



## SAINT PAUL SEMINARY

The Seminaries of Saint Paul

### **How to Keep the Lord's Day Holy A Catholic Family Guide for Celebrating a Spiritual Communion in the Absence of Mass**

**Background** – As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the public celebration of Mass has been suspended throughout many Dioceses in the United States. Many of the faithful, particularly families with children at home, desire to fulfill their duty to God and the Third Commandment in keeping holy the Lord's Day even in the absence of Mass; but there is little guidance on how or what to do.<sup>1</sup> This document is intended to serve as a guide for the spiritual father or head of the family to maintain contact with our ancient liturgical traditions in communion with the Catholic Church throughout the world today. While it should be made clear, especially to younger children, that this is not the Mass – it is intended to connect us to what is familiar in a paraliturgical manner while in these extraordinary circumstances. This guide was approved for use by the USCCB in a March 20, 2020 email.

Gather your family together; it can be around the kitchen table, in the family room, out on a porch or deck. Encourage them to remember that this is a time to rest; to give thanks to God for His love for us in Jesus Christ, and to ask him to heal our world so that we can again join with our neighbors in celebrating the Mass, the Paschal Mystery, and the source and summit of our faith.

NB part of the following paraliturgy draws from the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops. *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*, 2nd ed. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 2012 and other rites of the Catholic Church.

## Sunday March 29, 2020 – The Fifth Sunday of Lent

### Introductory Rites

*Gather the family together and begin by reading or chanting the following opening hymn or “Introit.” All stand.*

#### Introit

*Leader:* [Cf. Ps 43 (42):1–2] Give me justice, O God, and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless. From the deceitful and cunning rescue me, for you, O God, are my strength.<sup>2</sup>

*Family:* Give me justice, O God, and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless. From the deceitful and cunning rescue me, for you, O God, are my strength.

#### Introduction

*Invite the family to make the sign of the cross.*

*Leader:* We gather here to celebrate the Lord’s Day. Sunday has been called the Lord’s day because it was on this day that Jesus conquered sin and death and rose to new life. Unfortunately, we are not able to celebrate Mass today because [the Coronavirus Pandemic has limited our ability to hold public Masses]. Let us be united in the spirit of Christ with the Church around the world and celebrate our redemption in Christ’s suffering, Death, and Resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

*Leader:* In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

*Leader:* Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God forever!<sup>4</sup>

*Family:* Blessed be God Forever!

#### The Penitential Act<sup>5</sup>

*Leader:* Let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate [together and keep holy the Lord’s day].

*Family:* I confess to almighty God and to you my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

*Leader:* May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

*Family:* Amen.

**Collect<sup>6</sup>**

*The Collect is the introductory prayer at the end of the Introductory Rites that by ancient tradition of the Church, is usually addressed to God the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit.*

*Leader:* Let us pray.

*All present pray in silence for a short time. Then the spiritual leader in the family says the prayer that follows, with hands extended, to implore God.*

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death.

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.<sup>7</sup>

*Family:* Amen

**Liturgy of the Word<sup>8</sup>**

*Invite the Family to sit and listen to the words of Scripture. Don't be afraid to break out the family Bible and read the full passages for the scriptures of the day.*

**Reading 1: Ez 37:12-14**

*Reader:* **A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel**

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Thus says the Lord GOD:

O my people, I will open your graves  
and have you rise from them,  
and bring you back to the land of Israel.  
Then you shall know that I am the LORD,  
when I open your graves and have you rise from them,  
O my people!  
I will put my spirit in you that you may live,  
and I will settle you upon your land;  
thus you shall know that I am the LORD.  
I have promised, and I will do it, says the LORD.

*Reader:* The word of the Lord

*Family:* Thanks be to God

**Responsorial Psalm Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8.**

*Reader:* Our responsorial psalm is: **With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.**

*All:* With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

*Reader:*

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;  
LORD, hear my voice!  
Let your ears be attentive  
to my voice in supplication.

*All:* With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

*Reader:*

If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,  
LORD, who can stand?  
But with you is forgiveness,  
that you may be revered.

*All:* With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

*Reader:*

I trust in the LORD;  
my soul trusts in his word.  
More than sentinels wait for the dawn,  
let Israel wait for the LORD.

*All:* With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

*Reader:*

For with the LORD is kindness  
and with him is plenteous redemption;  
And he will redeem Israel  
from all their iniquities.

*All:* With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

## **Reading 2: Rom 8:8-11**

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*Reader:* A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.  
But you are not in the flesh;  
on the contrary, you are in the spirit,  
if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.  
Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.  
But if Christ is in you,  
although the body is dead because of sin,  
the spirit is alive because of righteousness.  
If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,  
the one who raised Christ from the dead

will give life to your mortal bodies also,  
through his Spirit dwelling in you.

