

# Catholic Parishes of St. Anthony and Our Lady of the Hills

March 22, 2020

4th Sunday of Lent

Issue No. 179



St. Anthony Catholic Church  
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**Office Hours:**

**Monday-Tuesday-Thursday-Friday from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm; Closed Wednesday and holidays.**

**Sacrament of Reconciliation:**

**St Anthony: Saturday 4:45 pm to 5:15 pm or other times by appointment. Our Lady of the Hills by appointment.**



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## Time Without Sacraments? Do Not Fear. We Can Still Receive God's Grace

While the Mass (Divine Liturgy) has a central role in the Christian life, we must remember, Christians throughout the centuries, and in many diverse places, have remained faithful while incapable of routine participation in the Mass (and other sacraments). Many Christians have had infrequent connection with priests, for one reason (priest shortage) or another (plague), that they had make do with a Christian life that had infrequent reception of the sacraments. This, certainly, is a concern, and the church desires to make the sacraments as accessible as possible (which is why the **Amazon Synod** was concerned about the shortage of priests and the needs of the faithful in the Amazon region).

While historically many Christians who lived outside of cities, in the various towns and villages which did not have a priest of their own, sometimes received the sacraments only once a year, many of us have grown accustomed to the way modern Western society allows us to much more easily travel to receive the sacraments on a frequent basis. Until recently, we have had a spirituality which could center on the Mass in a way many other Christians could not. This, in some ways, has made us rely too much on the ease of access that our spirituality has suffered. We were never expected to reduce our spirituality in such a fashion.

Now, many of us, at least for the present time, face a similar situation to many of our fellow brothers and sisters in the Amazon and other parts of the world. Thanks to the spread of the coronavirus, we find ourselves experiencing what other Christians have experienced perhaps all their lives. We might not have a priest shortage (yet), but we are finding ourselves quarantined, with little to no access to priests and the sacraments which priests can offer. Just like those who in other times and places found ways to continue their walk with God, we can, and should, continue on in our faith. We should make time to pray every day. On Sundays, might watch one of the many streaming or televised Masses, or at least, find the Scripture readings for the week, read them, and take time to contemplate their meaning for our lives.

Likewise, there are many devotions which we can use to help us as we deal with the sorrows and fears which we might have as a result of the pandemic. We might make a list of some of our own favorite prayers, and pray them when we wake up or before we go to sleep, such as the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Kyrie Eleison, the **Trisagion Prayer**, and **the Heavenly King**. The rosary, certainly, can be picked up and used daily. *(continued on page 2)*

### Prayer List for the Sick & Homebound

**St. Anthony**—Mary Canterbury, Mary Hanson, David Dodd, Nazira Joseph, Zachariah Kushner, Christina Lopez, Senaida Garcia, Michael McCallister, Maya Clark, Daniel Bishop, Robin Holly, Mike Layne

**Our Lady of the Hills**—Bert Zodorozny, Margaret Hancock, Violet Edwards, Marilyn Spencer, William Spencer, Katie Caroli, Jeanne Rollins, Steven Spencer, Jerry A. Legg, Doug Spencer

**Please call Father Tijo George at 304-342-2716, ext. 406 if you would like a visit and to receive communion or a home blessing.**

### Stewardship Report for March 14—19, 2020

#### St. Anthony

Offering	\$ 1,075.00
Diocesan Priests' Retire. Fund	90.00
Other	130.00

#### Our Lady of the Hills

Offering	\$ 50.00
Diocesan Priests' Retire. Fund	25.00
Other	30.00

**Thank you for your generosity! Please remember to continue to support your parish during this difficult time. May God bless you!**

### Fish Frydays: Thank You, Volunteers!

**As of March 19, 2020, we have a net profit of \$4,616.72 for our 2020 Fish Frydays. We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our dedicated volunteers who work hard each and every year to make Saint Anthony Fish Frydays so successful.**

**THANK YOU!**



**Safe Environment**—The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is committed to the protection of its children and young people. The Diocese complies with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* by maintaining an Office of Safe Environment. To report an incidence of suspected child sexual abuse, please contact your local law enforcement agency, or you may confidentially contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families/Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact one of the Bishop's designees at 888.434.6237 (toll free) or 304.233.0880: Sister Ellen Dunn, ext. 264; Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; Fr. Dennis Schuelkens, ext. 270 or call the Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. For more information on the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment, please go to [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), then click the "Diocese" tab, then click "Office of Safe Environment" under the "Offices" menu. To learn more about the Catholic Church's efforts in preventing sexual abuse of children in the United States, please visit <http://www.usccb.org>. Under "Issues and Action," click "Child and Youth Protection" from the drop down menu.

