



TEAMS OF OUR LADY

EAST PROVINCE NEWSLETTER



Hosanna To The Son of David!

Dear East Province,

We all remember Palm Sunday last year, when the celebrant and ministers remained in the back of the church to commemorate the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem. Palms were blessed and distributed; the *Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem* gospel was proclaimed; and the congregation, with palms in hand, sang as the procession to the altar began where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass took place.

Today, Palm Sunday, as we live-streamed Mass from St. Ann's Church in Bethany Beach, Delaware, it was comforting to see the familiar faces of our two parish priests, but there was much missing: we did not hear the Gospel proclaiming the excitement from the crowds welcoming Jesus or echo that excitement in song at the procession.

COVID-19 has created a living sacrifice with the many challenges, difficulties and deaths that this pandemic has brought us. We need to see Jesus coming toward us,



coming closer, Jesus with us! Of course our Faith tells us that Jesus is here in our midst now! Yes, we know it, but we struggle at Communion time not to cry as we say the words of *An Act of Spiritual Communion*, being away from our priests and separated from the worshipping community. For our Faith also tells us that Jesus is truly present in the Word, in the priest, in the Eucharist, and in the Community.

The Teams of Our Lady Metro (New York City) Region in our East Province is the hardest hit area to date. Thankfully, Nilson and Marioli Marques (Regional Couple for Metro) have been in constant communications with the Brazilian (Portuguese-speaking) Teams in their sectors. We spent last week calling couples in the five sectors of the English-speaking Metro teams. What beautiful, resilient, and faith-filled couples we have in the Metro area! Besides COVID-19, there are economic issues and family members who work in harms way. Amid the severe illness and worries was talk about baking cookies and children writing, with sidewalk chalk, notes to their friends. One thing that was absolutely present in the conversations was a sincere gratitude for Teams. Several of the Metro teams, this year, celebrate 50-55 years in the Teams Movement and several members told us that they do not know where their marriage would have been without Teams. Let us be united in prayer for those affected by the Corona Virus pandemic.

We close on a personal note, sharing with you the news of the death (March 12, 2020) of Charlie Babendreier (<https://www.devolfuneralhome.com/funerals-and-obituaries-in-gaithersburg-maryland/charles-albert-babendreier>). Charlie and Mary Ann have been in Teams of Our Lady for 53 years. About 43 years ago, we and our then two-year-old daughter Anne appeared at the Babendreier home to be trained for some service role in the Movement. Charlie announced that we would go outside, since it was such nice weather. The toddler was happy on the mother's lap for a time, but then she became fussy. Charlie and Mary Ann quickly disappeared. Charlie returned with an ancient-looking wooden high chair, that was reinforced with steel rods. We must have appeared hesitant because Charlie, with a big smile and a twinkle in his eye, said, "Don't worry, all 15 of our children ate in it, as well as many of our grandchildren." As we placed Anne in the chair, Mary Ann appeared with crackers and the training continued. We are grateful to the Babendreiens, and all Teams leadership couples, for their selfless service to the Teams Movement.

We wish you a holy and blessed Holy Week!

With gratitude and prayer,

Bob and Janie



Missing you too!!

Let us not forget our dear priests: they too have to sacrifice and miss us. The following excerpts are from published letters from two pastors, to their parishioners. Both are Spiritual Counselors to Teams: Father John Dillon is pastor of St. Francis Church in Derwood, Maryland and Father Robert Buchmeier is paster of Holy Cross Church in Garrett Park, Maryland. Father John is also Spiritual Counselor to the East Province and the Maryland-East Sector in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Father John Dillon's Blog: I am writing this column as the Coronavirus outbreak is in our midst. As a precaution the parish offices will be closed this week. The office staff will work remotely. I will be here to answer phone calls, but am trying to practice social distancing. I need to be prudent about such things as I am in the at risk category. I am now 70 (and as someone recently told me I am officially an old person) and have a somewhat compromised immune system owing to a necessary treatment of powerful chemotherapy for an aggressive cancer several years ago.

It is very difficult for many who are used to receiving Holy Communion on a regular basis to be deprived of the consolation of receiving the Eucharist. It is likewise very difficult for me as your pastor not to be able to give you Communion! One thing that we have been encouraged to do is to communicate to you, my beloved brothers and sisters, the value of making a spiritual Communion. The graces of a sacramental Communion are present in a spiritual Communion” “[through] their desire for the sacrament in union with the Church, no matter how distant they may be physically, they are intimately and really united to her and therefore receive the fruits of the sacrament” even absent the sacramental sign.” This statement is from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to Bishops of Certain Questions Concerning the Minister of the Eucharist. I truly believe that embracing this cross of limited access to the Sacrament is our path to sanctity and an opportunity to die to ourselves and our desires—as faith-filled as they may be.



