During these challenging times that we are unable to gather to celebrate Mass, please know that our prayers are with you all in the midst of this crisis.

Please refer to the homepage of our website for our Holy Week schedule.

Palm Sunday Mass will be available online on YouTube. The link can be found on our website and in a Constant Contact email that is sent to all parishioners.

As we begin our most holiest week, let us keep one another in prayer.
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you for the countless emails and wishes. So many of you have kept in contact with me and I am practicing ministry by distance! Thank you! Please don’t think that we have been sitting idle. Everyday Bishop and I celebrate Mass, each in our own space, and know that you and your loved ones are being prayed for, as are our health care workers and the many sick. Our parish staff is busy, albeit at a distance working like many of you, from home.

**HOLY WEEK AND EASTER ARE NOT CANCELLED because of COVID!** Once I have the details put together, we will have a schedule of events, some live via web presence and others that will be uploaded to the net for us to celebrate these Holy Days. It’s going to be different – and as my mother always says, “Different is not bad, it’s just different.” Mother is NEVER wrong, (Don’t tell her I said that!). So, tune in, be patient and flexible and we will still have Easter together. It will just be different than what we are used to. All of the information will be posted on our webpage and sent via constant contact once its confirmed.

**Some Important Observations**

There seems to be some stages to this quarantine I want to make you aware of.

In the beginning it was novel. Some of us didn’t take it too seriously and even after quarantine was called, we still weren’t being too careful. Then once things began to become more serious and there were closures and cancellations and the daily numbers of infections started to rise, we began to take things seriously. Now Two weeks later we have been fastidious. We have locked ourselves and our loved ones in tight. We have done without, not going to the supermarket or failing to get delivery times and we have been surviving. It became an adventure of sorts. More family time, more time to cook or do hobbies. More time to read or clean out closets. We busied ourselves with odds and ends and it worked. We texted, we tweeted, we shared jokes and funny things from the internet. We laughed and muddled through. So far so good.

In the meantime, we enter week three and the numbers of infections have increased, and we have heard stories of family and friends, or people we know who are sick or have been hospitalized. Our anxieties have grown, and our patience has been tested. The news always seems to have nothing good to tell. What was doing without, is now really bothersome as wait lists for food deliveries have become seemingly endless. Quality time with my family is now feeling a bit strained and we start to feel like this is never going to end. The four walls that were keeping us safe, feel like they are closing in. We start to feel a bit of despair. Maybe we find ourselves more frequently short tempered or overwhelmed. The text and the tweets are fewer and father between and the ones we get are darker, or less funny. Sometimes it’s bad news about someone we know. What seemed just a short time ago as something we could handle, now is really feeling like a test. We’re feeling a bit more helpless and hopeless, frustrated and trapped.

Now what I describe here may be happening in your home – or it may not. It just may be in varying degrees based on personality and mixture of people within your home. But, if you are seeing this in whatever degree in your home, please know that its **NORMAL**. If any of what I have described is ringing true for you. There is nothing wrong with you. Take a deep breath and exhale. What I describe above is what I am calling “Quarantine Stress”. It goes by other names in the Mental Health world, but that is not important. What I want you to know is that you are normal and what you are feeling is normal.
This is an extraordinary time. None of us have been prepared for this. It is not our normal way of living and all of us have been forced, in these extreme circumstances, to suddenly change gears and live completely differently. Now most of us can do that on the short term. We can muddle through and roll with the punches, but as time goes on not living the way we normally live is bound to cause a myriad of feelings and stress that we are not ready to deal with. Add to it the world of anxieties and frustrations that are being fed by the media and the emergency situation we are facing, naturally there is going to be a tipping point. A “one last straw”.

So, what do we do? What is the remedy when we can’t go back to our normal life? How do we deal with the anxiety and frustration? I want to offer you 10 points I hope will help you breathe a bit more deeply and deal with some of those feelings that are overwhelming us.

1) **Sometimes too much bad news is – TOO DARN MUCH BAD NEWS:** Limit the amount of News feeds coming into your world. Read the paper once. Do not leave the TV on as background noise. If the TV is constantly on and all there is – is bad news, it does filter through to your brain. Limit your amount of bad news!

