonetheless. Raising one another and our world in this way brings us all that much closer to this final, everlasting good.

With continued prayers for your health and safety, and for a holy Lent—

Yours faithfully,
Fr. Blake

Bulletin for the Facebook [Livestream Service](#)

Link to the Facebook [Livestream Service](#)

In order to prevent the spread of Coronavirus, and in accordance with instructions from the Bishop of California, we will be **suspending all public services until the end of March.**

On Sundays, tune into our Facebook Livestream at 10AM PST, to participate virtually in the limited worship we are able to offer.

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