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Dear Parishioner of Blessed Trinity and Spirit of Christ:

We began our Lenten journey remembering that Christ was led into the desert. These days have led us to a desert we could not have expected, but like Christ, who struggled there, we too persist in our faith and hear again and again the Gospel call to still “worship the Lord our God.”

It is our shared faith which strengthens us not to succumb to the temptation of fear, or even doubt, but rather inspires trust, deeper prayer and the ability to discern the abiding and “real presence” of the risen Lord in our home, life and in the lives of “the many.” This is true especially during these days of virus, social distancing, absences, sickness, economic uncertainty and stories and examples of hopeful service and loving care. It is our faith which inspires us to serve the whole human community, as we do what is so foreign to us: staying home and keeping distance from one another. Still, Christ is present, really present within and among us. Now. Always. Forever. The “desert” of these days has led us to fast from the Eucharist, from Mass, from our communal gathering and our “full, conscious and active participation” in the Lord’s Supper. This is distressing, challenging and difficult. For the first time in the lives of most of us we have not been able to gather for Sunday Mass; and now we cannot gather for the Great Three Days of Easter (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil) or Easter Sunday and likely beyond. *(The most recent statement from Bishop Austin Vetter is available on our parish website.)* Yet we still heed the command, “The Lord, your God, shall you worship and God alone shall you serve.”

As difficult and challenging as these days of “separation” may be, they can, in some fashion, become days of both grace and revelation.

“Grace” because we can be inspired to discover more deeply our faith and worship; “Revelation” because who and what we have always been is seen in brighter light.

The “grace” of these days is to grow in the awareness of Christ’s abiding presence. Our Catholic faith teaches us that:

- ❖ Christ is “really” present in the midst of the world, particularly among those who are sick, alone, poor or frightened; present in those who serve them;
- ❖ present especially today in the heart and soul of those whose lives are disrupted;
- ❖ present deep within the heart and spirit of persons who lift their hearts to the Lord in prayer;
- ❖ “really” present whenever and wherever two or three gather in his name;
- ❖ present when the Word of the Lord is spoken, especially in a deliberate gathering of two or three, then, the Church teaches, “Christ himself speaks the word;”
- ❖ finally, and most deeply, Christ is “really” fully present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, given to the baptized to eat and drink into being, with the whole church, the body and blood of the risen Christ on mission to the world. In the Eucharistic supper we enter the fullness of Christ’s real presence and, in the words of Saint Augustine, we become what we eat and drink.

Now, however, in these “crisis days” we fast from Eucharist but not from Christ’s abiding presence. That mystery and that truth we still enter and live. Today that mystery seems to be more deeply revealed. Revealed, for most us these days, in our own homes, around the table at which we gather as family, couples or even alone. *Lumen Gentium* / “The Light of the Nations,” a document of the Second Vatican Council, identifies the family home as the “**domestic church**,” the first place faith is shared and the place from which we learn to “bring the light of Christ to others.” These days the sense of our homes as Church becomes significant and the sometimes forgotten reality and truth is enhanced. Even the table at which we gather for family meals, or a meal alone, becomes sacred and associated with the Lord’s Table in our worship space. At table we gather; at table we ask God’s blessing; at table we eat and drink; dialogue, laugh and cry and enter more deeply into abiding and lasting relationships. Around our tables Christ is really

present. During these days the gift we receive is our more deliberate and honored gathering there.

PRAYER IN THE DOMESTIC CHURCH. The attached prayer guide, **HOLY WEEK AT HOME**, compiled by Liturgical Press, is offered to you as your guide to **PRAYER IN THE DOMESTIC CHURCH**, beginning with Palm Sunday and continuing through the Three Days and Easter Sunday. **These days are not ordinary days. We must keep them with a deliberate and faith-filled effort.** Prepare well for these days in your “domestic church.” Make a deliberate effort to use this guide for your family or personal prayer as we enter these most holy days. Pray at Table as a family or couple or even alone. Decorate the table for each day as the booklet describes. Engage in the prayer, speak aloud, sing the hymns noted or others you know by heart. Enter the mystery of Holy week, the Three Days and Easter Sunday, discerning the abiding and real presence of Christ in your “domestic church.” As each household prays these days, the prayer of the many will rise to the heavens as the one voice of Christ.

PARISH WEBSITE: blessedtrinitymissoula.org
During these days of prayer at home utilize the other resources available on the parish website (daily, morning, evening and night prayer; the prayers of the Mass, weekdays and Sundays, etc. etc.; remember you pray with the many and the many with you. **Pray the General Intercessions of our own faith community**—the prayers we would pray if we were together (available on the parish website). This is our common prayer for others which rises to the heavens—we need to pray them together. **Utilize the parish website as your source of continuing parish information, updates, etc.** **THE WEEKLY BULLETIN** continues to be published each week and is made available on the website and on the iPhone PARISH APP.

STEWARDSHIP. As you pray, remember the needs of others, the needs of our parish community. Offer your weekly or monthly stewardship offering. Please keep “up-to-date” with your stewardship. This becomes more important as this crisis becomes longer, while parish expenses continue. **Take care to remember the special EASTER COLLECTION. Please mail your regular offering weekly or monthly;** OR, for your convenience, you can offer your gift electronically through the Diocese of Helena. Your gift will be forwarded to the parish. Go to this link and follow the directions: <https://diocesehelena.org/parish-offertory-gifts> (Direct Auto debit continues to be available for those who desire. Please contact the Parish Financial Services Director Jim McDonald.)

+ HONOR THE PAST + SERVE THE PRESENT
+ PROVIDE FOR THE FUTURE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN.

The Blessed Trinity Capital Campaign moves forward. As of March 30, 2020, we have reached \$257,353 (51%) of our \$500,000 goal, with 34% of parishioners responding. **THANK YOU.**

The opportunity to state your intention continues for those who have not yet responded. Please mail your intention to the parish. Thank you.

NEEDS AND CONCERNS. During this CoronaVirus crisis, some may find their own lives in crisis; you may know of another or others who need some kind of assistance. If your faith community can be of service in any way, please do not hesitate to contact the parish. Call me directly (721-1675; email, edjh1455@gmail.com), or leave a message on the parish phone system.

IF YOU BECOME SICK or are hospitalized, desire the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick or Penance, please contact me directly as noted above. All other staff members continue to be available via parish telephone. While the offices are closed messages are checked regularly. Sadly, until further notice, Holy Communion for the homebound, is restricted.

IN CASE OF THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE please call me directly. If there is the NEED TO PREPARE A FUNERAL, please call either myself or S. Mary Jo at the parish office number (721-2405).

OUR LIVES ARE DISRUPTED THESE DAYS, but our faith is firm. Our gathering together is limited but our community is “strong, loving and wise;” and our prayer is sure. We observe the love of the Lord all around us in those who care for the sick and offer the comfort of Christ. For each of them and all of them we pray and offer loving support and deep appreciation. The “Lenten desert” has always been a time of “purification and enlightenment.” These days that is even more true. We set aside old presumptions and embrace what is most pure and real. Thus we can discover the value we hold for one another and the deeper meaning of our Sunday gathering at the Lord’s Table. That gift we can now appreciate and love even more sincerely, as we still “worship the Lord our God.”

Let the Peace of Christ be with you.

Fr. Ed Hislop, Pastor
April 2, 2020