*Reader:* The word of the Lord

*Family:* Thanks be to God

*All stand just as you would at Mass for the Gospel acclamation.*

**Verse Before the Gospel Jn 11:25a, 26**

*Reader:* **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!**

*All:* **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!**

*Reader* I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord;  
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will never die.

*All:* **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, King of endless glory!**

*The Gospel should be read by the spiritual father or head of the household. The family should be reminded at this time that we are called to live the Gospel by our lives.*

**Gospel: Jn 11:1-45**

*Leader:* A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

*Family:* Glory to you O Lord!<sup>9</sup>

*All should sign themselves with a cross on their forehead, their lips, and their heart saying quietly:*

*All:* May the Lord be on my mind, and on my lips, and in my heart!

*Leader:* Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany,  
the village of Mary and her sister Martha.  
Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil  
and dried his feet with her hair;  
it was her brother Lazarus who was ill.  
So the sisters sent word to him saying,  
“Master, the one you love is ill.”  
When Jesus heard this he said,  
“This illness is not to end in death,  
but is for the glory of God,  
that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”  
Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.  
So when he heard that he was ill,  
he remained for two days in the place where he was.  
Then after this he said to his disciples,  
“Let us go back to Judea.”  
The disciples said to him,  
“Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you,  
and you want to go back there?”  
Jesus answered,  
“Are there not twelve hours in a day?

If one walks during the day, he does not stumble,  
 because he sees the light of this world.  
 But if one walks at night, he stumbles,  
 because the light is not in him."  
 He said this, and then told them,  
 "Our friend Lazarus is asleep,  
 but I am going to awaken him."  
 So the disciples said to him,  
 "Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved."  
 But Jesus was talking about his death,  
 while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep.  
 So then Jesus said to them clearly,  
 "Lazarus has died.  
 And I am glad for you that I was not there,  
 that you may believe.  
 Let us go to him."  
 So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples,  
 "Let us also go to die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus  
 had already been in the tomb for four days.  
 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away.  
 And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary  
 to comfort them about their brother.  
 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming,  
 she went to meet him;  
 but Mary sat at home.  
 Martha said to Jesus,  
 "Lord, if you had been here,  
 my brother would not have died.  
 But even now I know that whatever you ask of God,  
 God will give you."  
 Jesus said to her,  
 "Your brother will rise."  
 Martha said to him,  
 "I know he will rise,  
 in the resurrection on the last day."  
 Jesus told her,  
 "I am the resurrection and the life;  
 whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,  
 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.  
 Do you believe this?"  
 She said to him, "Yes, Lord.  
 I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God,  
 the one who is coming into the world."

When she had said this,  
 she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying,  
 "The teacher is here and is asking for you."  
 As soon as she heard this,  
 she rose quickly and went to him.  
 For Jesus had not yet come into the village,  
 but was still where Martha had met him.  
 So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her  
 saw Mary get up quickly and go out,  
 they followed her,  
 presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there.  
 When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him,  
 she fell at his feet and said to him,  
 "Lord, if you had been here,  
 my brother would not have died."  
 When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping,  
 he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said,  
 "Where have you laid him?"  
 They said to him, "Sir, come and see."  
 And Jesus wept.  
 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him."  
 But some of them said,  
 "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man  
 have done something so that this man would not have died?"

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb.  
 It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.  
 Jesus said, "Take away the stone."  
 Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him,  
 "Lord, by now there will be a stench;  
 he has been dead for four days."  
 Jesus said to her,  
 "Did I not tell you that if you believe  
 you will see the glory of God?"  
 So they took away the stone.  
 And Jesus raised his eyes and said,  
 "Father, I thank you for hearing me.  
 I know that you always hear me;  
 but because of the crowd here I have said this,  
 that they may believe that you sent me."  
 And when he had said this,  
 He cried out in a loud voice,  
 "Lazarus, come out!"  
 The dead man came out,  
 tied hand and foot with burial bands,  
 and his face was wrapped in a cloth.

So Jesus said to them,  
 “Untie him and let him go.”

Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary  
 and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

*Reader:* The Gospel of the Lord

*Family:* Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ!

