During the period of suspension of public liturgies in response to the Coronavirus crisis, Catholics can take heart from one of the key decrees of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) on Christ’s presence in the liturgy:

“Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister, ‘the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross’ but especially under the Eucharistic elements. By his power he is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptises it is really Christ himself who baptises. He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’” (Mt 18:20).

[Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963) art. 7]

If parishioners pray at home at the same time they would normally be together praying at Mass, there is a very real sense in which two or three are gathering in Christ’s name, in the unity of their prayer rather than of their physical person. Individual and family prayer based on the Liturgy of the Word at Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours and other sources provides members of parishes and families with an opportunity to honour Christ’s presence in the domestic Church as those present pray to God in thanksgiving for gifts received, and for the needs of the Church and the world.
LITURGICAL RESOURCES

WEBSITES

- Liturgy Brisbane
- Liturgy Help (Creative Ministry Resources)
- Masses Online and Prayer Resources (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference)
- Universalis

CREATING SPACE FOR PRAYER

1. Create a prayerful, welcoming space;
2. Include familiar liturgical symbols: water, cross, Bible, greenery/flowers and others as appropriate;
3. Light a candle and utilise music and singing;
4. Foster a reflective atmosphere of praise, thanks and intercession.

CONTENTS

- Excerpts from the Liturgy of the Word at Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours
- Various Blessings
- Various Prayer Resources
- Lectio Divina
EXCERPTS FROM THE LITURGY OF THE WORD AT MASS AND THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

† Denotes making the Sign of the Cross

INTRODUCTION

MORNING

All make the sign of the cross.

V. Lord, open our lips.

R. And we shall praise your name.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen (Alleluia – outside Lent).

or

EVENING

All make the sign of the cross.

V. O God, come to our aid.

R. O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

SEASONAL HYMN OR SONG OF PRAISE/THANKSGIVING

GLORY TO GOD

(on Sundays outside Lent and Advent; Solemnities and Feasts)

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of Good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord, God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer: you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

PENITENTIAL ACT

(see alt texts in Roman Missal (2010) 1578]

Lord Jesus, you were lifted up to draw all people to yourself:
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

You shouldered the cross, to bear our suffering and sinfulness:
Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

You open for your people the way from death into life:
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.
FIRST READING  
Ezekiel 37:12–14 (JB)

I shall put my spirit in you and you will live.

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel

The Lord says this: I am now going to open your graves; I mean to raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel. And you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. And I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live, and I shall resettle you on your own soil; and you will know that I, the Lord, have said and done this - it is the Lord who speaks.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM  
Ps 129 (JB)

R. With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

1. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord, Lord, hear my voice!
   O let your ear be attentive to the voice of my pleading.  R.

2. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, Lord, who would survive?
   But with you is found forgiveness: for this we revere you.  R.

3. My soul is waiting for the Lord, I count on his word.
   My soul is longing for the Lord more than watchman for daybreak.
   (Let the watchman count on daybreak and Israel on the Lord.)  R.

4. Because with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption, Israel indeed he will redeem from all its iniquity.  R.

SECOND READING  
Romans 8:8–11 (JB)

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he will give life to your own mortal bodies.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

People who are interested only in unspiritual things can never be pleasing to God. Your interests, however, are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you. In fact, unless you possessed the Spirit of Christ you would not belong to him. Though your body may be dead it is because of sin, but if Christ is in you then your spirit is life itself because you have been justified; and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION  
Jn 11:25, 26

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord; whoever believes in me will not die for ever.

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
**GOSPEL**

*John 11:1-45 (JB)*

_I am the resurrection and the life._

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to John*

There was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany with the two sisters, Mary and Martha, and he was ill. It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. The sisters sent this message to Jesus, ‘Lord, the man you love is ill.’ On receiving the message, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will end not in death but in God’s glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.’

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judaea.’ The disciples said, ‘Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews wanted to stone you; are you going back again?’ Jesus replied:

‘Are there not twelve hours in the day? A man can walk in the daytime without stumbling because he has the light of this world to see by; but if he walks at night he stumbles, because there is no light to guide him.’

He said that and then added, ‘Our friend Lazarus is resting, I am going to wake him.’ The disciples said to him, ‘Lord, if he is able to rest he is sure to get better.’ The phrase Jesus used referred to the death of Lazarus, but they thought that by ‘rest’ he meant ‘sleep’, so Jesus put it plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad; now you will believe. But let us go to him.’ Then Thomas - known as the Twin - said to the other disciples, ‘Let us go too, and die with him.’

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, ‘If you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, ‘Where have you put him?’ They said, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept; and the Jews said, ‘See how much he loved him!’ But there were some who remarked, ‘He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man’s death?’ Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, ‘Take the stone away.’ Martha said to him, ‘Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.’ Jesus replied, ‘Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?’ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

‘Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew indeed that you always hear me, but let us go to him.’ Then Thomas - known as the Twin - said to the other disciples, ‘Let us go too, and die with him.’

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Jesus said:

‘I am the resurrection and the life.’

If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’

‘Yes, Lord,’ she said ‘I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.’

