

The Door is Always Open.

Our prayers remain full for all those affected by the covid-19 pandemic; those fallen ill and all those suffering from the societal disruption coming in the wake of this global affliction.

Here at CHS, worship on Sundays at both the 8 & 10 will continue until someone directly orders us differently.

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And even if you are prevented from physically joining, or at such times as we are ordered to stop public gatherings, worship will still continue through live-stream broadcast via the internet. A link will be sent out (and placed on our website) so you can log in on your smart phone or computer. So in this way, the door is going to be always open: the doorway to prayer, to community, to spiritual counsel and to friendship with God through common worship; all will remain uninterrupted.

Below is a link from our Bishop Chip Stokes, offering wise and pastorally appropriate guidelines for the parishes in his charge.

<https://mailchi.mp/diocesefnj.org/bishop-stokes-statement-on-covid-19-coronavirus?fbclid=IwAR3x093-X0JM4tfTTXhcUZy210qwggbukufY7ZNODBn3ibDKZCl0W70bq8Y>

We will certainly follow his lead in this moment of concern and caution.

I invite you to prayer. You will find the appointed Collect for the Third Sunday of Lent, this very coming Sunday, to be remarkably on point:

Third Sunday in Lent

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves:
Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls,
that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body,
and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

And here's one which we rarely pray together since the Season of Epiphany usually stops well before eight weeks. But here it is:

Eighth Sunday after the Epiphany

Most loving Father, whose will it is for us to give thanks for all things,
to fear nothing but the loss of you, and to cast all our care on you who care for us:

Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties,
that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal,
and which you have manifested to us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

On behalf of the Clergy, Wardens and Vestry, you are invited to cast all your care on God, wash your hands dutifully and frequently(!), and allow for the grace of God to pervade your lives with peace and tranquility.

The church, over the centuries, has faced even more challenging times than these. A couple months ago, in a sermon, I quoted St. Cyprian, who composed his *Epistle to Donatus*, written to his Roman friend while sitting in a garden, not long after he was baptized (around 246 CE). In it, he bravely claims his faith when such a public claim came with severe risk.

“It is a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and good people who have learned the great secret of life. They have found a joy and wisdom which is a thousand times better than any of the pleasures of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are Christians. . . and I am one of them.”

Let us show the same solid resolve, a joy and wisdom, being a quiet and good people who have learned the secret of life. Rest well friends, and be of excellent cheer even in a world of shadow.

As far as it is possible for any of us, let us be masters of our souls.

Faithfully,

Fr. Phil