**Bulletin & Mass Announcements**—The deadline this week for bulletin announcements is Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. and for Mass announcements is Friday at 9:00 a.m. Thank you!!

### Time Without Sacraments? Do Not Fear. We Can Still Receive God's Grace *(continued from page 1)*

Similarly, praying from the Psalms can help us find consolation. The **Liturgy of the Hours** (said alone or with those in one's household) offers us a way to shape our day and put our hope in God. Various other daily prayers, such as the **Synekdemos**, also can lift our spirits as we put our hope, faith, and love in God.

We can do some spiritual reading every day. It doesn't have to be from Scripture. It doesn't have to be from writings of the saints. Though, of course, both of those are excellent resources, what we need are things which inspire us and help lead us to God. Theological writings inspire me, but so does many good works of fiction. For others, they may want to take on the reading of poetry. What is important is to find something to help motivate us, to get us thinking and inspired, so that we do not end up either in sloth or in despair.

How we treat others during this time, also, is very important. If we are living with others (friends or family), we might find staying indoors for a long-term basis rather difficult. We must do our best to be charitable to each other, looking after each other's needs, even as we need to find a way to have time for ourselves. But we must also concern ourselves with the well-being of our community as a whole. We must recognize that our duty to the community means we should respect a quarantine or travel restrictions when they are put in place, but also, when we need to go out, such as to a store, we must think of others and their needs. We must not excessively hoard essential goods, nor should we try to find a way to make a profit on the extreme needs of others. We need to work together, showing our love to one another; this is how we are to live out our lives as Christians, being more concerned about the welfare of others than we are about our own selfish desires. Certainly, we can and should do what we can to properly take care of our own needs – but we can and should do so with as much charity to others.

Nonetheless, many fear that with the lack of contact with priests, they might not be able to have their spiritual needs met, especially if someone they love not only becomes infected by the coronavirus, but dies from it. If they cannot get communion, if they cannot get confession, if they cannot get last rites,

*(continued on page 3)*

**Time Without Sacraments? Do Not Fear. We Can Still Receive God's Grace** (continued from page 2)

they fear that they will be unable to have their sins forgiven and will find themselves going straight to hell. While this fear is understandable, we must keep in mind God love us all, Jesus came to the world to save us and not condemn us, and God is not going to expect the impossible from us.

While it is important to take the need of the sacraments seriously, and to receive them when we are able, the Christian faith teaches us that God's merciful grace is not bound by the church's sacraments. Those who are unable to receive the sacraments due to no fault of their own have ways to receive the sacramental graces which they need for their salvation. It is this grace, the thing of the sacrament itself, and not the ritual, which is necessary. The sacramental ritual is normative, but God, in his love for humanity, takes into consideration our intents and desires, so that if we cannot receive a particular sacrament, the desire itself can bring about the sacramental grace in a time of need (such as when we are dying). **This is why the church teaches those who die without receiving the sacramental form of baptism can receive the grace of baptism itself and find salvation.** Similarly, those who are unable to receive communion can **receive spiritual communion.** Finally, those who are unable to have a priest hear their confession before they die, can intend such confession, **ask God for forgiveness for their sins, and receive God's saving grace:** they do not need to fear God will not forgive them.

If we are in need of a sacramental confession and are able to get one, we should follow through with it, but if we cannot, God does not abandon us and leave us without hope, as Peter Lombard, in his *Sentences* indicates: What, then, is to be felt concerning this? What is to be held? Surely, that sins are blotted out by contrition and humility of heart, even without confession by the mouth and payment of outward punishment. For from the moment when one proposes, with compunction of mind, that one will confess, God remits because there is present confession of the heart, although not of the mouth, by which the soul is cleansed inwardly from the spot and contagion of the sin committed, and the debt of eternal death is released.**[1]**

