

April 5, 2020

Dear Parishioners of St. Paul and St. Mark,

Starting Palm Sunday, we enter the holiest of weeks, a time to commemorate the salvation of mankind from death through the suffering of the Son of God. The most important liturgy of the year is celebrated on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, culminating in the Easter Vigil on Saturday evening, but because of our inability to meet as a parish, **I will not be offering an online mass for these three days**. These liturgies are complex and presume the presence of the faithful, and we do not have the resources to celebrate this complexity by myself in a private chapel in a satisfactory way. In light of this consideration, I want to invite all of you to consider virtually attending these services as celebrated by either Pope Francis or Archbishop Thompson, for they will be professionally recorded, in the presence of a few other priests/deacons, and have a lector and some music, things which we are not able to provide as a parish at this time. However, **I will record a live Easter morning mass on Sunday, April 12 at 10am and it will be available on our youtube channel**; then our virtual masses will continue as normal throughout the following weeks, and it is only during these three days of holy week (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday) in which I will not offer any virtual masses.

There are great benefits to watching either the Holy Father or Archbishop Thompson for these liturgies, for although the Holy Father is 3000 miles away, and the Archbishop a couple hundred miles away, they are both an integral part of the living vitality of the Catholic Church in our parishes. There is immense value for every Catholic to make a formal connection with them, even when limited to only their digital presence and not being able to experience their physical presence.

I would like to leave you with one brief spiritual reflection on the liturgy of Holy Week, in light of our current global situation. One of the most moving events during the Triduum is the night of the last supper, followed by Jesus' time of prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. There, he prays a very intimate and moving prayer, one which causes blood to seep through the pores of his skin when he says, "Father, if possible, let this chalice pass from me. And yet not my will, but your will be done." This is the moment of total surrender by the Son, a moment of complete trust and abandonment to the Father. It is a moment saturated in blood and dripping in fear, but Jesus continues to make an inner act of trust, surrendering his personal preferences to the will of the Father. So also in our lives, the great drama of life is not something which happens on the outside but something that happens on the inside. We become more like Christ, not just by going to mass every weekend, but by surrendering to the will of the Father, and this surrender is something that happens on the inside. Although we are not able to gather as a community, external events are unfolding in such a way that, in my opinion, we are being invited more deeply

than ever before into the mysteries of Holy Week. This could be the holiest Holy Week of your life, and I invite you to soak it up.

God Bless!

Fr. Tony

- Holy Week with the Holy Father: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en.html> and <http://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/covid-19-ewtn-holy-week-schedule/64851>
- Holy Week with Archbishop Thompson: <https://www.archindy.org/criterion/local/2020/04-03/holyweek-schedule.html>