### **Reflection on the Readings<sup>10</sup>**

*All sit. This can be an opportunity for the spiritual father or head of the family to teach and apply the scripture passages to the family’s daily life. Make it real and practical. Draw in current events. Bring the Gospel to life! Especially if there are young children present, you may consider using prudent use of dialogue (questions and answers).<sup>11</sup> You can also look up and view a homily from one of the many on the web (e.g. Bishop Robert Barron or <https://adw.org/coronavirus-dispensation-and-prayers/>) or read one of the great homilies for the day from the Church Fathers.*

### **Period of Silence<sup>12</sup>**

*After the reflection, pause for a brief period of silent prayer and reflection on the scriptures.*

### **Profession of Faith: Nicene Creed<sup>13</sup>**

*All stand.*

I believe in one God,  
 the Father almighty,  
 maker of heaven and earth,  
 of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
 the Only Begotten Son of God,  
 born of the Father before all ages.  
 God from God, Light from Light,  
 true God from true God,  
 begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;  
 through him all things were made.  
 For us men and for our salvation  
 he came down from heaven,

*Instruct the Family to bow their heads at these words:*

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
 and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
 he suffered death and was buried,  
 and rose again on the third day  
 in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

### **Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful<sup>14</sup>**

*Encourage each member of the Family to offer in prayer their needs to their Heavenly Father who answers those who ask. The following are some suggested prayers and a guide to our intercessions. The family can reply to each: "Lord Hear Our Prayer."*

*Leader:* Let us ask our Heavenly Father, dear family, for the graces to endure these trying times and to offer our small sacrifices in union with Christ for the souls of all those suffering from the Coronavirus throughout the world.

*Reader:* For the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for our (Arch)bishop \_\_\_\_\_, and for all of our priests (especially \_\_\_\_\_), that they know of our spiritual communion with them each week as they remember us in the Sacred Mysteries of the altar in our absence. We pray to the Lord...

*Reader:* For our governmental leaders, particularly those entrusted with the healthcare needs of our society, that the Holy Spirit's gifts might flow through them in healing those afflicted. We pray to the Lord...

*Reader:* For Christians of all nations, that unified in prayer with the Holy Father this week, we will one day be united together with the Communion of Saints in glorifying our heavenly Father. We pray to the Lord...

*Reader:* For our family, friends and neighbors with whom we long to be together again in companionship and worship, may God grant them patience and perseverance through this time of separation. We pray to the Lord...

*Reader:* For all the sick, especially those with chronic illnesses and those who are unable to receive adequate care, that the healing power of Spirit will pour out an abundance of graces to heal those infirmities and calm any fears. We pray to the Lord...

*Leader:* We humbly beseech you, O Lord, imperfect and unworthy though we may be that, through the intercession of Mother Mary and all the Saints who have faced such trials through the ages, we may soon worship together at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We ask this in holy name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

*Family:* Amen

### **Prayer to St. Joseph, Hope of the Sick<sup>15</sup>**

*St. Joseph is guardian of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ and patron saint of the Universal Church. In this time of great need, we implore his intercession.*

*All:* Oh, St. Joseph, whose protection is so great, so strong, so prompt before the throne of God, we place in you all our interests and desires.

Oh St. Joseph, do assist us by your powerful intercession and obtain for us from your divine son all spiritual blessings through Jesus Christ, our Lord; so that having engaged here below your heavenly power, we may offer our thanksgiving and homage to the most loving of fathers.

Oh St. Joseph, we never weary contemplating you and Jesus asleep in your arms. We dare not approach while he reposes near your heart. Press him in our name and kiss his fine head for us, and ask him to return the kiss when we draw our dying breath. St. Joseph, patron of departing souls, pray for us. Amen.

### **Rite of Spiritual Communion<sup>16</sup>**

*Although without a Priest, we cannot offer the Mystery of Jesus' Sacrifice on the Cross, we can join with the Church throughout the world in making a Spiritual Communion until such time as we can again participate in the great Sacrifice of the Mass.*

### **Lord's Prayer**

*Leader:* The Father provides us with food for eternal life. Let us pray for nourishment and strength.<sup>17</sup>

*Family:* Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be 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.

### **Invitation to [Spiritual] Communion**

*Invite the family to kneel, if practical. The following formula of prayers can be prayed together as a family, inviting Jesus spiritually into our hearts.*

*Leader:* Let us make acts of faith, hope and love<sup>18</sup> to prepare ourselves to make our Spiritual Communion to unite ourselves with all the Masses our priests are celebrating in our absence and on our behalf:

*Act of Faith*

*All:* O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them who are eternal truth and wisdom, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. In this faith I intend to live and die. Amen.

*Leader:* Longing for the kingdom of heaven, we place our trust in Christ's promise relying on the grace of the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> Let us now make our own act of hope as we pray:

*Act of Hope*

*All:* Lord God, I hope by your grace for the pardon of all my sins and after life here to gain eternal happiness because you have promised it who are infinitely powerful, faithful, kind, and merciful. In this hope I intend to live and die. Amen.