Of course, if the person does not follow through with such a confession, when it is possible, then it is possible to question their contrition, for those who are contrite will follow through with the normative rite of confession if possible. For, Peter Lombard explains, inward metanoia will lead us to do what we can to make satisfaction for our sins, of which sacramental confession is normative: "For just as inward penance is enjoined upon us, so also outward satisfaction and confession by mouth, if they are possible; and so he is not truly penitent, who does not have the intention to confess." **[2]** And so, if there is opportunity to confess (one which we can realistically make), it does not suffice to keep a private confession to God. **[3]** Likewise, to make sure our intention is pure, Peter Lombard suggests that if we cannot confess to a priest, we might want to make our confession to someone else, like a friend, not because our friend will be able to absolve us of our sins, but because such humility in spirit keeps us contrite.**[4]** What Lombard found especially important was to emphasize the hope we have for forgiveness, so that no matter where we are at, when we are dying, we still have hope of salvation. We can repent at the very end of our lives, with or without a priest, and if the contrition is true, God's saving grace can forgive us our sins:

It must always be known that the time of repentance lasts until the last moment of life. – POPE LEO. Hence, Pope Leo: "No one is to be despaired of, for so long as he remains in this body, because sometimes what the diffidence of youth delays, is accomplished by a more mature counsel." **[5]**

This is not to suggest people should put off sacramental penance if they are in need of it and can receive it. The longer people put it off, the harder it will be for them to be contrite. The habit of sin might get in the way of contrition at the point of death. This is not to say it will, but rather, to serve as a warning that we must not forgo the sacraments when there is no good reason to do so.**[6]**

Peter Lombard's *Sentences* represents one of the fundamental works of systematic theology from the Catholic tradition; his exploration of the sacraments became normative, especially since his work was **the textbook used in medieval theology.** St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, and many others wrote commentaries on the *Sentences* as a part of their own education. And so, it should not be surprising that St. Thomas Aquinas, following the spirit of Lombard, indicates that grace can be and is received by those who truly intend to receive the sacraments:

Nonetheless, there is this consideration. Baptism has some effectiveness for the remission of sins even before it is actually received, while one has the purpose of receiving it. We grant that afterwards – (continued on page 4)

### Time Without Sacraments? Do Not Fear. We Can Still Receive God's Grace (continued from page 3)

when it is actually received – it bestows a fuller effect both in the achievement of grace and in the remission of fault. Sometimes, too, grace is bestowed in the very reception of baptism and a fault is remitted for which previously there was no remission. And thus the keys of the Church have effectiveness in one before he actually submits himself to them, provide that he has the purpose of submitting himself to them: nevertheless, he achieves fuller grace and forgiveness when he actually submits himself to the keys by confession and receiving absolution; and nothing prevents our thinking that sometimes a grace is conferred by the power of the keys one who has confessed, in the course of absolution itself, and that by this grace his fault is dismissed. [7]

St. Thomas points out that it is possible to receive grace due to the intention to the sacraments. Baptism of desire is a key representation of this fact. However, he also reminds us that greater grace is given when we receive the sacramental form of that grace. This should help us to understand how and why people can receive forgiveness through contrition while recognizing sacramental confession is not only normative, but offers superior graces to those who receive it. When dealing with sins, we have to deal with the guilt of the sin, but also the need to repair the harm which the sin has done (and others). That is, we need to make satisfaction for our sins. We can receive forgiveness but still need to make satisfaction (and if we do not make full satisfaction for our sins before we die, God's mercy allows us to do so after death, as the teaching of purgatory indicates). Sacramental confession not only offers the forgiveness of sins, but greater graces in relation to the satisfaction which we must make. But if, through no fault of our own, we cannot have such a confession before we die, we can still find forgiveness and have hope for our salvation.

What all of this means is that we should not panic and be afraid if we are unable to receive the sacraments due to the coronavirus (or, for any other similar reason). Christian wisdom tells us that God loves us. He is not an unmerciful tyrant who will cast us away because of circumstances out of our control. Due to the fact that many Christians did not have easy access to the sacraments, the church realized this early on within its history. God has his ways to offer his grace if we are open to them. We need not fear for our salvation.

