

Dear Parishioners,

I know that this has been an unusual Easter for all of us, but I do hope that it was especially a blessed one for you and your families.

I couldn't help but think back to that first Easter morn. It was just like any other day or time of the year. People were returning to work after celebrating Passover with their families. Sundays throughout the Roman empire were not only the first day of the week, but the first day of work week. The women who had faithfully followed Jesus throughout his ministry and even His death had prepared to spices to anoint His body that was hastily placed in the tomb on the Friday prior. They had intended to give the person they loved a proper funeral- even if it was a few days late. But when they arrived at the tomb, they discovered that a normal day had become an exceptional day- a day that they couldn't comprehend. The body of Jesus was no longer in the tomb! I don't think we could ever image their shock and even disbelief. Jesus had done the impossible- He rose from the dead and those women would be the first to tell of His resurrection. They would become the first witnesses to the world that Jesus was alive and they had seen Him.

I can't help but think that many of us, this Easter was like for the women at the tomb. It's like nothing we've ever seen before. Instead of being with one another celebrating this day in Church, with the readings proclaiming resurrection and sharing in the Eucharist, we were perhaps forced to watch the Mass from home. Our world in just a short time has turned upside down and we face an uncertain future. It is on this day and in the days going forward, the words spoken to Mary when she said yes to God's plan for her- Be not afraid. The women at the tomb could likewise hear the words: Be not afraid to look for Jesus among the living, not the dead. Those same words are addressed to us today- Do not be afraid. We have the Risen Christ to lean on, to help us through these difficult times. Perhaps various aspects of our world will change forever, but our hope in the Risen Lord lasts a life time.

We can also see that in times of such crisis, the number of people who are willing to risk even their lives to save others. They inspire us to do whatever we can to likewise bring life and love into our world. We can be grateful for the doctors, nurses, technicians and first responders who risk their own lives to save those infected with this horrible virus. They aren't doing it for the money or fame- they're doing it because they are needed. Many have already become infected themselves and too many of them have died as a result of their self-giving. They remind us that when it comes to saving lives, no sacrifice is too great- even if it requires their lives. Let us pray for them, thank them and certainly imitate them in the little ways we can help one another.

On Holy Saturday, Pope Francis reminded us: "Tonight we acquire a fundamental right that can never be taken away from us: *the right to hope*. It is a new and living hope that comes from God. It is not mere optimism; it is not a pat on the back or an empty word of encouragement, with a passing smile. No. It is a gift from heaven, which we could not have earned on our own. Over these weeks, we have kept repeating, "All will be well", clinging to the beauty of our humanity and allowing words of encouragement to rise up from our hearts. But as the days go by and fears grow, even the boldest hope can dissipate. Jesus' hope is different. He

plants in our hearts the conviction that God is able to make everything work unto good, because even from the grave he brings life.

“The grave is the place where no one who enters ever leaves. But Jesus emerged for us; he rose for us, to bring life where there was death, to begin a new story in the very place where a stone had been placed. He, who rolled away the stone that sealed the entrance of the tomb, can also remove the stones in our hearts. So, let us not give in to resignation; let us not place a stone before hope. We can and must hope, because God is faithful. He did not abandon us; he visited us and entered into our situations of pain, anguish and death. His light dispelled the darkness of the tomb: today he wants that light to penetrate even to the darkest corners of our lives. Dear sister, dear brother, even if in your heart you have buried hope, do not give up: God is greater. Darkness and death do not have the last word. Be strong, for with God nothing is lost!”

Let us take to heart these words as days of uncertainty will surely follow.

We remember Ed Lampron who passed away last week. There will be a service for Ed once this time of crisis has passed. Please remember the family in your prayers.

Like everyone, I am looking forward to the end of this crisis, but I know we need to do all that we can to beat this virus. In the meantime, let us take stock of all the blessings this time of lock down is to all of us. Let us work on our patience, forgiveness, self-giving within our own homes. Let us become better people as a result of this time together.

Peace... Fr. Tom