2) **If the walls are closing in-BREAK OUT OF THE ROOM:** Go outside. Get some fresh air. If you can’t go for a walk, go sit in the yard or on the porch. Do some gardening. Drive to the park and sit in the car. Picnic in the car while looking at the water. You can self-isolate. It doesn’t have to be at home.

3) **Family time is good – but so is alone time:** Along the lines of point two – being together all the time may seem like a nice idea, but the reality is, once the novelty wears off, we realize that maybe we are better with some space. Give each other room. Go for a walk alone. Go for a drive. Sit by the water.

4) **Fix a routine and stick with it:** We are routine people. We are good with schedules, even as we often feel trapped by them. Go to bed at a set hour, wake up at a set time. Break up your day with a schedule. When I feel like I have been a lump on a log or have wasted my day aimlessly, I feel frustrated and this builds on my feelings of aimlessness and frustration. If I have a routine and I stick to it at the end of the day I can feel like I accomplished something. It’s putting some normal back into the abnormal situation.

5) **Set Tasks:** OK, you cleaned out the closets and the basement has never looked better. What else is there to do? Don’t stress over it, but here is your opportunity to feel useful and do something meaningful for yourself. We all have those tasks that we say, “If only I had more time”. Now is the time.

6) **Be Creative:** Some of you are saying, “Creative? I can’t draw a stick figure! Whah?!?” It doesn’t matter. All of us have gifts. Some are more evident than others but being creative and forcing ourselves to think outside the box and test our creative skills, does not have to be a frustrating endeavor. Draw, write, sew, play an instrument, whatever. Creating fills the soul with a sense of awe and pride. Remember God created you and looked and said, “He/She is good!”

7) **Have some human contact:** Remember girl’s night or guy’s night? Have it remotely. Face-Time, dial in to a chat room, or use a web based service to chat with others. Many of them are offering free services right now. Set up a time and do it together. While it may not be the way you are used to, it is good to see and talk to one another.

8) **Social Isolation does not stop us from doing good for others:** Remember the closets you cleaned? Give stuff away. Volunteer to do a food delivery. Be a friendly caller. Write notes. Maria Ryan in Parish Social Ministry is the Queen of this stuff and she needs you! All of it can be done with isolation and you can feel good doing good for others.

9) **A cocktail is nice, but sometimes it’s not the answer:** For some of us social isolation makes us go to bad or troubling habits. It’s a drink to get to sleep, or the substance to help me with my increasing anxiety. It’s what I do when I trapped with my family. But none of it is the answer. This time is especially hard on members of our community in Recovery, but any of us can turn to substances to try and deal with what we are feeling. If you are struggling – reach out. While groups are not meeting in person. They are meeting online, and there are people always waiting to help if you ask.
10) “All Angels have wings – sometimes they just forget to use them” I love that saying. Most importantly. Be patient with yourself. Breathe. Pray. Trust me, God hears you and knows your fears and frustrations. Don’t get frazzled, or let anger and frustration rule your head and your heart. We will get through this. We are all angels and we have wings. We just need to stop and remember how to use them.

On to Holy Week
Outside my office there is a beautiful large Magnolia tree. I have come to love this tree. It’s the first to bloom as the weather softens and it has a wonderful canopy of leaves to shade my office from the summer sun in the height of the season. This tree and I have become friends. Right now, it is ready to burst forth with beautiful white and pink blossoms. For me this is a sign of hope. Hope that new life is burgeoning in the world around us, ready to erupt forth. Bishop Henning told me the other day that while he was outside with Agnes (the wonder dog), he saw schools of fish running in the pond. The eagles, the Commander and Mrs. Vanderbilt, have been circling above, looking for their next meal as they guard their nest. It’s all around us, in the air, in the sea, in the flora – life. Life in abundance. That gives me hope.

This is an unprecedented time in the life of our world. Certainly, I could never have imagined in my 27 years of ministry that I might not be able to celebrate with my parish family the Holy Week liturgies. It’s unprecedented. This has been truly a tough Lent for us all. But in spite of Virus warnings, bans and social isolation, Holy Week; the remembrance of Jesus Passion, death and resurrection, remains. Even if we are forced to celebrate via the internet, by live streams, or YouTube, whatever the means, we need this Holy Week. We need to be reminded that we are people of hope and faith and regardless of what the world endures, we are saved by the blood of Jesus’ cross. There is a saying attributed to St. Bruno, “The world changes, but the Cross remains the same.” It’s this same cross we cling to now in the midst of this crisis, but not only his cross, what lies beyond it. The very source of our hope. The Easter Mystery.

