

Memorial page for coronavirus victims allows family, others to grieve loss

BALTIMORE (CNS) – The Archdiocese of Baltimore launched a page on its website April 13 for people throughout the archdiocese to memorialize loved ones who have died of the coronavirus and to offer the prayers and support of the entire Catholic community.

“At a time when funeral Masses aren’t safe to celebrate and when people aren’t able to gather, even for something as important as the death of a loved one, I pray this will allow people to express their prayerful love and support in a way that is safe, but also very meaningful to those who are grieving the loss of a loved one at this time,” Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori said.

Auxiliary Bishop Adam J. Parker, vicar general for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, said the initiative – “One Church – One Family” – is in keeping with the Catholic Church’s long tradition of praying for the dead. The page is on the site www.archbalt.org.

Traditional rituals include wake services, funeral Masses, graveside services, Mass intentions, enrollments and other commemorations, Bishop Parker said. Families also preserve memories of loved ones in other ways, such as with tombstones and monuments, plaques on columbaria and in places of worship, and with photographs in their homes, he said.

“Given our inability to gather for our traditional rituals, it is all the more urgent to unite in prayer as one church family for those who have died,” Bishop Parker said. “Knowing that many of the victims of the coronavirus are dying without the presence of their loved ones, our ability to unite in prayer

for them is even more significant.”

Bishop Parker noted that three days before Christmas, Paul Parker, his brother, died of cancer at 52.

“In addition to my faith, the greatest source of consolation came from the support and prayers of countless people who reached out with condolences and words of encouragement,” Bishop Parker said. “Whether that was through cards, texts and emails or in person at the funeral home or church, the very knowledge that so many people were praying for him was of great comfort to me and my family.

“I’m hoping that the prayers of those who use this memorial page will likewise be a source of comfort to those who are grieving the loss of coronavirus victims.”

Bishop Parker highlighted Pope Francis, who in his special blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) March 27 said everyone is “in the boat together” in dealing with the pandemic.

“That compels us to support one another and pray for one another including those who have died, even those we don’t know,” Bishop Parker said. “We are one church and we are one family united in Christ.”