Dear all,
As we begin the Holiest Week of our year, let us continue to pray for all affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, including ourselves:

In the midst of our storms, Lord Jesus, you call us to look to you and trust in your goodness and love.
In these days, we struggle with the impact the coronavirus has had, on our lives, our communities and our world.
We think of our sisters and brothers around the globe, who are sick or quarantined, uncertain and afraid, and we ask you to speak your word of peace into our troubled hearts and minds.
Help us to reach out to each other in concern, compassion and solidarity, and not to yield to the temptations of selfishness, prejudice or isolation.
Help us to be generous toward those whose needs are greater than our own, and let us lift up in prayer countries who are feeling the burdens of loneliness and desperation.
May your mighty hand, O Lord, swiftly tame the spread of this virus, and restore peace and health to your children in every land.
Keep us steadfast in faith and confident in your love, for we are yours, O God, and the whole earth is yours also.
God our Redeemer, our Healer, Our Strength, be with us now and throughout the days and weeks ahead.
Glory to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen

This year, perhaps more than usual, we have time to reflect on the place that our faith holds in our lives. Much of it can be explained by the events we remember in Holy Week:

**On Monday** we hear the Gospel of John proclaimed in the story of Mary washing and anointing Jesus’ feet. He relates this to anointing a body prior to burial prefiguring the events which will take place later in the week.
Tuesday’s Gospel, also from John, is the story of betrayal – of Judas being ‘outed’ as the one who will turn Jesus in to the Sanhedrin, and of Jesus’ challenge to Peter that he will deny him three times before cock crow in the morning.

Wednesday’s first reading starts with a saying which is a boost to the role of teachers: “The servant of the Lord said: the Lord has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.” (Isaiah 50:4). At a time when we are all weary of the unfamiliar demands of being cooped up, this is a challenge to us to help overcome the weariness of those who listen to us. And we should never forget the words of Pope Paul VI, who taught us that if people learn from teachers it is because they are also witnesses.... The Gospel, from Matthew 26, is a retelling of Tuesday’s Gospel with a bit more detail of Judas’ arrangements with the chief priests.

On Thursday, the only Mass permitted is the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper. Prior to the 4th Century, no Eucharistic celebrations were permitted during Holy Week; however, at that time began to celebrate a Cena Domini (Supper of the Lord). We are told that bells were rung all through that liturgy and then silenced until the Gloria of Easter. The name, Maundy Thursday, which is still used in some Christian traditions, refers to the “new commandment” Jesus gives to love one another. The foot-washing which is traditional in many places is witness to the way Jesus calls us to serve one another. Although this year, we shall not see this in our churches, we are called to offer parallel acts of service as we are able to those in our communities who need help. At the end of the Mass, the Blessed Sacrament is removed to a place – often a chapel or place of prayer set up in the
Parish hall, and kept in a safe place other than the Tabernacle in the
curch. Many communities keep a prayer vigil over this throughout
the night.

**Good Friday** is the only day of the Church Year during which no
Mass is celebrated. The altar is bare and we can
only receive Communion which is Presanctified,
consecrated at the Holy Thursday Liturgy. This is
usually at a service held at three pm, during which
we venerate the Cross. Stations of the Cross and
meditation on the “Seven Last Words of Jesus” are also offered.

On Holy Saturday, the Church remains bare and empty until the
Easter Vigil, which we shall explore during the week.

Here are some Links which may be of interest:

- Holy Week in three minutes [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdrPhxqRP9I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdrPhxqRP9I)

- Holy Monday at Home [https://aleteia.org/2020/04/05/heres-how-to-celebrate-holy-monday-at-home/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en](https://aleteia.org/2020/04/05/heres-how-to-celebrate-holy-monday-at-home/?utm_campaign=NL_en&utm_source=daily_newsletter&utm_medium=mail&utm_content=NL_en)

For those who may need some encouragement to cope with isolation, this movie,
although about 25 years old, may have some advice: Trappist
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohzS11DZJlw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohzS11DZJlw)

And this: [https://www.catholicstand.com/the-accidental-contemplative-isolation-for-beginners/](https://www.catholicstand.com/the-accidental-contemplative-isolation-for-beginners/)

Finally, there are a lot of great information and short, easy-to-watch video
segments at [https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/embracing-holy-week-at-home](https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/embracing-holy-week-at-home)

As I was unable to figure out how to attach an email from GIA with some
wonderful music resources and opportunities to listen, I am sending it to you
under separate cover.

Until tomorrow,

Gillian