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, ‘The Master is here and wants to see you.’ Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were in the house sympathising with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, ‘Where have you put him?’ They said, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept; and the Jews said, ‘See how much he loved him!’ But there were some who remarked, ‘He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man’s death?’ Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, ‘Take the stone away.’ Martha said to him, ‘Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.’ Jesus replied, ‘Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?’ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

‘Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me.’

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, here! Come out!’ The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, let him go free.’

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

_The Gospel of the Lord._

_Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ._
FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR A)

SCRIPTURAL REFLECTION

A PRAYER FROM THE DEPTHS

‘Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.’ We have all been in the depths at some time in our life – in the depths of despair, of grief, of sin – utterly lost and miserable, incapable of raising ourselves up. Our only hope is God and we have no grounds on which to oblige God to help us. We can only hope in God’s mercy.

Psalm 130(129) is ‘the miserable cry of a nobody from nowhere’, writes one commentator. Remarkably, this cry from the depths is the very cry that pierces the heavens, the cry to which God is especially attuned. It is the cry of the Israelites groaning in slavery in Egypt (Exodus 2:23–25), the cry of the tax collector in the temple (Luke 18:13), the cry of the repentant thief on the cross (Luke 23:42).

Having cried out to God for help, the psalmist is touched by God’s saving love. He experiences forgiveness and is filled with reverential awe of God. Interestingly, he remains in the depths: the difficult situation he is experiencing continues but now he is at peace. He waits calmly for God to lift him from the depths knowing that this is as certain as daybreak following night.

In the final verses, which are probably a later addition, the psalmist now out of the depths encourages Israel (the community) to trust in God. When God hears our cries and lifts us out of the depths, we in turn are called to encourage and support others going through their time of anguish.

Michael Goonan SSP

I AM THE RESURRECTION

On this fifth Sunday of Lent, resurrection hope is put before us.

In the prophecy of Ezekiel we hear God insist to the people of Israel, who feel dead and buried in exile, that God is going to dig up their graves, raise them up and breathe new life into them. God stresses that it is God’s own self who does this, acting and speaking for God’s people.

We hear this same theme most dramatically in the Gospel of John where Jesus raises a man from the grave. God’s promise in Ezekiel’s prophecy is realised vividly when Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. As in Ezekiel, so in John, the deep point of this event is that it makes God known to us. Jesus says at the outset that the story will end in God’s glory and in Jesus himself being glorified. Below the surface of this story runs the theme of Jesus’ coming death. In John’s Gospel, Jesus will be glorified when he is lifted up on the cross. Ironically, when Jesus restores Lazarus to life he brings on his own death, since this demonstration that the creative power of God abides in Jesus disturbs the authorities.

Paul teaches that if we trust God’s gift of resurrection in Jesus, then God will also give resurrection life to us, in whom Jesus’ spirit lives. As we approach the Easter feast we focus on this central mystery of our faith: resurrection from the dead. We trust that ‘with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.’

Michele Connolly RSJ

St Pauls Publications and the authors have allowed the publication of this reflection to support the spiritual needs of Catholics unable to attend Mass at this time.
GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Introduction

Mindful of our baptismal dignity as members of God’s family, let us place our intentions with faith and hope in God’s unbounded mercy and infinite power.

Intentions

We pray for our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and for all bishops, clergy, religious and laity. May they be a source of spiritual consolation and healing amongst their communities, families and employment networks during this time of crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Let us pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all leaders of national and local governments. May they exercise their responsibilities with wisdom as they work towards the welfare of communities and individuals, particularly the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable members of society. Let us pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all public health officers, medical and nursing staff, pastoral carers and health care volunteers. May God abundantly bless their work as they seek to respond to the Coronavirus emergency with compassion and effective strategies to treat those in need. Let us pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all women and men engaged in medical and chemical research. May they enjoy every support in their determination to find vaccines and remedies for diseases that plague the human family. Let us pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all who have died recently, particularly the victims of COVID-19. May they rest in God’s loving care and rise in glory on the last day. Let us pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

Conclusion

Gracious and loving God, you are the source of all that is good. In this period of medical and economic crisis, we place our prayers before you, with faith in your unbounded mercy and trust in your divine providence.

We ask our prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Let us join our prayers with the prayer Jesus gave us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

My Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

St Alphonsus Ligouri, alt. (1696-1787)

CONCLUSION

PRAYER

Lord God, you give the world new life by mysteries which are beyond our grasp. May your Church not be deprived of earthly help while she makes progress by the strength of these eternal gifts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

BLESSING

+ The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

CONCLUDING SEASONAL HYMN OR SONG OF PRAISE/THANKSGIVING
EXCERPTS FROM THE LITURGY OF THE WORD AT MASS AND THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

PSALM AND CANTICLE FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

E.g. Psalm 41 (42)

1. Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God.
   R. My soul is thirsting for the living God: when shall I see him face to face?

2. My soul is thirsting for God, the God of my life; when can I enter and see the face of God?
   R.

3. These things will I remember as I pour out my soul: how I would lead the rejoicing crowd into the house of God, amid cries of gladness and thanksgiving, the throng wild with joy.
   R.

