

Eucharist in a time of Coronavirus

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March 20, 2020 Fr. Jim Sabak, OFM
c_THEOLOGY Eucharist

In an attempt to mitigate somewhat the fears of the faithful of the diocese where I serve, who are experiencing anxiety and stress brought about by the prohibitions on daily and weekly celebrations of Mass during the outbreak of the Coronavirus, I composed this piece for the diocesan website. I offer it here as a way not only to understand this moment in our personal, communal, and sacramental histories, but also as a way, hopefully, to open further dialogue for all of us on the deeper meaning of a very peculiar Lenten Season.



It is often not recognized enough that the period of time following the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday until

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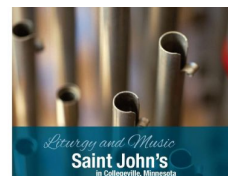
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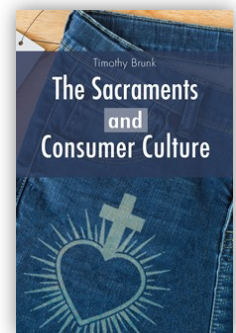
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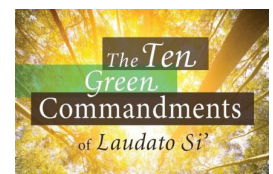
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the first spark that ignites the wick of the Paschal Candle at the Paschal Vigil is a moment of “Real Absence” of the presence of Jesus Christ. He has died, he now lies in a tomb, and for everyone who associated with or knew him, that was the end of all that once seemed promising. While we who believe know that in truth this was not the end, we would be mistaken to gloss over the death of Jesus Christ as a type of sleep. Each year as the faithful pass through this point in our celebration of the Paschal Triduum we are called and challenged to reflect on the absence of Christ from our lives, which at times can feel tragically, painfully real.

In this extraordinary moment in our human history, where the fears and unknowns of the COVID-19 crisis surround us, the period of the Real Absence of Christ that would be experienced in the Triduum has been drawn closer to us this Lenten Season. We experience it starkly and profoundly in our inability to gather together, to participate in, and to remember in the celebration of the Mass all that Christ taught us by loving God and by loving one another. The absence of participation in the sacred Eucharistic liturgy can appear to be a terrible failing on our part or on the part of others in prohibiting this necessary experience of faith that enriches and deepens our relationship with God and with one another.

Yet, we *are* a people of faith who know “how the story ends.” We know that this absence of Christ while in the tomb is only temporary and leads to the glory and wonder of the Resurrection, which far surpasses the pain and indignity of the Cross and

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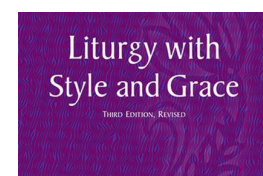
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July 1, 2020
Other Voices



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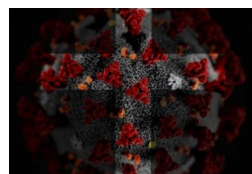
manifests for us the truth of our Savior who “makes all things new.” This truth reaffirms again and again for us that Christ, that God, is never absent, but closer to us than we are to ourselves.

In this time of difficulty and pain, when we cannot participate fully in the Eucharist by receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, we are encouraged to explore the many other ways in which and through which Christ comes to us. We are challenged in this time of anxiety and stress to affirm that Christ never stops coming to us, especially through his Word, which nourishes our Elect during this time of final preparation for Baptism, and through our relationships, our care and love for one another, which even though remote, have the potential to reveal Christ to us.

This is indeed a difficult time for us all, but it is surely not a period where Christ is absent. May the Presence of Christ always and everywhere urge us to recall and remember, understand and embrace, more fully how in breaking the bonds of sin and death, Christ has jerked this world onto new courses, which have truly transformed our human history forever.

To help aid those who are unable to participate in the Eucharist as they are accustomed in this time of precaution and safety may the following prayer offer peace and hope to our lives.

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Your son, Jesus Christ, has told us that wherever two or three are gathered, he is there with us and even when we



Saints Peter and Paul



June 26, 2020

Paul Inwood

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May 5, 2020

Editor



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May 4, 2020

Editor



are alone, you remind us that we are never abandoned or beyond your loving care and concern for us, because we are always held in the palm of your hand.

In these difficult times when we cannot participate fully in the celebration of the Mass, inspire in us the desire to participate in this Sacrament through other means.

Help us to understand and to believe that you continually come to us through your Word in Sacred Scripture and through the many relationships with one another you have given us each to nurture and to embrace.

Until that time when we join together once again to praise and learn from you, please give us that peace, which the world cannot give, that we may pass through this time free from fear and in trust and quietness secure in your love for us.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

CORONAVIRUS EUCHARIST HEALTH

LITURGICAL ASSEMBLY

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2 COMMENTS

HIDE COMMENTS

Paul Inwood says:

March 20, 2020 at 9:08 am



Thank you, Jim!

[Reply](#)

John Karolus says:

April 18, 2020 at 1:55 pm

We pray the Lord will continually remind us that because the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we are never absent from God and God is never absent from us. May the Holy Spirit burn a deeper desire for the spiritual benefits of mass during this time of our inability to participate in the eucharistic liturgy.

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