

Dear Parishioners of Saint Augustine of Canterbury Parish,

As I mentioned at Mass this past Tuesday night, our last Mass for some time to come, this will be a Lent we will never forget. We have opportunities, though, to make this a Lent we will always remember.

Yes, the public celebration of Mass has been suspended and you are dispensed, by Bishop Braxton, from the obligation of participating in Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation until further notice.

However, this does not mean that we are to take a holiday from our relationships with Jesus, our Savior; God our Father; God the Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier; or from our Church, the Body of Christ. Rather, we can use this time of less distraction from school, sports, and other events, to spend time individually, as well as with our spouses and families, in drawing closer to God in prayer.

First, we are invited to recall that, despite what we see and hear going around us, God loves us all. He created us to receive his love and to love him in return. As I get older, I realize more and more that God is the one who is constant in his love and care for me. He must be first in our lives, if our lives are to make sense and have meaning. This Lent we can spend quiet time in prayer with God, thanking him for his love, and rededicating ourselves to loving him in return. A slow, meditative praying of the Lord's Prayer, the "Our Father," may be a good way to start.

We are called to realize that God speaks to us through the Scriptures, the Bible. As I mentioned Tuesday night, we now have time to sit down, individually or as a family or household, and read God's word. One place to start might be the First Letter of Saint Peter, near the end of the New Testament, the second half of our Bibles. It is a good summary of how Jesus fulfilled the promises of the past and gives his gift of life to us. It is short, we might be able to read it in one sitting. Another book to read is the Gospel of Saint John. This is longer, but Jesus describes the importance of believing in him for eternal life. Our readings last Sunday, this Sunday, and next Sunday are from this Gospel. Look for the misunderstanding and irony that people show as they encounter Jesus. Look for the love that Jesus shows to them. Look for the declaration of Thomas regarding the risen Jesus: "My Lord and My God!"

We also have opportunities to view the Mass on television and online. EWTN, on cable and satellite, broadcasts a live Mass at 7:00 AM and, in general, repeats it at 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Bishop Robert Barron, or a priest who works with him, will have Mass at wordonfire.org/daily-mass that can be viewed at any time. The Saint Louis Cathedral and possibly churches in our diocese will also have Masses available online; check their websites. I will pass along more information as I receive it. The daily Mass readings can be found at: usccb.org or in the Word Among Us booklets. Tune in to Catholic Radio, 90.3 FM, for Masses, prayer, and faith sharing. Please pray the Spiritual Communion Prayer found in the bulletin.

If you would like to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, please contact me. We could meet in church but, per the bishop's directive, we have to stay six feet apart. Bishop Braxton has also given permission for general absolution at this time; I will share more information about that in the near future.

If I can be of any assistance, please call me. I will keep you all in my prayers and at Mass.

Let us make this Lent one we will always remember, as we draw closer to God and his love.

Fr. Von Deeke
Pastor
Saint Augustine of Canterbury Parish