

# THE PHILADELPHIA ORDINARIATE POST

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A NEWSLETTER OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC CHURCH  
THE PERSONAL ORDINARIATE OF THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA

[WWW.SJBRIDGEPORT.ORG](http://WWW.SJBRIDGEPORT.ORG)

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April, 2020

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

This Holy Week will be unlike any that we have experienced. The principal services will be live-streamed, since the restrictions on gatherings of more than ten people remain in effect. The important thing to remember, however, is that it is still Holy Week. The substance abides. This is our annual opportunity to enter into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – those cosmic as well as earthly events by which we are saved. It is His death and resurrection which have changed everything. They offer us the chance to live in the love of God in this life and in the next.

Jesus defeats death, and we no longer need fear dying. Unless Jesus returns earlier, we will all die. But death for us is no longer the final indignity, something to be feared above all else. Rather, as we share life and death with Christ, who has gone before us in life and death, we are the more closely united with Him. Death is our passage to be with Him in perfect intimacy.

As Christians we are ever grateful for the promise of heaven, as well as for the blessings of communion with God in Christ which we enjoy on earth. And we never forget what this has cost Jesus: His rejection by His chosen people, the pain and humiliation of the Cross, the agony of bearing the burden of the sins of the whole world – and death. He dares to die, that we might live.

He dies the death which sinners deserve, even though He was without sin Himself and didn't deserve to die. But He does not stay dead. He rises the third day. He kills off death. This, too, we celebrate at this time of the year. We follow in His footsteps, by the grace which He gives us. Especially in Holy Week, we ask Him to conform us ever more perfectly to Himself.

How we go about this will be different this year. Rather than being present in church for the services, we will be “watching” them on the computer or television. Even so, it is still possible to pray. Some practical suggestions. Plan ahead. Take a few minutes before a service to be quiet, to put things in order, and set up the electronics. During the service, do not multitask (as we so often do when we are on the computer), ignore email and texts, do not answer the phone or try to read the paper. Join in the responses out loud. Follow along in the leaflet, which is posted on the parish web site (view it on your phone or print it out ahead of time). You might even consider standing and kneeling at the usual times in the service. You might even find that the live-stream allows for greater focus and devotion.

I know many of you miss your regular Communion. That is to be expected. But remember that God does not restrict His grace to sacraments. He is more generous than we can imagine. I'm sure that when we enter into the Mass by live-stream, He will not penalize us. Rather He will give all the grace He would have given us in Communion – and more. Be open to it. Expect it.

You will see some liturgical changes, necessary to accommodate current conditions. They are, however, modest, for which I am grateful. All the Holy Week services are “private.” Here are the times for the ones which will be live-streamed:

## **Palm Sunday**

Blessing of Palms & Sung Mass, 10 a.m.

*Distribution of Palms curbside in front of the church, 11:30 a.m. & 5 p.m.*

## **Maundy Thursday**

Sung Mass, Procession to the Altar of Repose 7:30 p.m.

## **Good Friday**

Good Friday Liturgy, noon-3

(Veneration of the Cross, Mass of the Presanctified  
Preaching on the Seven Last Words from the Cross)

## **Holy Saturday**

Vigil & First Mass of Easter, 8:30 p.m.

## **Easter Day**

Sung Mass, 10 a.m.

### **Palms**

Since the Palm Sunday Mass is private, I will be distributing palms outside in front of the church on Palm Sunday at noon and 5 p.m. Curbside service: drive by and pick up a blessed palm. I will also save palms (refrigerated) for distribution after the restrictions on travel have been lifted, so you will be able to get a palm even if you don't get one on Palm Sunday.

### **Confession & Contrition**

Even if public Masses are suspended, Confessions are still possible. I have shifted the regular time to Saturdays, 11-noon. I will be in the back part of the confessional to allow more distance between the penitent and me. If someone is already in the confessional, please wait in the front of the church, to reduce the chance that you might overhear something. The church door at the top of the ramp is the one which will be open. I am also available by appointment.

For those of you who cannot or should not go out, remember that contrition is the means by which we receive forgiveness. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "Contrition is sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again. When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called 'perfect' (contrition of charity). Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible." In other words, contrition is sorrow for sin because our sin offends the love which God has for us. (By contrast, we can be sorry for our sins because we don't like them, because they make us look bad, because we'd rather be righteous, etc. – such is not perfect contrition, though such sorrow can lead to it.) Contrition allows God to forgive us, even if we cannot come to the sacrament of confession. This should give us comfort when we cannot come.

It is remarkable how people have altered their routines to avoid infection by the coronavirus and for the common good. Would it not be wonderful if we – individually and corporately – took the contagion of sin as seriously as we take the virus?

### **Pledges**

Coping with the virus has meant many people have been laid off. Others have seen their savings and retirement diminish significantly. There is and will be a considerable economic toll to all this. Meanwhile, expenses go on, including those of St John's. The Thrift Shop is closed, so we've lost that income, and there has been no Sunday collection. If you are in a position to continue your support of the parish, could you put a check in the mail? You can also contribute on the web site through Pay Pal (they take a 3% cut). A special thanks to those who have already been mailing their pledges to us. Through past generosity, both divine and human, the parish is not in financial peril. But the needs continue, as does our need to offer to God from the bounty He has given us.

Our on-line offerings now include Sunday and Holy Week Masses, Sunday coffee hour (noon), the Wednesday Bible study (11 a.m.) and daily Evening Prayer (5 p.m.).

Sunday live-stream: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_kIDXBzK-DvK3o-2BerZzQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_kIDXBzK-DvK3o-2BerZzQ)

Coffee Hour: see the link on the web site

Bible Study: see the link on the web site

Evening Prayer: see the link on the web site

A very special thanks goes to James Griffin for countless hours spent getting the video up to speed for the live-streaming of our services. I know the live-stream means a lot to people, and we have James to thank for making it possible.

Yours faithfully,

Fr David Ousley