It is important to remain open to God. When we cannot go to Mass, when we cannot receive the sacraments as normal, we should find ways in which we continue our spiritual life. It is important to put our hope and faith in God, even as it is important for us to act in prudence. Reading of Scripture, saying daily prayers, doing acts of charity (even if it is for those who are in our household) are good ways to do this. We must not despair. Even though we find the routines of life changes, God is always there, ready and willing to offer his love. ~ **By Henry Karlson**

### Facing the Covid-19 crisis

Is there a Christian way of facing the Covid-19 crisis? Yes, of course, there is. I can think of at least four characteristics:

The first is the move from "I" to "we". This is a frightening situation that we face together. The **common good** — the good of us all — must be given first place; within the common good, we will find our own good. That is a very Christian, even a very Catholic virtue.

The second is an attitude of **concern and compassion**. Even if we must be isolated in our own homes or workplaces, modern communications allow us to stay in touch in a way impossible before. This is a great benefit. But, we need to choose to stay in contact, perhaps with a greater frequency so that people don't feel abandoned.

The third is a respect for **truth**. In recent years, the truth has suffered in public discourse, giving rise to a horrible expression, the post-truth era. In these days, we need to pay attention to science and medicine and less attention to opinion-makers and rumours. A society without truth cannot last. Today, right now, we need truth more than ever before.

Lastly, as Christians, we can **pray**. We can pray in particular for scientists, medical personnel and politicians. These are wonderful people with a huge job of work before them. As we pray for ourselves and our families and friends, we pray too for all who look after the common good. ~ **Kieran O'Mahony**

## Homily (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent)

**Readings: I Sam 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Eph 5:8-14; Jn 9:1-41**

“Carry on as usual” — lethal advice. The virus is a wake-up call, perhaps changing our whole way of life.

Meditating on John 9:1: ‘And passing by, he saw a man blind from birth.’ An archetype of miserable humanity, trapped in darkness — the darkness, let us say, of a planetary plague such as that of 1918, or of the war, the filth of the trenches, that compounded it and was compounded by it.

Where is God in such darkness? Well, in the human response, individual trust and courage, and above all collective solidarity and compassion. Perhaps we may apply the dictum of Albert Camus, author of the newly-relevant novel, “The Plague”: “*je me révolte donc nous sommes*“, I revolt against the absurd, against blind fate, and we are reborn as a community of care.

But there is a second dimension to blindness, the *incurvatio in se*, the turning in on oneself, that is part of Augustine’s vision of Original Sin. The individual cares only about his or her own survival, shuts the door and lets the others die outside. Or one generation, feeling itself immune, blithely consigns the old and weak to Nature’s cruel culling, even rejoicing to be rid of them. The blind egoism shown up in the crisis was present all along, as an inborn darkening of the intellect. A demonic solidarity among blind egoists produces the blind mob, in panic, or in the insane enactment of war.

What does the Word of God say when he visits His ravaged creation? “I told you so, miserable sinners. Had you the shield of Wisdom you would not be sunk in such a lamentable state!” But when we turn to him in prayer that is not what we hear. Rather, “neither he nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God would appear in him” (Jn 9:3). He remains, even in darkest physical and moral circumstance, a fount of compassion, an agent of healing, and “the light of the world” (9:5).

Thousands turned to God in the fetid trenches of the Great War (the heroism of the French chaplains brought a church revival in France), or they found the Lord on hospital beds, or in the silent suffering of quarantined isolation when the churches closed. They remembered that they were not rats but humans, made in the divine image, and recovered their dignity in repentant remembrance of their brothers and sisters, — “I am the enemy you killed, my friend” — and in humble subjection to the divine other.

John’s story: “He spat on the ground, made some mud, and applied it to the man’s eyes. Then He told him, “Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam” (which means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came back seeing” (9:6-7). is modeled on Mark 8:23-5: “Then He spit on the man’s eyes and placed His hands on him. “Can you see anything?” He asked. The man looked up and said, “I can see the people, but they look like trees walking around.” Once again Jesus placed His hands on the man’s eyes, and when he opened them his sight was restored, and he could see everything clearly. The divine Word heals by humblest fleshly means, spittle and mud. Amid the squalor of war and disease humanity is stripped of complacent illusions and gets back to the basics of mortality. Thus stripped, it sets to work on healing and restoration, cooperating with the Creator and his grace.

9:35-9: When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, He found the man and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “Who is He, Sir?” he replied. “Tell me so that I may believe in Him.” “You have already seen Him,” Jesus answered. “He is the One speaking with you.” “Lord, I believe,” he said. And he worshiped Him. Then Jesus declared, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind may see and those who see may become blind.”

