

COVID-19 PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL



1-Pray for people who are infected with COVID-19 or facing quarantine.

Jesus, during Your ministry on Earth You showed Your power and caring by healing people of all ages and stations of life from physical, mental, and spiritual ailments. Be present now to people who need Your loving touch because of COVID-19. May they feel Your power of healing through the care of doctors and nurses.

Take away the fear, anxiety, and feelings of isolation from people receiving treatment or under quarantine. Give them a sense of purpose in pursuing health and protecting others from exposure to the disease. Protect their families and friends and bring peace to all who love them.

2-Pray for people at higher risk of developing the disease.

Dear Lord, we lift to You our concern for people who are more likely than others to become severely ill from COVID-19 — the elderly and people with chronic health conditions. Protect them from harm and be their comfort in this time of uncertainty and, for many, preventive isolation from loved ones.

3-Pray for medical professionals, caregivers, and researchers responsible for fighting the new coronavirus.

God, as more people get sick, healthcare workers and first responders are working longer hours with fewer supplies and with more risk of contracting the new coronavirus themselves. Renew their energy and sustain them on long shifts. Bring Your protection upon them as they work with patients. Multiply their supplies so they have the protective items needed to stay safe on the job.

Inspire and invigorate the research doctors developing better tests to diagnose the virus, create vaccines to prevent it, and identify protocols to eliminate the disease's spread.

4-Pray for leaders responsible for making decisions about the new coronavirus.

Father, we seek Your wisdom daily. Be with people making decisions that affect the lives and futures of our families, communities, countries, and the wider world. We pray that they communicate clearly, truthfully, and calmly — with each other and with the public — and that their messages are received and heeded. May truth and empathy be the touchstones of people setting policies for our protection.

5-Pray for families adjusting to new ways of life.

Holy Spirit, as families adjust to everyone being home as businesses and schools close, we ask that You guide people in their new realities. Give spouses grace for each other. Prompt worn-out parents to speak words of kindness and encouragement to their children. Help children find creative ways to experience the beauty of all You have created and continue learning.

6-Pray for business owners and families facing financial stress.

Jesus, we thank You for Your faithfulness in how you have guided and equipped people in their jobs and have provided in the past. It can be scary and overwhelming not knowing how bills and obligations will be met or to not be able to provide for families. As people feel financial strain during the uncertainty, bring them comfort and peace, reminding them that You are there for them. Provide for them in their times of need.

7-Pray for grocery store workers and delivery drivers.

Lord, we are so grateful for all the people who continue to work each day so that people are able to eat. We ask that You bless and protect them as they serve. Give them grace to handle disgruntled customers during supplies shortages. Keep their bodies healthy as they unload and stock boxes of supplies. Keep their cars and trucks running smoothly as they deliver needed supplies and food people have ordered online. And please protect them all from contracting the new coronavirus.

8-Pray for the disease to stop spreading.

Almighty God, we know that everything is in Your sovereign control. We ask that You keep this new coronavirus from continuing to spread. Give government officials the ability to safely handle people arriving from other countries. Help people decide to stay home instead of traveling or going out needlessly. Holy Spirit, remind people to wash their hands properly. And while it may be heartbreaking, comfort families as they decide to keep their distance from elderly or other high-risk family members.

9-For those who died of the COVID-19, may God grant them eternal rest, and we pray for their families, may the Lord give them strength during this time of loss.

GOSPEL*John 14:15-21*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Jesus said to his disciples:
 'If you love me you will keep my commandments.
 I shall ask the Father,
 and he will give you another Advocate
 to be with you for ever,
 that Spirit of truth
 whom the world can never receive
 since it neither sees nor knows him;
 but you know him,
 because he is with you, he is in you.
 I will not leave you orphans;
 I will come back to you.
 In a short time the world will no longer see me;
 but you will see me,
 because I live and you will live.
 On that day you will understand that I am in my Father
 and you in me and I in you.
 Anybody who receives my commandments and keeps them
 will be one who loves me;
 and anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father,
 and I shall love him and show myself to him.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

HOMILY:**RECEIVING THE SPIRIT**

The Samaritans had received the Word and been baptised 'in the name of the Lord Jesus'. But it was only when the Apostles laid hands on them that they received the Holy Spirit. This rather curious 'separation' between baptism and the coming of the Spirit in a way foreshadows the sacrament of Confirmation. However, the 'separation' should not be pressed too rigidly. Fundamentally, Christian Baptism does impart the Spirit. The narrative of Acts at this point probably has in mind a more experiential ('Pentecostal!') awareness of the gift.

The Gospel, John 14:15-21, presents a further extract from Jesus' long discourse at the Last Supper. As we noted last week, the discourse oscillates back and forth between two understandings of Jesus' 'going away' and 'return'.

On the more immediate level there is the 'going away' of his death and the 'return' of his appearances as risen Lord on the third day. At another level, the discourse addresses his more permanent 'going away' and absence from the disciples following his final return to the Father. The return 'on that day' of which he speaks would then be his return on the last day at the end of time.

HOMILY CONTINUED:

SHARING THE RISEN LIFE: But here there is more to say. The Fourth Gospel plays down the traditional expectation of Jesus' coming at the last day in the direction of emphasising his abiding presence in the community. This lies behind the statement: 'In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live'. In contrast to 'the world' (unbelievers), for whom Jesus after his death will cease to exist, believers will 'see' him and 'also will live' in the sense of here and now experiencing his presence in the community and sharing his risen life. Thus the passage continues to address directly the situation of the disciples in the period when his appearances as risen Lord have ceased, the situation of the Church that prevails to this day. Naturally, the disciples will feel the loss of his comforting physical presence. But if they grasp the sense in which he will continue to be present, they should not feel 'orphaned'. In this connection Jesus speaks of 'another Paraclete' that he will ask the Father to give. (The implication is that Jesus himself has been a 'Paraclete' for the disciples during his earthly life.)

COMFORTING PRESENCE: The essential idea behind 'Paraclete' is that of someone who stands beside you in time of difficulty, providing a comforting, supportive and encouraging presence. One thinks perhaps of a highly respected person whom you might ask to go to court with you and act as character witness. Such is the idea that the Gospel applies here (and in several other places) to the Spirit. Though Jesus may no longer be physically present, the comfort and assurance his presence gave the disciples during his lifetime will continue in the presence of the Holy Spirit. In the face of constant trial and rejection from the world, the Paraclete will be for the disciples 'the Spirit of Truth' in the sense of imparting to them a conviction that what they believe and hold on to is indeed reality in the most profound sense. We come close here to the fine statement in the Second Reading, 1 Peter 3:15-18: 'Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that is within you'.

LOVE PREVAILS: Finally, we should note the way in which the Gospel begins and ends with the sense that believers 'have entered into the same reciprocity of love that unites the Father and the Son' (C. K. Barrett). Though the language may suggest it to be the case, the Gospel does not mean that God's love is conditional upon human observance of the commandments. The essential commandment is that of love. What the Gospel is saying is that when the community is indeed one where love prevails, the atmosphere of love that it experiences is nothing other than a sharing in the communion of love that is the Godhead.

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PRAYER OF THE WEEK

God
You speak to me.
You are close.
I hear as words from my deepest self.
From here I am to be healed,
created and consoled.

Let me feel living waters
splash upon my skin, my heart.

Drench me in your passion and the gift of you.
Teach me who I am in you.
Hold me strong
and don't let go
even when I do.

Keep my eyes, open, shut,
transfixed to you and your eternal desire.
I am certain
you will draw me to yourself
because you are Love's Self, who delights
in the simplest murmuring of praise
which I and he and she and they
cannot help but hum.

Marburg, Marlene.

STEWARDSHIP:

"For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be God's will, than for doing evil." (1 Peter 3:17)

The old line says "if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans." Many of us are diligent in our planning and making sure things are progressing smoothly. Then disaster strikes, we don't get the result that was intended or an unforeseen problem arises. Many times we may respond negatively and ask, "Why me? I did everything right!" Here's the thing – adversity humbles us and reminds us of our dependence on God and not on our own self-reliance. Rest assured, God has a better plan in store for you.

JOKE OF THE WEEK



PARISH NOTICES

CHANGES TO ACCESS FOR CHURCHES AND PLACES OF WORSHIP. A letter from the Bishops of Victoria.

Members of the Catholic community in Victoria, The Catholic Dioceses of Melbourne, Ballarat, Sale and Sandhurst.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Throughout this situation of the Coronavirus pandemic our prayers and solidarity have been with you all, and will continue to guide the challenging decisions we have been called to make.

