

RECTOR'S LETTER

Dear friends in Christ,

We're all aware, even overwhelmed, with information regarding the coronavirus. For better or for worse, we're constantly steeped in breaking news and novel statistics concerning this pandemic. When many of our public health restrictions began to take place, I shared with you an observation: it seemed like we were being forced to observe some



public health version of Lent. We were now required to fast from social engagement; to take on faithful and important health practices for our own good and for the good of our neighbors; and to become more intentional about our daily actions.

A month later, the liturgical season of Lent approaches its end. However, our forced public health Lent-like season does not yet have an end. Further, our state and national health restrictions will prudently prevent us from communally and publicly celebrating Holy Week and Easter. While this is necessary, it also fills me with great sadness, as I'm sure it does you.

While we cannot gather together to observe Holy Week and Easter, I cannot think of a more necessary and vital time in our modern history for us to celebrate and proclaim the beauty, glory, and power of Easter than now.

In the raising of Jesus from the dead, God shows us that where fear and death once grazed, where fear and death seemed to have a hold on us, hope, life, and radical new possibilities can, and will, take place. The Easter message, the Good News that Christ is risen, is deeply needed. This year, the glorious resurrection of Jesus ought to be celebrated more than ever before in our lifetime.

Therefore, I invite you to celebrate Easter with extra gusto. While this might seem difficult, or worse, inappropriate, given our current pandemic, it is precisely because of our battle with fear and death that we need to shout, louder than ever before, "Alleluia! Christ is risen!" It is precisely because we are up against an invisible foe that we need to not only trust in God, but cling to the Easter story. I hope you'll once again come to hear and embrace (this time through Facebook) our Lord's passion, death, and resurrection. We begin our journey this Sunday at 10:00 a.m. with our Palm Sunday service, followed by our Holy Week service schedule as posted below. If you have not joined us on Facebook or you do not have a Facebook account, all you need do is visit our Facebook page (facebook.com/stjohnsepiscopalbellefonte).

HOLY WEEK SERVICE TIMES ON FACEBOOK LIVE:

Maundy Thursday | 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday | 12:00 p.m.

Holy Saturday | 8:00 p.m.

Easter Day | 10:00 a.m.



Yours in Christ, ~Father Carlos †

CURBSIDE PALMS



Hosanna in the highest heaven! Following our Palm Sunday (April 5) service on Facebook Live, blessed palms will be available for curbside pick-up outside the church until 12:30 p.m. Father Carlos will be distributing palms to ensure they remain inside the church and are not handled by multiple people. No need to get out of your car! Just pull up, and palms will be brought to you. If you are running late or

want to schedule a later time to pick up your palms, please call Fr. Carlos – 914.648.8584.

A PASTORAL MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR: EXTENDED SUSPENSION OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

(Previously sent on March 28, 2020 via Mailchimp email)

Dear People of Saint John's,

In consultation with the Presiding Bishop's office, and in keeping with various guidelines and timetables from the medical and scientific community, Bishop Audrey Scanlan has decided to extend our cancellation of public worship across the Diocese until the end of May. There is no official date when we'll be able to return to our normal worship life and schedule. However, there is a hope that Pentecost (May 31) might serve as our first Sunday back in our sanctuaries.

We will continue live-streaming our Sunday and Wednesday masses on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsepiscopalbellefonte>); we will also live-stream our Holy Week services; and we will continue offering our Tuesday and Thursday virtual coffee hours as a time to check-in, stay in touch, and pray together.

For the next few Sundays and Holy Week, Saint John's will be collaborating with Saint Mark's, Lewistown, where former parishioner and friend of the parish, Father John Harwood, serves as priest. You will see John in our live-streams preaching and celebrating on occasion, and one or two of our services will be streamed from Saint Mark's. It is important, especially during this pandemic, to come together and share resources. I'm glad our two parishes can participate in this practice through prayer and worship.

Last, I want to share with you my deep sadness to not be able to celebrate Holy Week and Easter with you. As most of you know, this would have been my first Holy Week and Easter at Saint John's. I was so excited to lead you in these sacred liturgies of the Church that Erik Clayton and I had planned back in January. But here we are, looking at a year without a proper Easter celebration. And yet, we know that Easter has already taken place. We know that Christ reigns victorious and conquers the darkest forces of this world. But if you like me are feeling a bit somber about Easter, especially on a grey and rainy Central Pennsylvania day, I want to share with you a poem—one that I hope will remind you of the beauty, majesty, and power of Easter.