He is in our midst, he walks among us as the supreme healer, his hand ever ready to touch us, to take away our blindness, and free us from the shackles of sinful paralysis and despair. His church too has a healing mission, and it is ours, since we are all restored to sight in the pool of Siloam, of Baptism, and we are all sent to be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” as He is (Matthew 5:13-14). Let’s not think “How can I ensure my own survival?” but “How can I be salt and light? How can I take part in the Church’s mission of healing the wounded, consoling the dying, witnessing to human dignity and divine goodness?”

## **A Reflection of Lenten Fasting**

In the early Church and, to a lesser extent still today, there were two fasts. There was the “total fast” that preceded all major feasts or sacramental events. The ancient name for this fast was “statio” from the verb “sto, stare” to stand watch, on guard or in vigil. The second fast was a fast of abstinence from certain foods, e.g., meats or fats. This was more an act of self-discipline and self-control. The *statio* fast was total and a means of watching and waiting... i.e. *for* something. The fast of abstinence was more general and personal, to help oneself be more disciplined or self-controlled. The total fast is still kept today prior to reception of Holy Communion. Following Holy Communion, the total fast ceases because Jesus had explicitly stated that we don’t fast when the bridegroom is here, in other words, what we’re keeping vigil for has arrived, the wait is over. On the other hand, the fast of abstinence was allowed on Sundays because the continuity of abstinence can be important for it to be effective.

These initial observations, then, teach us that the Eucharist is always the end of a preparation. It is always the fulfillment of an expectation. In the Orthodox Church during Lent, they have Eucharist only on Saturday and Sunday. But because Wednesdays and Fridays are total fast days, those two days are also days for the Communion service (Liturgy of the PreSanctified) which are held in the evening, i.e., after the day of preparation. Fasting is always *preparatory*.

But how did *fasting* become such an important means of preparing for the Eucharist and of learning virtue through self-discipline? Christian fasting is revealed in an interdependence between two events in the Bible: the “breaking of the fast” by Adam and Eve; and the “keeping of the fast” by Christ at the beginning of his ministry.

Humanity’s “Fall” away from God and into sin began with eating. God had proclaimed a fast from the fruit of only one tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17), and Adam and Eve broke it. Fasting is here connected with the very mystery of life and death, of salvation and damnation. Food perpetuates life in this physical world, which is subject to decay and death. But God “created no death.” (Wis. 1:13) Humanity, in Adam and Eve, rejected a life dependent on God alone for one that was dependent rather on “bread alone.” (Dt. 8:3; Mt. 4:4; Lk. 4:4) The whole world was given to man as a kind of food, as a means to life, but “life” is meant as communion with God, not as food. (“Their god is their belly.” Phil. 3:19) The tragedy is not so much that Adam ate food, but that he ate the food for its own sake, “apart” from God and to be independent of Him. Believing that food had life in itself and thus he could be “like God.” And he put his faith in food. This kind of existence seems to be built on the principle that man does indeed live “by bread alone.”

Christ, however, is the new Adam. At the beginning of his ministry in the Gospel of Matthew, we read, “When He had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, He became hungry.” Hunger is that state in which we realize our dependence on something else—when we face the ultimate question: “on what does my life depend?” Satan tempted both Adam and Christ, saying: Eat, for your hunger is proof that you depend entirely on food, that your life is in food. Adam believed and ate. Christ said, “Man does NOT live by bread alone.” (Mt. 4:4; Lk. 4:4) This liberates us from total dependence on food, on matter, on the world. Thus, for the Christian, fasting is the only means by which man recovers his true spiritual nature. In order for fasting to be effective, then, the spirit must be a part of it. Christian fasting is not concerned with losing weight. It is a matter of prayer and the spirit. And because of that, because it is truly a place of the spirit, true fasting may well lead to temptation, and weakness and doubt and irritation. In other words, it will be a real fight between good and evil, and very likely we shall fail many times in these battles. But the very discovery of the Christian life as “fight” and “effort” is an essential aspect of fasting. ~Rev. Daniel Merz

**USCCB Responds to Coronavirus**—Please visit <http://www.usccb.org/coronavirus> for information and resources from the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops.

**“‘Repent’, in other words, ‘Change your life’ (Mt 4:17), for a new way of living has begun. The time when you lived for yourself is over; now is the time for living with and for God, with and for others, with and for love.”**

~ Pope Tweet 03/16/2020