Through Holy Week to Easter

2020

We travel Christ’s Way at Home this Year

Hello,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

It has been nearly a month now since this strange and most awful time of the coronavirus has been upon our world. In the last couple of weeks its impact has now been felt in our home here in Allegany County. These weeks have brought us much about which to pray – for the souls of those who have died to the virus, for those who have lived in the throes of it but have happily survived, for all the medical practitioners and other first responders who have put their own lives at risk and have been working to exhaustion, for families and friends who have been worried about loved ones and especially those who are most vulnerable to the virus, for people with altered and alien work schedules and ways of accomplishing that work, for those who have been put out of work and for those whose business’ survival is questioned, for the discomfort and fear of young ones who have little understanding and many questions and fears of what this time really is all about and especially what it means for them, for the homeless and the poor who have so few resources to even begin providing and protecting themselves through the months, for those in fear and trembling. There is so much for which to pray. As people of faith, we know the One to whom we must turn and who is the Source of all that is essential for us is no one but God. That is why we have continued and will continue to have our times for prayer and worship – individually, in families, and as a church community. Please do know Stephanie and I, here in our home, hold all of you in our prayers and in our caring and in our love. I’ve attempted to stay in touch with many of you through various ways and, so far, our people seem to be managing against the worst of what is possible as a result of our desperate times. Praise be to God for this. I remember you each day in my prayers and give thanks for you.

Currently, our Bishop is telling us that services will remain suspended in church buildings through May 10. He’s also quick to add that this date is very fluid depending upon how the disease in our area progresses, and what advice he gets from our Presiding Bishop and from the Governor of our State. A certainty is that our worshiping in our homes rather than at the Church will continue through Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Easter Sunday, and the weeks following Easter. For Christians, this is another dimension to our hardship as these weeks are so rich in their traditions and liturgies. To be apart from one another and to miss what we otherwise draw from one another in these holy weeks is a loss. I surely feel that.

However, we can continue to worship in our own homes. We can continue to worship together as a community through the radio station in Angelica and our access to that worship on the internet every Sunday. We can continue to make holy space in our homes at which we center our worship, whether alone or with family. We can continue to pray for one another and to keep in touch with one another through telephone calls to check in and through the Facebook sites online. We are not left alone and abandoned in fact. That is Good News …. and to God be glory and praise!

To assist us in the holiness and our worship in these coming weeks, especially from Palm Sunday through Easter Day, I am sending this mailing to all in our parish. I’m hopeful it will be useful to you and bind us, in our separation and distancing, into the community we know ourselves to be.

The first set of papers is the Sunday service and readings we’ll use for Palm Sunday. They are on violet-colored paper. These are what I will use in recording the service for next Sunday. In addition, I’m including a palm cross for each household so we can continue having that symbol with its liturgy of blessing to grace our homes. Also, because we are not having a Good Friday service in the churches, the full length of the Passion Gospel will be included in the Palm Sunday liturgy. It also is on violet paper and follows the Palm Sunday service. There will be several hymns for this Sunday.

Thursday, April 9, is Maundy Thursday, observing the Last Supper of Jesus and the Institution of the Holy Communion. I am including in the packet the Collect and Lessons for Maundy Thursday following that for Palm Sunday. I’d suggest you read the Gospel for that day as you sit at your table at home and know that Jesus is there with you, whether alone or with your family. Honor the ministry instituted on this day, not by the washing of feet necessarily as is in the liturgy, but instead washing your hands; or if there are others with you, washing each other’s hands. In this time of halting the spread of the coronavirus, as washing our hands frequently is so urged and important, it may be this symbol is the best way this year we have of showing our love and care for one another, and which Jesus showed us his love and care on the night in which he was betrayed.

Good Friday is April 10. I’ve included a liturgy appropriate to Good Friday and which we can use in our homes and at whatever the time is best for you. It is the Liturgy of the Stations of the Cross. I’ve taken it from The Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Knoxville, TN. The pictures accompanying the stations are from the Icon Guild who drew and donated the icons and to Peg Hess who photographed them. You can read and meditate at each of the fourteen stations sitting or standing in one place, or you can walk about the spaces of your home and bring the holiness of this time into each of those spaces, or (if the weather outside should turn out to be acceptable) you can walk the Stations outdoor in the holiness of God’s creation …. so long as you keep your distance from others. The Liturgy of the Stations of the Cross is on ivory-colored paper in your packet.

And finally, there is the Lessons’ sheet for Easter Day which is on white paper. Along with that there are the Lessons’ sheets for each Sunday after Easter through May 10. Hopefully, by then . . . . . There is also included for this time beginning Easter Sunday a new Morning Prayer packet with the service changed from Lent and what is appropriate through the Easter season. It is folded as a booklet and is on white paper.

Lastly, remember to tune in on Sundays for our worship time together at 9:00 a.m. If you are in Angelica you can likely receive the service on WRAQ at 92.7 FM. If you’re outside the village and beyond the broadcast area, WRAQ also lives streams its broadcast on the internet at www.WRAQ.org

Thank you to Mary Warner for arranging this time, and to Mary and to Ken Ralyea for helping to supply music for the hymns. Also, remember the Facebook page on which to post updates on how you’re doing or to read information and articles I’m posting for you during this time we’re in. Go on Facebook and do a search for either St. Paul’s Coffee Hour Chat or Christ Church Coffee Hour Chat, as appropriate. You also can get information through this time on our web pages: www.ChristChurchCuba.org or www.StPaulsAngelica.org. Our Sunday services have been well received, having now nearly 250 listeners each Sunday from all over the County, our State, and the nation! It seems to be a good ministry. If you haven’t already joined us, please begin this Sunday.

God’s blessing upon each of you. Stephanie and I will miss you in these coming weeks, but are praying you will stay well and that makes our distancing for now worthwhile. God’s blessing on you.

Fr. Rick