



## St. Christopher Church

REMEMBERING THE PAST • CELEBRATING THE PRESENT • BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Office of Faith Formation

April 3, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I pray that this message finds you and your families healthy and safe. We are truly experiencing an extraordinary global event. Many of you are trying to balance working from home offices (as I currently am), while also taking on the role of primary educator for your children as they tackle remote learning, on top of your already full time roles of mother, father, husband, wife, partner and everything else which our lives require of us. Some of you may be facing or already experiencing financial insecurity due to businesses being closed, hours being cut or being furloughed or laid off. Nothing could have prepared us for the enormity of the abrupt changes in lifestyle we are experiencing. It is simple to say, "Trust in the Lord. He will not forsake us." While absolutely true, it is still challenging for we humans to understand what we are asked to do as we put our trust in God. We still may experience fear and anxiety. There is so much uncertainty right now, even more so when our very day to day movements are subject to outside control. The added pressure of isolation, self-quarantine and scarcity of everyday items adds to our anxiety. It is easy to feel alone, almost as a form of exile.

The Israelites certainly experienced a form of this a few times in their history. In Exodus, we read of their many struggles and losses of faith and life as they wandered through the desert for forty years until they were allowed to enter the Promised Land. Again, later in their history, the Israelites break their covenant with God, and are a captive, conquered people, in exile for years until they were truly beginning to lose hope of any kind of future. God sent the prophet Jeremiah to deliver a message of hope to the Israelites. In one of the most often quoted Scripture verses, Jeremiah delivers this message to the Israelites in chapter 29, verse 11, *"For I know well the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans to help you, not to harm you...plans to give you hope and a future."* In verse twelve the Lord goes on, *"When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the Lord, and I will change your lot..."*

This message of hope, *especially as we enter Holy Week*, is most appropriate for us to reflect upon. Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup> is Palm Sunday. We recall the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, knowing full well what is to come by the end of the week. He is the hope for our eternal future. His death on the cross and triumph over death by his resurrection has changed our lot. Although he was abandoned by many who loved him, our Lord did not abandon us. When we seek God, when we pray to Him with all our heart, laying our burdens, joys and thanksgiving at the foot of the cross, we will find God and He will listen. With God, there is always hope. Let us do our best to live in hope, especially now.

Our Palm Sunday celebration will look different this year. Gathering together in community, processing into the church with our palms, later creating crosses out of the palms will be not be happening. Or can it?

This year, we are challenged to observe Palm Sunday in our own intimate family Domestic Church. *Prepare for Palm Sunday* by gathering some palm fronds if you happen to have a palm tree, or other green branches. As a family, prepare your home altar. Remember to include a white tablecloth with some sort of red sash or napkin to represent the liturgical color for Palm Sunday. Add at least one candle or two, a crucifix, and a Bible. Place your altar in front of the main television in your home so that your entire family can participate in a livestream of the Palm Sunday Mass. Experience receiving a Spiritual Eucharist in place of the physical Bread of Life.

*Leave your altar visible through the rest of Holy Week.* Livestream a Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper. Parents wash your children's feet. Ask your children to wash yours. On Good Friday, livestream a Stations of the Cross and walk the way of the Cross with your family. On Holy Saturday, livestream a Vigil Mass. *On Easter Sunday, celebrate with our whole faith community on livestream.* (Livestream information available on our webpage or check out the Archdiocese of Los Angeles website:

[la-catholics.org](http://la-catholics.org)

At the beginning of Lent, the students created a calendar of sorts for the 40 days of lent, full of activities/ideas/suggestions to help your family pray, fast and give in preparation for Easter. Even if you only followed it for a few days, look at it again as we enter Holy Week. It will make for a deeper experience of Easter, especially this year.

At this point in time, we do not have a fixed target when we will return to regular class sessions. First Communion, Confirmations, Baptisms at Easter Vigil have all been postponed. We pray that the health crisis will be resolved to a point where we can resume, sooner than later. In any event, the Office of Faith Formation will continue to support the continued formation of your children online by available downloaded lessons or by email. Whether your student is in year one or year two, we are committed to have your children prepared to receive their sacraments when we arrive at the time they are able to receive them.

I, like many of you, have moved to a home office. There was some down time as we transitioned equipment and access to resources, but we are now up and running. Please keep checking on the webpage frequently. Circumstances change often these days. Some material may be emailed. Most will be available to download. Please don't wait for an email. If you have a question or concern, call me right away. I am available by phone, text, email.

*If homework has been assigned, please support your child to complete it. We are counting on your continued partnership in the preparation of your children.*

For Confirmation Students: submit homework via email.

For grades 1-8: Submit any written homework via email. Complete all family activities together. Take a photo of you completing the activity and email the photo to me.

RCIA students: complete the assignment which is currently available on the webpage and others to come. Submit via email.

I will comment on the assignments submitted as soon as possible. Please be patient as there are many of you.

Thank you very much for making the faith formation of your children and family a priority. Our relationship to God and our faith is integral to facing our daily lives with hope and grace.

In my missal the intercession for tonight's evening prayer seems so appropriate to this time:

***Response: Let us trust in God's merciful love as we pray:***

*Let our hearts rejoice in your saving help! For perseverance in faith in times of abandonment-*

***Let us trust in God's merciful love as we pray:***

*For a deepening of love in times of suffering-*

***Let us trust in God's merciful love as we pray:***

*For endurance in times of trial-*

***Let us trust in God's merciful love as we pray:***

*Amen.*

May the grace and merciful love of God our Father, by the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ in union with the Holy Spirit be with you and your family, today and always.

Your Sister In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judi Peña', written in a cursive style.

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