

St Raymond De Penafort

"Welcome. Love. Serve."

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For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

(Hebrews 4:15-16)

Dear St. Raymond Family:

As we enter Holy Week, our current health crisis gives us an unexpected opportunity to observe these holy days in a deeper way than many of us normally could. The rush of calendar dates has been stopped for a moment, and a space is opened up for prayer and reflection.

As a contribution to our observance of Holy Week, I am planning to do a reflection on the seven words of our Lord Jesus from the Cross. The first reflection will be the Palm Sunday homily, followed by a reflection on one word each day from Monday to Saturday. These reflections will be available daily through the website: www.st-raymond.org.

We can also be drawn to prayer by taking time to meditate on the readings for Mass for each day, talking and sharing with someone about what they mean to us. Throughout the week, the readings from the prophet Isaiah come from the great Servant Songs. The Servant of Yahweh was a figure of hope for Israel - a person chosen by God who would somehow bear the sins of the nation as a representative of the people and restore their broken fidelity to the covenants. The Church early on saw Jesus as the Servant of Yahweh. As divine person, Jesus can represent all of humanity. The Second Vatican Council says: "By suffering for us, Jesus not only provided us with an example for our imitation. He blazed a trail, and if we follow it, life and death are made holy and take on new meaning." (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 22)

In the Letter to the Hebrews, the early Hebrew Christians are assured that Jesus is a new kind of priest. He is not a priest who mediates between the people and God, while the people remain separated from God because of their sinfulness. Jesus is the high priest who offers himself as sacrifice for the sins of the world. He does that by immersing himself in our human condition with all its difficulties. In Jesus, God comes close to us in our weakness and suffering, and brings to us the power to transform sin into holiness, evil into good as we care for one another.

Social distancing cannot separate us from the love of God. Social distancing cannot block Jesus' solidarity with us, in whatever struggle we are facing. Social distancing cannot extinguish the love we can show to one another as we reach out in prayer and caring. So, let us confidently approach the Lord, knowing that the power of his mercy and grace is not even confined to any sacrament. Sacraments are the ordinary way for us to be in touch with the power of God, but these are not ordinary times. So though we are not worshiping together, the power of the Holy Spirit continues to consecrate us as church - as the body of Christ.

Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

(Ephesians 3:20-21)

Have a blessed and healthy Holy Week!

Peace Be With You,



Fr. Scott Hebden, Pastor