Yours in Christ,
Father Carlos

A Coming Alleluia

They say there will be no Easter this year.
No hats.
No hunts.
No hymning.
No lilies to fill a bright room
with a fanfare of pollen.
No garden, no angel,
no victory.

They say that our journey
born in sackcloth and ashes
will lead us at last
to nowhere.

And so we sit worried
that the tomb, this year,
will be found, for once,
still full.

That Mary and the others
will leave with their spices
and come back home with nothing.
That this year the women will finally
end their work –
anoint and then
leave empty.

Ssh. Be still.
Do you not hear her?
Clucking close by like an old mother hen,
brooding and sighing and
stretching her wings?

Fear not, she says,
for I did it before –
in the silence
in the dark
in a closed and locked room
in a world that had known
only death.

Did I not once prove
once for all
that there is nothing you can do,
no decision you can make
(for good or for ill)
that can stop
me
rising?

Written by Mother Erika Takacs

FROM THE DEACON'S PERCH



“O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come to you.” There is comfort in surrendering, in realizing that we have a God who wants to know our grief and pain.

Dorothy Day famously said, “My strength returns to me with my cup of coffee and the reading of the psalms.” Today’s psalm, in many ways, is like a balm for the displacement of hard times. What about us? When we feel lost and disheartened, where do we look for hope and strength? Does our suffering separate us or lead us out to encounter others? Where might the Spirit be calling us to greater courage, community, and creativity in times of dryness and struggle, so that we can share the way together?

This pandemic seems to be taking its toll, with many of us practicing social distancing, leery of going out to shop, afraid that we aren’t keeping our 6-foot boundary even from our loved ones. Amid empty streets, we are homebound and restless. Where can we find comfort in these troubled times? Father Carlos has arranged for us to meet online on Tuesday mornings and Thursday evenings. We are conducting virtual mass from church on Facebook, and of course there are the phone, text messaging, Facebook, Zoom, and other media to stay in touch with each other and our church family. I realize it’s not the same as face-to-face, but try to connect. Isolation can be very disheartening and lead to depression and anxiety. As family, we can support each other. Communicating and checking in that all is well helps in this time of trial.

“Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things pass. God does not change. Patience

achieves everything. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices.” — St. Teresa of Avila



I would like all of you to know that I am available to help with grocery shopping, to pick up items at the hardware store or pharmacy, or anything that I can assist you with. I can be reached at **814-883-0430**. If there is a financial difficulty, please let Fr. Carlos and me know so that we can help. This is all confidential.

I want to thank everyone for the successful St. Patrick’s Day Dinner. Even though we did only take-out, we sold out in 2½ hours and netted \$1500. We also took in \$500 in profit from the pancake dinner. Thank you for all your support of these fund-raisers.

~Deacon Alex



April Vestry Collection Counters

Peggy Jackson and Deb Cree

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Newsletter editors: Debra Cree and Kathryn Grossman

April 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9:30 Monthly Parish Requiem via Facebook	2 7:00 pm Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom	3	4 Bdays: Sara Witmer
5 Palm Sunday Blessing of Palms Parish Mass 10 via Facebook 	6	7 10:00 am Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom	8 9:30 Low Mass via Facebook	9 Maundy Thursday 7:00 pm Worship service via Facebook Bdays: Myrna Alterio Steve Dillon Cody Fitzgerald	10 Good Friday 12:00 noon Worship service via Facebook	11 Holy Saturday 8:00 Easter Vigil via Facebook
12 EASTER SUNDAY Parish Mass 10 via Facebook 	13	14 10:00 am Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom	15 9:30 Low Mass via Facebook 7:00 pm Vestry	16 7:00 pm Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom	17	18
19 Second Sunday of Easter Parish Mass 10 via Facebook	20 Bdays: Susan Christy	21 10:00 am Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom	22 9:30 Low Mass via Facebook	23 7:00 pm Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom Bdays: Finn Quigley	24	25
26 Third Sunday of Easter Parish Mass 10 via Facebook	27	28 10:00 am Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom	29 9:30 Low Mass via Facebook Bdays: Daniel McGinley, Sr.	30 7:00 pm Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom		