



St. Catherine Labourer Church

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Dear Parishioners,

March 20, 2020

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and the love of God our Father be with you. I pray that you and your loved ones are well.

In this fluid and ever-changing time, Bishop Stika – in consultation with other Dioceses and consistent with direction by the CDC and the White House – has made the difficult decision to suspend all public celebrations of Holy Mass across the Diocese effective March 20, 2020.

He will continue review and revisit this guidance regularly as the situation calls for.

As necessary as these changes are in helping keep us safe, it's also important to remember that we remain a community of faith. One that trusts in the Lord and shares our blessings with each other.

On Tuesday, March 17th, the first reading for Mass came from the Book of Daniel 3:25, 34-43. It is the great prayer of Azariah as he was standing in the midst of a fire for staying faithful to God. I encourage you to read and reflect on this scripture as a source of strength in your faith journey as we are on the stormy seas of uncertainty as a people of faith.

Azariah's prayer, "in the midst of the fiery furnace" (DN:25), is a heartbreaking cry for God to remember his covenant of mercy. Azariah wants God to remember this covenant for two reasons: the first is to show how Azariah's actions are in accord with this covenant "let our sacrifice be in your presence today... as we follow you unreservedly." (DN:40-41) The second reason is to beg God's deliverance "in light of his mercy and fidelity". (DN:42)

Azariah remembers God's covenant and acts in fidelity to this covenant. Azariah also remembers that God is a God of mercy and faithfulness. So Azariah's prayer is one of trust in God's providence to deliver him from this fiery trial, not because he is worthy, but because God is faithful and has made a covenant with his people which God will not abandon.

Azariah's prayer shows us how to respond in the face of our own tribulations. When faced with temptations, hardships, or with spiritual desolation (times when God seems absent, or spiritual practices seem meaningless), it can be hard to continue in fidelity and virtue.

When we can't feel God's closeness, we are called to remember those grace moments when we did, to remember God's action throughout salvation history in the lives of the saints and in the stories of Scripture, and to remember that this same God who has acted in our life, and in the lives of our ancestors, is a God to be trusted, hoped in and followed.

As we travel through these uncharted waters, let us remember that this storm is not the first the Church has weathered in her 2000 year history. These last three weeks of Lent will look, feel and be lived in a way that can bring us closer to God and one another by embracing the way of the cross or to a way of selfish living abandoning our faith and others.

Let us strengthen our memories with those grace moments when we have experienced the Lord close in our lives and fortify ourselves. Recall the words of St. Theresa of Calcutta:

"When pain and suffering have come into your life, remember pain, sorrow, suffering are but the kiss of Jesus - a sign that you have come so close to Him that He can kiss you."

I came across the following quote while reading an article about a man who had the corona-19 virus and wrote a reflection on his experience: *“Something incredible happens when fear and anxiety are replaced with acts of kindness and compassion ...”*

At this time, as we stay close to our faith and family, we need to make extra efforts to reach out to those who need us. As a parish family, we are sharing new ways we can draw even closer to God and one another at this time.

I invite you to stay close to the Church and our Parish community in the following ways:

- Join our Parish **Faith On Demand** program by signing up on www.formed.org website. Watch Catholic movies, listen to CDs, audio books, talks and faith formation/study programs on sacraments, scripture, church teaching, prayer and much more. Pray and listen to devotions such as the rosary, divine mercy, stations of the cross. Best of all its **FREE** for our parish Family to enjoy. Go to our parish website for information on how to join.
- **Stay in contact with us by visiting our parish website www.sclccopperhill.org where we will post updates regularly.**
- Participate in the Mass online from the Diocese Cathedral or on various websites and TV stations such as EWTN and other resources. Information can be found on parish website.
- Make a specific effort to draw closer to God in prayer
 - Catholics are encouraged to make a ‘spiritual communion’
 - Set aside a specific time to pray each day
 - Pray the Stations of the Cross on Fridays in Lent
- Follow the parish on Facebook.com/SCLCCopperhill
- Update your contact info so that we can update our files and be able to reach you electronically with important updates. You can email us at sclchurch@etcmail.com
- Further information, resources and Bishop Stika’s statements are available on the Diocese website www.dioknox.org. Subscribe to DioNotes for the latest news from the Diocese .

Lastly, but importantly, I want to thank you for your continued stewardship. While some of our normal practices may be altered for the time being, the needs of the parish and the outreach to the needy in our community continue.

As in-person Mass attendance will be suspended for the coming weeks, please continue to support the important work of our church with your stewardship.

If you haven’t already done so, I highly encourage you to use online giving to support the important work of the parish. It’s safe, easy, and convenient and a link to our parish can be found on our diocese website www.dioknox.org. Contributions can still be mailed to the parish office at PO Box 1165, Copperhill TN 37317.

Please know that I continue to pray for you each day and ask that you pray also for me and our entire parish family - indeed our entire church, nation and world. In a special way, let us pray together for those affected by this serious virus and those caring for them, that they may receive the strength and care needed to assist them in their recovery.

Take time to love others, guard your mind, and think of things from God's perspective.

“For this reason, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you...; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline”.

2 Timothy 1:6-7

Peace of Christ,

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