*Leader:* Through His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus made the ultimate act of love by offering himself as expiation for our sins. Let us now make our own act of love as we pray:

*Act of Love*

*All:* O Lord God, I love you above all things and I love my neighbor for your sake because you are the highest, infinite and perfect good, worthy of all my love. In this love I intend to live and die. Amen.<sup>20</sup>

*Leader:* With a humble and contrite heart, we ask the Lord to come to us just as He would if we were able to receive Him in Holy Communion at Mass:

**St. Alphonsus' Act of Spiritual Communion**

*All:* My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire you in my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.<sup>21</sup>

**[Spiritual] Communion Antiphon**

*All:* [Cf. Jn 11:26] Everyone who lives and believes in me will not die for ever, says the Lord.<sup>22</sup>

**Act of Thanksgiving<sup>23</sup>**

*Leader:* Let us together pray an Act of Thanksgiving

*All [Psalm 100]:* Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing for joy. Know that he, the Lord, is God. He made us, we belong to him, we are His people the sheep of his flock.

Go within his gates, giving thanks. Enter his courts with songs of praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name.

Indeed, how good is the Lord, eternal his merciful love. He is faithful from age to age.

*Another Psalm of Thanksgiving would also be suitable, e.g. Ps. 23, Ps. 27, Ps. 98, Ps. 137, etc. Perhaps add prayers dear to the family to give thanks to God for faith in the Holy Eucharist and ever long to receive Him in Holy Communion at Mass.*

## **Concluding Rite<sup>24</sup>**

*All stand.*

### **Invitation to Pray [for the world]**

Pope Francis' prayer to Mary during the Coronavirus Pandemic<sup>25</sup>

*All:* 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, Oh Lady of Guadalupe and Patroness of the Americas,  
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.

## **Blessing<sup>26</sup>**

*Leader:* Bless, O Lord, your people, who long for the gift of your mercy, and grant that what, at  
your prompting, they desire they may receive by your generous gift. Through Christ our Lord.<sup>27</sup>

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

*Family:* Amen.

## **Sign of Peace<sup>28</sup>**

*Leader:* Let us offer other [an appropriate] sign of peace.

## **Closing Hymn<sup>29</sup>**

*Choose a family favorite hymn and sing to the Glory of the Lord!*

<sup>1</sup> Pope St. John Paul II offered abundant material for reflection about the importance of the Lord's Day in his 1998 Letter "*Dies Domini*," available online. What is included below is one option families may find helpful to keep the Lord's Day holy especially in our current circumstances.

<sup>2</sup> *The Roman Missal*, 3<sup>rd</sup> typical ed. (Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), 256.

<sup>3</sup> United States Catholic Conference of Bishops. *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 2012), §186.

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §188.

<sup>5</sup> *The Roman Missal*, §4; cf. *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1983), §83.

<sup>6</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §189.

<sup>7</sup> *The Roman Missal*, 256.

<sup>8</sup> *Lectionary*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, at [www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032920.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/032920.cfm), accessed Mar. 23, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §195.

<sup>10</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §196.

<sup>11</sup> Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory for Masses with Children* (1 November 1973). *Adoremus Bulletin* [www.adoremus.org/2007/12/31/Directory-for-Masses-With-Children/](http://www.adoremus.org/2007/12/31/Directory-for-Masses-With-Children/), accessed March 23, 2020, §48.

<sup>12</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §197.

<sup>13</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §199.

<sup>14</sup> *The Roman Missal*, §20.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. [www.ewtn.com/catholicism/devotions/prayer-for-st-josephs-protection-329](http://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/devotions/prayer-for-st-josephs-protection-329).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Sunday Celebrations*, §204ff.

<sup>17</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §205.

<sup>18</sup> [www.ibreviary.com/m2/preghiere.php?tipo=Preghiera&id=213](http://www.ibreviary.com/m2/preghiere.php?tipo=Preghiera&id=213).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. CCC 1817.

<sup>20</sup> [www.ibreviary.com/m2/preghiere.php?tipo=Preghiera&id=213](http://www.ibreviary.com/m2/preghiere.php?tipo=Preghiera&id=213).

<sup>21</sup> [www.stalphonsusno.com/pray-with-us-act-of-spiritual-communion/](http://www.stalphonsusno.com/pray-with-us-act-of-spiritual-communion/).

<sup>22</sup> *The Roman Missal*, 259.

<sup>23</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §211.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Sunday Celebrations*, §212ff.

<sup>25</sup> [www.cny.org/stories/text-of-popes-prayer-to-mary-during-coronavirus-pandemic.20746](http://www.cny.org/stories/text-of-popes-prayer-to-mary-during-coronavirus-pandemic.20746).

<sup>26</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §214.

<sup>27</sup> *The Roman Missal*, 259.

<sup>28</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §215.

<sup>29</sup> *Sunday Celebrations*, §216.