

My dear friends in Christ,

As you already know by now, we are all in this most difficult challenge of going into the Holy Week with the Shelter-in-Place Order and Social Distancing still in effect.

I know that you all want to be here physically to be with us in our celebrations and to be able to have a quiet time in prayer. But because of the great danger we are all going to be facing in the next few days, our leaders and all the medical experts asked us to act with tremendous care and responsibility to curve the spread of the Covid-19.

Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany said “that the only one who can stop this from spreading is us, you and me!” How true this is!

REGARDING THE PALM LEAVES AND OPENING THE CHURCH DURING THE HOLY WEEK!

So many of us are still insisting that we should put the blessed palm leaves outside on the table in the box for you to pick up! Many of you also asked me that we should open the church during the Holy Week.

I prayed about all these things and I believe with peace in my heart that the most prudent thing for me as your pastor is to do what is proper and responsible.

I don't want to put anyone in danger. The Shelter-in-Place Order means that we are to stay in our home. I don't want also to violate this order by encouraging you to violate this order. I don't want to be part of it. I realize that it is very painful for you to be denied access to the church and be deprived of the Eucharist for this long.

I know how important these things for you. And it hurts me deeply that we are struggling with this reality. The Israelites went through this experience as well. In the wilderness they complained to Moses and were angry that they were brought out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. It is a human condition that when we are deprived of physical and spiritual nourishment, the reaction is filled with anger, disbelief and irrationality.

In the book of Numbers 14:2, it says, “All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!” But we know that in God's time, all these things will pass. God said to Moses, “In the morning you will see the glory of the Lord!”

You will not die by not having the palm leaves on your hand on Palm Sunday. But you can put your life in danger by acting with irrational or with emotional behavior by going out to find a church that will distribute palm leaves on this Palm Sunday. I ask you to remain in your home and pray with me this Palm Sunday as we celebrate the great entry of our Lord Jesus into Jerusalem. This is a time of common sense.

In Isaiah 26:20 it says, “Go home, my people, and lock your doors! Hide yourselves for a little while until the Lord's anger has passed.”

What I want you to do is to get or have a palm branch or leaf in your home to be blessed during the live stream mass-----a virtual blessing. The palm leaves that I will be blessing in the church tomorrow will be distributed when this crisis is over.

I know also that you miss coming to church to pray. It is a place of our community celebrations. Unfortunately, we are deprived of this because of the **Shelter-in-Place Order** and the importance of **Social Distancing**. **God himself reminds us in the book of Jeremiah 23:23-24, "I am a God who is everywhere and not in one place. Do you not know that I am everywhere in heaven and on earth?"**

In your home create a sacred space where you can spend time in prayer with our God who is everywhere. Play some music. Create that environment! That 's what I am doing right now. I pray my office and listen to beautiful Taize music.

Please remain strong! Stay well and healthy. Stay with God!

Again this is the schedule of our live stream on our YouTube Channel, our Facebook Page or go to our parish website at <http://sjcpinole.church>.

April 5, Palm Sunday at 10am

April 9, Holy Thursday at 7:30pm

April 10, Good Friday: 12pm Stations of the Cross

3pm The Lord's Passion and Veneration of the Cross

April 11, Easter Vigil at 7:30 pm

April 12, Easter Sunday at 10am

In Christ,

-Fr. Geoffrey, your servant