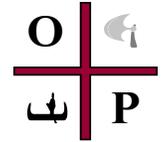


St. Olaf Catholic Parish
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December 1, 2020

Hello Everyone!

Greetings again from 18943 Caldart Avenue NE, Poulsbo, WA 98370!

I'm writing this letter at a time when I feel an extra word of heartfelt encouragement might be beneficial for each of us and our families.

How can I put it? I'm so sorry for the loss of our former experiences of the "real presence" both in Mass and with each other. I think we all understand that it persists in different and new ways. Nevertheless, even with the blessings of modern media technology, we've also come to know quite well the burdens that accompany relating across barriers of distance and separation.

In some of my earlier pastoral letters I offered alternative suggestions – ways to experience communion and remain rooted in a sacred center given our limitations and restrictions. I wrote about our hearts remaining open to new discoveries. I would be happy to share those again, yet that is not my intention with this message. Rather, right now, I acknowledge the difficulty we're in, how challenging it is to remain vigilant and conscientious, and ask your ongoing perseverance in the midst of it all.

Again, how can I put it? Something like this: Those entrusted with the responsibility of governing our society and caring for our health are calling upon us to re-dedicate ourselves, for the time being, to those personal sacrifices that go hand-in-hand with distance and separation. We're being called to renewed grave caution in meeting our daily demands, for the greater good of one another and those who are most vulnerable among us. I think by now we probably know what this entails: masks, physical distance, limited personal contact, virtual meetings, sanitary cleanliness, restricted travel, etc. We even have to refrain from singing hymns at church.

I see it when I'm out and about – at church and all throughout our broader community – people gravitating toward each other as if by natural inclination. Talking in groups. Sharing lunch around a picnic table. Chatting here and there. Working at our jobs. Kids playing together. Wanting some depth. Connecting. The

pull toward “real presence” in all such ways is a powerful force for good and helps meet a deep need we all have for fulfilling experiences of belonging and communion.

This is why it’s all the more difficult to share these thoughts and requests with you. At the same time, I can’t help but wonder whether we might be inspired to find in our efforts a wonderful putting into action of the command to love our neighbor. In our better moments we might see how true this is – the deep significance of the sacrifices being asked of us these days. Nevertheless, it’s a tough ask that I’m echoing. I don’t pretend to deny that.

I write these reflections with reverent respect for the vast multitudes among us who bear the heavy loads of bedside health care, front line services, financial loss, and the affliction of the illness itself. It’s the same for families with school children juggling their numerous responsibilities of work, child care, housework, homework, and maintaining a safe environment with neighbors and friends. This goes double when one of the spouses is deployed.

Taking a look ahead . . . our holiday schedule is listed below. Our focus for Advent and Christmas will be “Glimmers of God”. Please remember that registration is required for all in-person Mass attendance. Registration is available on our parish website.

With many blessings of peace, love, and joy to you and your families 😊

Fr. David

*Tuesday, December 8th, Immaculate Conception, 6:00pm**
*Saturday, December 12th, Our Lady of Guadalupe, 6:30pm**
Thursday, December 24th, Christmas Eve, 6:00pm & 10:00pm*
Friday, December 25th, 10:30am (bilingual)*
*Friday, January 1st, Mary Mother of God, 11:00am**

On Christmas Eve from 7:30pm – 8:00pm, and on Christmas Day from 12 Noon – 12:30pm, I will offer Holy Communion to those unable to be present in church for Mass, and for all who will be joining via livestream. Please follow all the usual health and safety protocols, and adhere to the directions of the hospitality ministers who will show the procedure for entering the church, receiving communion, and exiting. (Please register if you plan to attend by emailing michelleann@stolafschurch.org or joy.erickson@stolafschurch.org.)

* Livestreamed via Facebook-Live, and recorded for later viewing. Please visit www.stolafschurch.org and click on the blue “F”, which will take you to our Facebook Page. All our videos are there. (Please note that a Facebook account is not necessary – simply decline the prompting to register with an account.)