I urge you to enter this week with me – albeit by distance. Walk with me through the passion of Jesus this week. Bring with you all that you are struggling with; your anxieties, your hurts, your wounds, your tiredness, your fears. Bring it all, and together, let’s lay them at the foot of his cross. His death is our death to sin, his rising is our rising to new life. NEW LIFE.

Blessed Holy Week,

Fr. Steve
WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.

As we journey together through these difficult days, we are so grateful to all who have subscribed to our online giving option and to those who have mailed in their weekly envelopes. We realize that this situation has placed an emotional and financial burden on many of you. It has also put a strain on our parish’s budget and has the potential to impact our mission.

If you are able to continue your financial support, may we suggest opportunities for giving which prove to be most cost effective and help us to sustain parish operations and expenses.

One easy way to do so is through our parish’s online giving provider, Faith Direct. Faith Direct ensures you the security of knowing that your information is protected, every transaction is secure and that your donations are automatically transferred to our church.

You may enroll by visiting www.faithdirect.net and use our parish code NY229.

You may prefer the simplicity of our “Text to Give” option from your mobile phone. It is safe, secure and convenient. Although previously a function of the Catholic Ministry Appeal, it has currently been reutilized for parish giving and 100% of your contribution will go to our parish.

You may also mail your contributions directly to the Rectory at 53 Prospect Rd. Centerport, NY 11721.

We thank you for your prayerful consideration of these options to support Our Lady Queen of Martyrs and our prayers are with you.
Easter 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

None of us could have imagined even weeks ago, that we would celebrate Holy Week and Easter Sunday virtually.

I have been amazed and inspired by the creativity and initiative of our pastors, our people and our parishes to continue evangelizing all of Long Island.

Whether it is video-streaming Masses and Eucharistic adoration, conducting a virtual parish mission, or a health precaution sensitive Eucharistic procession through neighborhoods, you are all moving forward and trusting in the transformative power of the Risen Christ as we continue to experience the tragedies, trauma, unemployment, financial and economic distress of the COVID-19 crisis.

The light that streams from the glorified wounds of the Risen Jesus always touches and transforms our wounds and fears, and the wounds and fears of the world.

We remember in a special way this Easter Sunday and throughout the Easter season the souls of those who have died from the corona virus and their families, and those who, as Pope Francis says, are “writing the decisive events of our time: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, deacons, religious men and women and so very many others.” We remember our families and the efforts of each of us to care for our families and our neighbors.

While we are all in pain that our Holy Week 2020 needs to be a virtual one, we do have a Pastoral Letter, The Great Week: A Pilgrimage with the Lord in Holy Week which can help strengthen, lift and inspire our virtual Holy Week celebrations.

This Pastoral Letter is a user-friendly, easily understandable synthesis of Holy Week and the Sacred Triduum, its liturgical theology, spirituality and history, designed to show the relationship between the Sacred Liturgies of Holy Week and Catholic Evangelization.

I encourage everyone to participate in all the Holy Week liturgies virtually through the Catholic Faith Network (see: catholicfaithnetwork.org for details) and through your own parishes streaming the liturgies.
Let’s take this unique and virtual evangelization opportunity to pray that the Risen Christ might lead a massive return of Catholic Long Islanders to a full, active and conscious participation in our Holy Week liturgies and our Sunday Masses throughout the year.

I encourage you all to read and pray our Pastoral Letter which is available on our diocesan website DRVC.org and in the March 2020 Long Island Catholic magazine that many of you received at home.

I also had the opportunity on March 27, 2020, to share the Pastoral Letter with every American Bishop in the United States for possible use in their dioceses as they celebrate virtual Holy Weeks around the country.

I received an email from the Bishop of Fairbanks, Alaska. He thanked the Diocese of Rockville Centre for sharing the Holy Week Pastoral Letter with the people of Fairbanks, Alaska and said: “We have 37 remote parishes of Native Alaskans, pretty much on ‘lock down’ that could benefit enormously from the Pastoral Letter.”

Catholic Long Islanders stand in the solidarity of the Risen Lord with Catholic Alaskans! This is just another example of the global Catholic solidarity that our Holy Father Pope Francis models for us and calls us to.

