

Easter Message 2020

My dear friends,

Easter 2020

I am always a bit disappointed when Easter falls on a beautiful day. You may think that a bit strange. Why do I feel that way? Because when Easter falls on a beautiful day it can be just something like a Spring festival. It is the Easter Parade. It is a holiday, more than a holyday, greeted with new outfits for the kids, chocolate bunny rabbits and colored eggs. Easter, looked at that way, has a certain inevitability about it. The first Easter was anything but that.

The first Easter found the disciples of Jesus huddled in fear behind locked doors. We might say they were "sheltering in place." They are desolate. The One whom they had loved dearly has suffered a terrible death. They fear that those who killed Him will soon be coming after them. All their dreams for the future have been dashed. Then, suddenly He is there before them, uttering the simple, but now necessary words, "Fear not."

This Easter, more than any other, it is possible to place ourselves in that setting. We may have a loved one who has been taken from us. And, certainly we fear for ourselves. No matter how careful we have been in observing social distancing, sanitizing our homes, and refraining from touching our face, the threat of the coronavirus looms large. All of us are stressed out. The elderly are more isolated than ever. Many fear the loss of their jobs or their small businesses. Young people, in or about to enter college, wonder if there is any future for them. And children just want to be able to be with their friends. Yet, the risen Jesus comes to each of us, with the same words He spoke to those disciples in the upper room, "Fear not."

This year, we have experienced how it is not possible to rush to Easter Sunday by passing over Good Friday. This year Good Friday is too much with us. On Good Friday we remember how Jesus goes to the cross trusting God with His life, faithful to the mission He believes, He trusts, is God's will for Him. Easter promises us a life beyond the grave. Yes, but about right now as well. As Fr. Richard Rohr, the Franciscan spiritual writer states, "Jesus shows what God can accomplish in humanity when we say "yes" to God. The point of the Resurrection is am I willing to believe and trust that can change all my crucifixions into new life." Then, I can engage life with courage to embrace whatever life throws at me. As St. Paul writes, "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (I Cor. 15:20). He has shown us the way in this life and the next.

The poet, Theodore Roethke, writes, "In a dark time the eye begins to see." So, what have we seen? We have seen that the real heroes are not the over-compensated athletes used to accepting the cheers of their fans, nor the high-tech wizards providing the latest app for our convenience, nor the investment bankers congratulating themselves on the latest deal. The real heroes are the health care workers, the doctors, the nurses, the aides, the hospital cleaners who every day put their lives on the line to attend to the needs of the sick, caring for them with commitment, compassion and courage. They are the first responders, the transit workers, the grocery store clerks and shelf stackers, the delivery guys, the taxi drivers—all those who contribute to providing as much of normalcy to our lives as possible. We have seen how the disparity of income and access to health care has disproportionately affected the most vulnerable among us. Make no mistake about it. Poverty kills! We have come to appreciate even more the company of family and friends. We have seen the value of small acts of kindness.

The day will come, when like the disciples we will leave the rooms where we have huddled for safety. Let us pray that because we have pondered the lessons we have learned we can accomplish great things for God. Then, we can truly be as St Augustine said, "an Easter people with Alleluia as our song."

God bless you all and Happy Easter,
Fr. Kevin Madigan