4. O send forth your light and your truth; let these be my guide. Let them bring me to your holy mountain to the place where you dwell.
   R.

5. And I will come to the altar of God, the God of my joy. My Redeemer, I will thank you on the harp, O God, my God. R.

6. Why are you cast down, my soul, why groan within me? Hope in God; I will praise him still, my Saviour and my God. R.

BENEDICTUS (Morning)

All make the sign of the cross.

1. Blessed be + the Lord, the God of Israel; he has come to his people and set them free. He has raised up for us a mighty saviour, born of the house of his servant David.

2. Through his holy prophets he promised of old that he would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us. He promised to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant.

3. This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our enemies, free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.

4. You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.

5. In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

6. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

MAGNIFICAT (Evening)

All make the sign of the cross.

1. My soul + proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour for he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.

2. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

3. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

4. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

5. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever.

6. Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
VARIOUS PRAYER RESOURCES

PRAYER FROM VOTIVE MASS FOR THE SICK
[Roman Missal (2010) p. 1378]

Collect
Let us pray:
O God, who willed that our infirmities be borne by your Only Begotten Son to show the value of human suffering, listen in kindness to our prayers for our brothers and sisters who are sick; grant that all who are oppressed by pain, distress or other afflictions may know that they are chosen among those proclaimed blessed and are united to Christ in his suffering for the salvation of the world. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

A PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE

Almighty and all-merciful God, lover of the human race, healer of all our wounds, in whom there is no shadow of death, save us in this time of crisis; grant wisdom and courage to our leaders; watch over all medical people as they tend the sick and work for a cure; stir in us a sense of solidarity beyond all isolation; if our doors are closed, let our hearts be open. By the power of your love destroy the virus of fear, that hope may never die and the light of Easter, the triumph of life, may shine upon us and the whole world. Through Jesus Christ, the Lord risen from the dead, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.
Holy Mary, health of the sick, pray for us.
St Joseph, guardian of us all, pray for us.

The Most Reverend Mark Coleridge
Archbishop of Brisbane

ECUMENICAL PRAYER FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The National Council of Churches, who have invited all of us to pray this prayer at 7pm each day, but especially on Sunday 29 March which we will mark as a National Day of Prayer in this time of crisis:

Gracious God,
We give thanks anew for your providence and presence.
We prayerfully seek your grace, amidst COVID-19 here and overseas.
We pray for those in need of healing.
We pray for your peace with those who are anxious or grieving.
We pray you will continue to strengthen and sustain all those who are serving in response.
We pray for your Holy Spirit’s discernment amidst the many choices and decisions facing our national, community and medical leaders.
We pray we each might see quickly what more we can do to help those who are vulnerable.
This prayer for our nation in the family of nations, with all that is on our hearts, we gather now and pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

POPE FRANCIS’ PRAYER TO MARY DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

O Mary, you always shine on our path as a sign of salvation and of hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who at the cross took part in Jesus’ pain, keeping your faith firm.
You, Salvation of the Roman People, know what we need, and we are sure you will provide so that, as in Cana of Galilee, we may return to joy and to feasting after this time of trial.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will of the Father and to do as we are told by Jesus, who has taken upon himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows to lead us, through the cross, to the joy of the resurrection. Amen.
Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God.
Do not disdain the entreaties of we who are in trial, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

Translation by Catholic News Service
GUIDELINES FOR SCRIPTURAL REFLECTION

Ten Principles of Lectio Divina

(based on writings of Fr Michael Casey, OCSO
from Tarrawarra Abbey, Yarra Glen, VIC)

1. Recognise the value of regularity - lectio should be done according to rules: fixed times, fixed periods, in season and out of season.

2. Allocate time. Nobody finds time; you have to make it.

3. Choose a quiet, temperate, harmonious, dedicated place. The place is more important than most people think.

4. Choose reading that is able to sustain your attention. Try the Gospels, one by one, taking a passage each day.

5. Vocalise as you read -- this will slow down the reading, and helps ensure that your words and your thoughts move together.

6. Progress through a whole book -- “in order and entirely” (per ordinem et integro) it says in the Rule of St Benedict -- rather than leaping about within it, or between books.

7. Read closely, word by word, line by line; every word must be understood. It is all too easy to pass over words that are unfamiliar, challenging or shocking, but these are often the ones that have something to say to you.

8. Allow yourself to puzzle over obscurities.

9. Actively attempt to make the text meaningful -- the purpose of lectio is to form the mind in Christ.

10. Activate, if necessary, the different stages: start with lectio (reading), then move to meditatio (chewing over the words), then onto oratio (prayer) and finally contemplatio (when you allow the Holy Spirit to act in the heart). This is not a method, but a description of what, in the experience of monks, happens in an hour’s lectio divina.

The Holy Spirit, says Fr Casey, is as active in the reading of Scriptures as He was in their writing. The power of lectio comes from the Spirit being present in the interaction between Scripture and our own experience -- of life and of God.

Source: Austen Ivereigh, “Learning from the Master” in America Magazine
(18 July 2009)
(https://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/learning-lectio-master)