Despite the many weeks of worry and social restrictions, we are delighted that as of 11.59pm yesterday, Tuesday 12 May 2020, churches in Victoria may now be open in certain circumstances.

This opportunity for small gatherings and for some quiet moments of prayer in the sacramental presence of Our Lord is a gentle first step in the right direction, and rightly a moment of rejoicing for God's people. We are pleased to work constructively with our communities to make appropriate adjustments. Strict restrictions still govern our actions due to the risks of COVID-19 and we are all being asked to show patience and fortitude.

Each Diocese is communicating with their parishes about how various ministries, including sacramental care, will be conducted in this first stage of the easing of social restrictions. We wish to be fully compliant with the directives that apply across Victoria, so that we ensure the protection of elderly and vulnerable people, and work together for the common good of our communities.

The conditions under which a church can be open include a collection of contact details (for the purposes of contact-tracing if it becomes necessary), strict monitoring of numbers, ongoing hygiene requirements, publicising the scheduled times for private worship, and public worship limited to ten people at a time.

Arrangements for liturgies and access to churches while ensuring these conditions are met will vary, depending on the facilities and resources that are available in each particular community. We recognise that deciding on these arrangements and putting them in place is not straightforward, and we ask for patience and understanding during this time.

This new stage of restrictions is subject to changing guidance that we receive from the State Government authorities, and we are advised this will be reviewed at the end of May.

After a difficult time for all of us, including many new pressures on families and great challenges for healthcare and emergency workers, we share in the disappointment that social restrictions are likely to continue for some time.

Nevertheless, we act with one accord in doing what is most prudent and loving for the sake of those most susceptible to the virus. We rejoice that Christ is with us and will walk with us as we begin the long journey out of the current stage of restrictions.

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus.

Prayers of the people: Sixth Sunday of Easter Year A, 17 May

INTRODUCTORY REFLECTION

The scriptures continually subvert our desire for tidy catechism-style formulas.

Life is messy and confusing, so too the word of God. We might see in today's first reading grounds for a neat distinction between baptism (in Jesus' name) and confirmation (the giving of the Holy Spirit by the apostles' laying on of hands).

This is confounded by other accounts of the freewheeling activity of the Spirit in the early church and by the later complex history of confirmation.



What is clear, however, is today's urgent need for us, the people of God, to realise how gifted we are in word and spirit. Living this boldly will make for a messy church but that's exactly what Pope Francis welcomes.

Presider

Dear friends, God our Father sent the Paraclete to us as Jesus promised. United in the Spirit of Truth, let us pray for the needs of all our sisters and brothers.

Reader

1. We pray for the world-wide church, our local diocese and our parish. May the church at every level be a vibrant community of the Holy Spirit. (Pause for silent prayer) Lord, hear us.
2. We pray for all who looked forward to being baptised at the Easter Vigil this year. May they await their full initiation with patience, faith and hope. (Pause for silent prayer) Lord, hear us.
3. We pray for leaders guiding their nations through the coronavirus crisis. May they chart the way forward with wisdom, justice and courage. (Pause for silent prayer) Lord, hear us.
4. We renew our thanks for the dedicated workers and volunteers maintaining essential community services. May they enjoy our full and lasting appreciation. (Pause for silent prayer) Lord, hear us.
5. We pray for the needy and vulnerable in our midst unable to claim government support. May welfare agencies and the whole community come to their aid. (Pause for silent prayer) Lord, hear us.
6. We pray for teachers and support staff throughout the school system. May they meet the challenge of re-opening with enterprise and zeal. (Pause for silent prayer) Lord, hear us.
7. We pray for all whose diversity of culture enriches the life of the nation. May their contribution to the vitality of society be valued and welcomed. (Pause for silent prayer) Lord, hear us.
8. We pray for our families, friends and fellow parishioners. May the experience of the pandemic spur us to work all the more readily for a new world of justice, love and peace. (Pause for silent prayer) Lord, hear us.
9. We pray for the recently deceased, farewelled by so few **Doris Avellino, Matteo Augello**, and for those whose anniversary of death occurs around this time, **Cecilia Santuccioni, Alfred Ciantar**. May they see the face of God and live. (Pause for silent prayer) Lord, hear us.

Presider

God of all goodness, you have made your love known to us in Jesus and still bless us with the Spirit of truth. Keep us on the way that leads to you. We ask this through Christ, our risen Lord.