Thank you for continuing to support your parish and the vital ministries of our Church as your means allow during this most challenging time for all of us. The Church continues to serve the spiritual and physical needs of people during this crisis. Weekly collections mailed or given online will be critical to the sustaining and reemergence of our parishes.

Our Easter joy may be delayed this year, but our faith, hope and trust in the power of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection must shine brighter than ever. The cross of this crisis offers us the opportunity for a renewed and lasting appreciation for the gift of family and the transformative power of faith.

Know that you and all your families are in my heart and in my prayers as we celebrate The Great Week, Easter Sunday, the Easter Octave, Divine Mercy Sunday and the Easter Season.

He is Risen! Alleluia!

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre
**Gospel at the Procession: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew**

This is Matthew, a Jew writing especially for Jewish converts. He wants to make sure he conveys that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise for the Messiah. That is why he has Jesus “riding on a donkey” as the prophet Zechariah foretold and has the crowd cry out “Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” from Psalm 118.

There is obviously a group of supporters for Jesus who believe him to be the Messiah and yet not long after, this same city has another crowd yelling “Crucify him.” Have you ever wondered how and why the people of Jerusalem changed sides so quickly? As we hear later in the story, it was the Pharisees and other religious leaders who were threatened by Jesus that wanted him dead and roused up many of the people to turn against him even though it was not in their best interest. It is a pattern that has continued throughout history.

**A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah**

This is one of the four poems called Suffering Servant Songs that depict a messenger sent by God to convince the people to be true to the covenant they had with God. The Servant suffers rejection and even death while being faithful to his mission. The early church saw Jesus as the embodiment of the Suffering Servant as do we today.

Have you ever suffered for doing the right thing, for standing up for the truth, for helping someone in need? At times we all may be called to be suffering servants but not people without hope. Our hope is in Jesus, especially in times of suffering.

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians**

This was probably a hymn sung at early Christian liturgies that incorporates the image of the Suffering Servant that was familiar to the Jews of the time. But it goes beyond this image of one obedient to death. “Because of this, God greatly exalted him” “and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”

This was a radical statement for any Jew to make. For Judaism, God is totally other, not embodied in some aspect of nature or anything else. God is God. That’s it. So here, the early Christians boldly sing of their belief “that Jesus Christ is Lord.” That may be easy for us to say now but it was a dangerous song back then.

**The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew**

This is the most important part of the Gospels and so we read the whole passage reverently. It is impossible to get all the many parts of the story all at once. Please try to read all four of the gospel Passion stories or at least one of them sometime this week if possible and talk about it with someone who shares your faith. There are so many interesting characters and stories within stories. Let’s look more closely at Judas and Peter. Both betray Jesus but in different ways and for different reasons. Peter is afraid, afraid for his life. He knew how hideous the Roman crucifixions were. So, here he is the one chosen by Jesus to be the leader, the “rock” and he crumbles. We do not know why Judas betrayed Jesus to the Romans. Was it just money or were there other motives? In any case, he becomes so wrapped in guilt that he kills himself. He does not believe that he can be forgiven. That means that he did not really get who Jesus was, the healer, full of compassionate forgiveness and so he cut himself off from the very power and gift that Jesus offered.
to him. Peter recognized his tragic mistake and turned himself around, had a change of heart and asked for forgiveness. Later, of course, he gave his life for Jesus and for the message of forgiveness. And what of Judas? Did his suicide mean that he was forever condemned for his lack of faith in forgiveness? NO! Who are we to judge?

As we celebrate this Palm Sunday in the midst of a Global Pandemic and remember all the horrible suffering that Jesus endured, let us pray to both the suffering Jesus who bore the suffering of his people at that time and the risen Jesus who overcame suffering and death and is with us now in our suffering and especially the suffering of our sisters and brothers here at home and throughout the world.

Let us also ask ourselves what we can do to help those who are in danger and may be hungry.

As you may know I co-founded WhyHunger with the late Huntingtonian Harry Chapin. We started the first hunger hotline in America, the New York Hunger Hotline. Some years later, we started the National Hunger Hotline. WhyHunger still runs that hotline at 1-800-548-6479. Over the years, we have helped millions of hungry people find food in their neighborhoods. During the past two weeks our calls have gone up 300%. Please let people you know who are hungry to call that number and help if you can, in any way you are able.

Peace and love! Bill Ayres