



April 12, 2020

He is Risen! Alleluia!

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

“PEACE BE WITH YOU!” This greeting of the Risen Christ to His disciples on Easter will continue to resound in all of us as we celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord.

This past Holy Thursday, we not only celebrated the Institution of the Eucharist and the Priesthood, but I also personally celebrated the 25th anniversary of my coming to the United States. I realized that almost half of my 25 years in the U.S., I have spent with you, living in Itasca and being your pastor and spiritual leader at St. Peter's. Of course, this was not the way I had hoped to spend my last few months here.

Little did I know that last year, 2019, would actually be my last Easter with you to celebrate the Mass. I didn't know that last year's Confirmation class of 2019 would be the last confirmation I would celebrate with you, and it looks like last year's First Holy Communion celebration is to be my last as well at St. Peter's.

As we can see now, our plans and our lives can be changed in a moment's notice, and the only thing we can do is to trust God and accept His will.

This is an unprecedented crisis for almost all of us, as we have never before had to deal with such a threat to our health and our lives. At this time, we must use the gift of faith which comes directly from God to enable us to do things we could never do on our own power.

I want you to know that I am thinking about you and praying for you all every day. I am conscious that you might be suffering on many different levels. My heart hurts for you and for your families. The uncertainty is one of the worst sufferings. We walk by faith; not by sight. We never know what tomorrow will bring, but we trust in Jesus to walk with us through whatever it turns out to be.

The Good News of Jesus is still the greatest news in the history of the world. Christ has risen! And because of this Victory, we don't have to be afraid of anything this world may bring. We do not fear even death! Jesus said:

“These things I have spoken to you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (Jn 16:33)

We have been very blessed with prosperity here in the U.S. We have a superabundance of things which we do not really need. This virus crisis is forcing us, so to speak, to concentrate on the essentials. What do we need? Physically, we need oxygen, food, water and shelter. Spiritually, we need love with other human persons. We need the safety and security of God's love and care for us. We need a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus!

How are we to be strengthened by the grace of the Sacraments when we cannot receive the Sacraments, especially during the Triduum and on Easter Sunday? We cannot go to Mass, receive Holy Communion or go to Confession. Remember that God is not limited by anything or anyone at any time. God is not limited in the way He saves - by the Coronavirus, or by the devil or even by His own sacraments which He gave us to save us. If you call on the name of Jesus, He will come to you! If you request a Spiritual Communion as you watch the Mass live streamed, you will receive that profound gift of union with Jesus. And when you are able to return to the Church and to Mass and to Confession, I think you will experience those sacraments with a new appreciation!

I encourage you to continue to practice the Catholic sacramentals in your home. First of all, read the Sacred Scriptures. God's Word is not just informational; it is transformational! It will strengthen you. Sacramentals are “little sacraments.” They include pictures of Jesus, Mary and the saints. The rosary, holy water, crucifixes and statues are all sacramentals. Wear the Miraculous Medal or other holy medals. These medals have protective power. This is not Catholic superstition. Sacramentals strengthen our faith and point us to the essentials. Ask anything in the name of Jesus, and it will be done for you!

With the help of Jesus, we are going to make it through this trial!

Concentrate on the essentials, make sure others around you have the essentials...and forget about the extras. St. Francis of Assisi said: “Start by doing what is necessary. Then do what is possible. And suddenly you are doing the impossible.” In a time of crisis, we all have the potential to transform to a new level and do things we never thought possible.

As you have noticed, I am not streaming Masses. I have been dealing with a pinched nerve for the past month. I have never experienced this before and it is very painful, but I do say Mass every day privately and you are all in my prayers.

Thank you for your generous continuing support of St. Peter's during this extraordinary time.

May God bless you and keep you safe.

Fr. Slawek

