

Dear members of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish family,

I am sure we are all in panic and concern with Pandemic that is snowballing so fast around us. What is the impact of the civil order for lockdown to our church and for our spiritual health and wellbeing?. How do we remain the body of Christ in these difficult times when Catholic churches around us and around our country are closing with Masses and other parish services cancelled by many Bishops ?.

This is what our Bishop had to say, *“After consultation with our presbyterate council and listening to our government and public health officials regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19), effective today, March 17, 2020 through April 12, 2020 (Easter Sunday), I am suspending the celebration of all public (Sunday and daily) masses in all counties of the Diocese of Monterey. We continue to monitor this crisis knowing that this timeline could be extended, if needed.”*

These are prudent and necessary measures designed to protecting those who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 and to keep people healthy and taking into consideration the necessity of protecting public health.

But they come at some cost: For many people, this removes one of the most consoling parts of their lives—the Mass and the Eucharist—and isolates them even more from the community at a time when they most need support.

But what does this say about Christian hope? What do we, we who are believers—the very body of Christ—make of our situation? **Remember the Church is still at prayer.**

Closed doors don’t mean “cessation of worship.” Abbeys of monks and nuns are carrying on their unabated rhythms of prayers. Raising their hearts and minds to God in the psalms and Holy Mass and they continue their exalted vocation of interceding for the faithful. We Priests here at Our Lady Help of Christians Parish in Watsonville, will continue to offer Masses privately on behalf of each of you and for your intentions.

Even if the church services are closed, your priest will be there, standing as mediator between God and his parish. He will also continue, insofar as he is able, to administer the sacraments to the sick and dying. Please do not hesitate to contact us in emergencies and need. **Just know we are here for you in these difficult times and we do not run away in fear.**

Even though churches may cease holding public Masses, we will remain open. Make visits to the Blessed Sacrament, joining the Church in prayer through your private devotion. There are many televised and livestreamed Masses available, as well as those broadcast on the radio. But even if you can’t find one, you can pray on your own. When you do, remember that you’re still part of a community. There is also the longstanding tradition in our church of receiving a “spiritual communion,” when, if you cannot participate in the Mass in person, you unite yourself with God in prayer.

Let us keep everyone in prayer and seek the Mercies of God. I have inserted a special novena to our lady help of Christians to protect the world and all of us in this difficult time. Please pray this prayer for the next 9 days. May our blessed mother through her intercession keep us protected in her mantle of love and grace.

Fr Joseph Mathew Paradayil SDB , Pastor