The Most Reverend Mark Brennan was, for many years, our neighbor as Pastor of St. Martin of Tours Parish, Gaithersburg. Now Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston, he wrote a letter on March 13, 2020 to the faithful of his diocese on the occasion of his having to suspend public Masses there because of the Coronavirus outbreak. The last three paragraphs of the letter contain some good advice for all of us. I would like to share those paragraphs with you here:



Faithful Catholic people love the Mass, so it is a hardship not to be able to celebrate it. I encourage you to remain steadfast in faith during this time by praying the Liturgy of the Hours in your homes, praying the Rosary, and by reflecting on the readings of the day. All of these resources are available online. We can look on this development as a penance we do together during this Lenten season and offer our disappointment and sorrow up to God. May the Lord give us the joy of celebrating Easter together in good health!

Finally, I would urge everyone to pray for the sick and for those who care for them, in particular our doctors, nurses, and other medical support staff who must deal with up close with the sick every day.

Let us pray for a quick end to the Corona Virus outbreak in our country and around the world. May Jesus, the Divine Physician, send his healing grace upon the people he has redeemed. Let us hold one another close in prayer and Christian love.

God bless you and your loved ones!

Until next week,

Fr. John

Father Robert Buchmeier's Church Bulletin Letter:

Dear Parishioners and Friends of Holy Cross,

The Lord is always with us and we should not doubt that he is with us now in this time of unprecedented disruption in our lives. It may be difficult to feel confidence because of our separation from each other and because we cannot gather to celebrate the Eucharist. However, our Faith keeps us united to the Lord and to one another.

I do miss seeing you! I miss seeing families coming to Mass together and the joyful sound of the congregation singing hymns to the Lord. I miss seeing the happy faces of our children in the classrooms and in church. Although I know that this tribulation will eventually pass, we cannot deny our present distress.

Of course, we should also remember that God is bringing about good even when we don't yet perceive it. Being quarantined may mean spending more time with family members. Having children, high school youth and college students all together as well as spouses working from home may be a challenge, but it can also be fun. It could lead to new understanding and patience. A friend of mine received a message from her cousin in Italy saying that since her family is confined together, "sometimes we fight but we get over it and we are learning to appreciate each other more."

We can't forget those who are isolated at home by themselves. Missing the usual contacts and routines of daily life, many find this isolation particularly difficult. Our



elderly parishioners are even more vulnerable. As a parish family we want to care for them and others. Do continue to check on your friends and neighbors...

It looks more and more like we may not be together for Easter. Schools will not return to the classrooms until the end of April. Our candidates preparing for the Easter Sacraments and our children preparing for First Communion and Confirmation are waiting anxiously for new dates. But be confident that God will supply. He will not disappoint those who long for communion with him. Meanwhile, we will attempt to keep you informed through Flocknotes.

Coming through a crisis together will strengthen all of us. As we reach out to others, offering words of encouragement and acts of kindness, God’s Love shines in us. When it comes to Christian fellowship, it is true that “absence makes the heart grow stronger.” When we are together again, may we all appreciate each other more and never take the gifts we have received for granted. May Christ Jesus, renew us each day in his Love.

Sincerely in Christ,
Fr. Robert
Pastor



Fr. Robert Buchmeier (far left) with his Rockville Maryland 4 Team. Charlie Babendreier is on the far right; Mary Ann Babendreier is in the first row on the left.



Lenten Reflection *from the South*

The current Responsible Couple for the South Province, T.J. and Ellen Holt, wrote this inspiring letter for their recent newsletter that we want to share with you.

Lent + COVID19 = Holiness

I work in formulas everyday at work. It was put on my heart to share this. After many prayers about the Coronavirus and this Lenten season this formula came to mind to describe the meaning behind this set of events.

The word 'Holy' means set apart. 'Holiness' is then the state of being set apart. Have we ever felt the state of being set apart more than this current time? Incorporating this time into our personal and couple search for holiness leads us to a very different place than we hear in the news and society. We hear daily reports of sickness, death, fear, scarcity and isolation.

Is God calling us to focus and rely solely on him? Lent is a time to sharpen our focus away from ourselves to God's plan in preparation of the Joy of Easter. It seems the timing is all providential.

Perhaps we are given this separation and these events to deepen our close personal relationship with God through prayer, actions within our homes, self-improvement and self-reflection. If we maintain this focus we can truly grow in holiness even in these most challenging times.

May God bless your Lenten Journey, keep you safe and penetrate the depths of you heart!

Love,
T.J. & Ellen

Holy Week Reflection *from the East*

Please watch One Pair of Hands at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjT-r2wUo8o>.

In the morning, let me hear your faithful love,
for in you I place my trust.
Make me know the way I should walk;
to you I life up my soul. (Ps 143: v 8)