

Message from Fr. David – 4/12/2020 – Easter Sunday

Happy Easter to all of you. We come to the conclusion of our Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum – Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday with the Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday. On Holy Thursday, we recall Jesus washing the feet of his disciples and celebrate the institution of the Eucharist in the Last Supper. On Good Friday, we reflect on the Passion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, according to St. John, we venerate the cross, and normally receive the Eucharist, consecrated the night before on Holy Thursday. In the Easter Vigil, we prepare the Easter candle and sing the Easter Proclamation (the Exsultet). In an expanded Liturgy of the Word, we meditate on the wonders our God has done for us from the beginning, trusting in his word and promise. Next, we welcome new members to the Church through the waters of baptism. We conclude by celebrating Eucharist together at the table the Lord has prepared for us, the memorial of his death and resurrection until he comes again.

The Paschal Triduum is not so much an entering into history to recall the final days in the life of Jesus on earth, but rather an entering into mystery, the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, his life, death, and resurrection – for us, for our salvation! As members of his body, we participate in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, and Christ lives his Paschal Mystery in us, today.

In these difficult times in which we find ourselves, suffering the effects of the corona virus throughout the world, how might we find ourselves living the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ in our lives today? To guide us in answering this question, I've chosen a few lines from the Sacred Scriptures for the Paschal Triduum as brief points of reflection for us.

In our Holy Thursday liturgy, when Jesus comes to wash the feet of Simon Peter, he tells him: **“What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later.”** Even people who are close to the Lord, often times do not understand what the Lord is doing in their lives. We live in a time of great uncertainty. We have many questions. What can I do to keep myself and others safe and healthy? When will we be able to gather with family and friends again? How will I be able to go to school from home? What is going to happen with my job? How will I pay the bills? When can we gather together again in prayer and worship in the church? While we may not have good answers to these questions now, we trust that Jesus is walking this path with us; he loves us; he will not leave us alone; he will help us understand over time.

After washing his disciples' feet, Jesus tells his disciples: **“If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”** Jesus gives us this example of loving service as he goes to the cross, and asks us to imitate him. In this time of the corona virus, so many people are living the Paschal Mystery through loving service, sacrifice, and selfless giving. Who are these people? Doctors, nurses, first responders, grocery store workers, farm workers, cleaning people in hospitals, public transportation people, so many essential workers all around us. Let us take a moment to thank God for them and ask God to protect them and keep them and their families healthy. Perhaps there are some specific people in your lives that come to mind at this time. (You may wish to put this video on pause to reflect in silence for a minute or two.)

Finally for Holy Thursday, how are we living the Paschal Mystery by washing each other's feet? For some, it may be bringing food to the homebound and medically fragile. For others, it may be calling someone who is socially isolated. For still others, it may be simply sheltering well, staying at home to do one's part in not spreading the corona virus to others, so as not to make it even more difficult for those who are taking care of the most seriously ill among us.

In our Good Friday liturgy, Jesus enters fully into his passion and death, for us. We are reminded that he was **“a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity”** and that it was **“our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured.”** Jesus takes on our sufferings and invites us to do the same for those who are suffering around us. Jesus lives his Paschal Mystery with us, in us, and through us; we are not alone. Please take a moment now to pray for someone you know who is suffering from the effects of this Covid-19 pandemic: someone who is sick or dying; someone who has lost a loved one; someone who is fearful or depressed; someone who is out of work. Or consider those who are suffering throughout the world from the effects of Covid-19: those without clean water and soap to wash their hands; those without hospitals, protective supplies and health care; those without knowledge of this terrible disease; those without shelter or housing. (Again, you may wish to put this video on pause to pray in silence for a minute or two.)

When his passion was completed, Jesus said: **“It is finished.”** He handed over his spirit to his Father in heaven. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepared his body for burial and laid it in a new tomb in a garden. For many, this may have seemed like the end, like all is now lost. However, it was only a new beginning, the time for Resurrection!

In the Easter Vigil, we proclaim the good news of the Paschal Mystery. An angel speaks to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who came to see the tomb: **“Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.”** As they ran from the tomb to tell his disciples the good news, the women ran into Jesus, who said to them: **“Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”** What seemed like the end became a new beginning.

How are we living the fullness of the Paschal Mystery in our lives today? Where might we find new life in this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, in this time of suffering, sacrifice, and at times, death? Some are experiencing a deepening in their prayer life. Others are experiencing a deepening in their family relationships. Recognizing the fragile nature of life, there is a growing appreciation for those around us: husband, wife, children, parents, brothers and sisters, friends. Perhaps we are hearing the words “I love you” spoken a bit more often. We are becoming more aware of, and grateful for, all those who provide services for us, day in and day out, especially those risking their lives to care for the sick among us. We are finding new life through new ways to connect with one another, reading a good book, or taking better care of our health. Once more, pause to bring to mind someone in your life that you appreciate more now than you did a mere month ago, when our Covid-19 sheltering began. Give thanks to God for that person in your life. (You may wish to put this video on pause to pray in silence for a minute or two.)

What will our (your) new life be like as we continue living through this time of Covid-19? Where and how will we experience the Risen Lord of the Paschal Mystery in our lives today? The disciples of our Lord discovered this newness of life in the Risen Lord over time. Some

insights came early; other insights came over many years. Our lives are changed. This has been a Lenten season and a Holy Week like none other than we have ever lived through in our lives. Now we continue for 50 days in the Easter season. He is Risen. He makes all things new. We are on a journey in Christ, a journey into the Paschal Mystery of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who never leaves us alone, who never ceases to amaze us with new life in Him.

Happy Easter to each and every one of you. Please, continue sheltering in your homes. Wash your hands. Don't touch your face. Be safe. Love one another, as the Risen Lord loves you.

May God bless you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.