

Monday, March 16, 2020; 6:26 PM CDT

Updated Sunday, March 22, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Throughout the history of the Church, the faithful have known many forms of hardship, calamity, disaster, and oppression that have - for a time - prevented public assemblies. Throughout those times, the faithful continued to call upon the name of the Lord. In Babylon, Daniel had no public assembly of which to be a part, but continued to call upon the name of the Lord. In the Early Church, the faithful could not meet in sanctuaries, so met in homes or in cemeteries. In Wittenberg in 1527, Luther cared for the sick in his home and individually served communion to those afflicted by the plague.

Whether you personally are in the age of increased risk or in the younger, "low-risk" category, it's important to understand that this pandemic is considered to be of historic proportions unseen since the Spanish Flu of 1918. And, as this coronavirus has attacked the whole world, it's important for Christians to theologically understand the role of the "three estates" with which God has ordered the world and how those three estates work together to address the effects of the Fall, including pestilence. The three estates are family, government, and the Church. In this particular situation, individual heads of household must care for their families to the best of their abilities, while the government - serving the families - seeks to defend its nation to the best of its abilities, while the Church prays on behalf of both family and government, realizing that the greater pestilence is Sin itself, which only Christ can and has overcome for us all and will share with his Church the eternal victory from Sin *and sin's consequences*.

As the church, the members of Calvary faithfully and calmly pray for our government and our national and state leaders and health care professionals. We pray for our families and continue to conduct daily life in as normal a way as possible, while willfully complying with the government and caring for our neighbors.

But, unlike a government and society that thinks everything depends on its own ability to fight this virus, the faithful know that all of these "three estates" depend upon the mercy of the God who made heaven and earth. So, we will continue to appeal to God and call upon his name and... as the situation allows... go to His altar.

President Trump has requested that all Americans engage in a 15-day self-isolation in hopes it will slow the infection rate. Governor Pritzker has subsequently mandated a "stay at home" policy until April 7. As this federal request and state mandate is placed upon *all* society in a time of crisis, and not merely an imposition against the Church, Calvary will show itself to be a willing helper in and for society, but also continue to confess that our help is in the name of the Lord and his gifts.

The Board of Elders has unanimously agreed to suspend all public assembly at Calvary, which means we will also "wait for one another" (1 Corinthians 11) as we eagerly anticipate receiving the

Sacrament of the Altar again in the weeks ahead. But, thanks be to God, in this time we must be apart, that He keeps us by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in our baptismal inheritance and continues to proclaim to us His Holy Word. Thus, in these difficult weeks, Calvary will continue to preach, hear, and meditate upon His Holy Word in "agile" ways: I will record my sermons for Sundays and Lenten midweek and they will be posted on our website. Calvary will continue to "meet" for daily prayer, as found at the page on our website, www.clce.org.

No one suggests that 15 days (or the state mandate until April 7) will be the "last step;" we simply hope we can help the government and health care professional get "ahead of" the viral spread. Even after these "shelter-in-place" days, we anticipate continual limitations on sizes of gathering. In the upcoming few weeks, the elders will devise a plan with how to carry on congregational life in the 8-10 weeks ahead, and we will keep in contact with the congregation by email. We also urge congregational members to keep in touch with each other - call, Skype, text, email, write letters, and pray for one another. We ask the younger members to consider the needs of older "at-risk" members and consider how you may be of help in running errands.

During these weeks ahead, I also encourage you to call my home number (847-760-6069) or cell number (630-337-9342) as needed. Though I won't have much time for "small chat," I'm always happy to hear how members are doing.

Please keep in mind that - for the majority of the population - this virus is not believed to be deadly; for the sake of the elderly/at-risk and for the healthcare system of our country, we take these drastic measures. But, for most of us, this is not a matter of extreme danger, but of patience and confidence and love for our at-risk neighbors. Remain calm in the promises of Christ, "In this world you will have great tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!"

I keep you all in my prayers and, with tears, look forward to the day we will again all gather together at the altar of God.

Peace be with you,
Pastor Bestul