



May 10, 2020

Happy Mother's Day!

Today as we celebrate Mother's Day in this unusual and rather difficult time, let us remember to offer our own mothers special signs of our love and affection, if you are able. Let us not forget the Mother who loves and cares for us most of all, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

For some people, this day can be difficult. I know some of our parishioners have mothers who are very sick, and some people cannot even visit their mothers if they are in a nursing home, assisted living or a hospital at this time.

Last Tuesday afternoon, I received a call from the hospice chaplain who asked me to visit someone in a nursing home for Anointing of the Sick. They assured me it was not an issue to visit this person since she was dying. Ten minutes later, I received another call from the same chaplain who told me that this patient in fact had tested positive for Coronavirus. She then gave me the option to visit or not. I did say yes, and then I called to find out the procedures that are taken at Alexian Brothers and St. Alexis Hospitals. I was informed that priests only do an Apostolic pardon by phone with patients who have the virus. With these kinds of answers, I had a dilemma of what to do - call back and say sorry, or think about following Jesus's example, who was not afraid to touch the leper.

When I arrived at the nursing home, a man was walking near me approaching the front door as well and said to me, "Father, I think we are coming to visit the same person." I mentioned the lady's name and he said, "Yes, she is my mom." The receptionist at the front desk said the man who entered with me was not allowed to see his mom. I asked the son, "When was the last time you were able to see your mother?" He said St. Patrick's Day, almost two months ago. He mentioned to me that his mother is a very faithful Catholic. When she was able, she attended Mass every day.

I can only imagine how difficult it was for the son to see me, who never met his mother before, and be able to stay with her and pray with her in her final hours, while he was left in the lobby with no hope of being able to see her again alive or hold her hand or hug her.

After I was given adequate personal protective equipment, I went to the unit where there was a sign on the door “Corona Virus Quarantine Area” with approximately 20 patients in that unit. Probably they all were in the same situation and had families who are forbidden to visit. I was then directed to the room where my patient was, a 90-year-old woman. Before I started praying with her, I let her know that her son was downstairs but not able to come and visit because of medical restrictions. I told her that her son asked me to tell her that he loves her and wishes he could be there with her at this moment, but he is here in spirit and praying with us at the same time. Then I gave her Anointing of the Sick and an Apostolic pardon, and I assured her that I would keep her in my prayers too.

When I left, the son was not there in the lobby anymore. I could only imagine how heartbreaking and difficult it was to be so close but yet not able to see his own mother one more time. I’m sharing this story with you so you can pray for those sons, daughters and families who are in the same situation, especially today on Mother’s Day; and also a reminder, if you are able, to give your own mother (or wife) a big hug and kiss.

Also this past week, I was to have an in-person meeting with Bishop Pates. After I shared my experience of who I went to visit for an Anointing of the Sick, it changed to a conference call.

I have been granted my sabbatical for six months, starting in July, of three months in Kenya serving with the Missionaries of the Poor, and then six weeks in Rome/Vatican and the last six weeks in the Holy Land. But now I can only do this in God’s time with the travel restrictions. To be honest, I do not know if I will actually be able to complete any of this travel this year.

So please pray that we will be able to come back to church and return to our normal life, as close as we can get to it, soon. At this point it is certain there will be no Masses in the month of May except weddings, funerals and baptisms with no more than 10 people. Most importantly, I am hoping to be able to celebrate my last Mass here with all of you before I leave on June 30th.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all of you who continue to support St. Peter’s. I appreciate the thoughtful emails, notes and phone calls after the Sunday letter is emailed.

Enjoy your Mother’s Day and blessings on your week.

God bless you.

Fr. Slawek

