Dear Parishioners,

My initial thoughts were to re-open parish Masses on Monday, May 25 which marks Memorial Day where as a parish, we have the tradition of celebrating on the hallowed grounds of our parish cemetery. The occasion of celebrating Mass on the cemetery grounds honors the sacrifices that our beloved and heroic men and women in the armed forces offered for others brought great meaning for us all who have sacrificed these past 10 weeks for the public health of others.

However, after consulting with the Parish Cemetery Committee, our Memorial Day Mass is so well attended and there is such a great number of those within our parish community and those outside, it was decided that it would create challenges to maintain the 25-person limit.

For this reason, listening to the prudence of the Cemetery Committee, the sound decision was made to postpone it for this year. There will be a scheduled Mass in the parish for those who signed up that day. And you are encouraged to visit the cemetery as the Cemetery Committee has continued the custom of making sure that the grounds look impeccable for this holiday.

With that said, as I reread and prayed over the Gospel passage for the Feast of the Ascension this weekend, the Gospel message seemed very fitting to what we are experiencing, that is, the reopening of the parish for Mass. The passage is taken from the glorious conclusion to the Gospel of St. Matthew. Jesus commissions the Apostles to go forth and “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (c.f. Matthew 28:19).

In this beautiful and powerful mandate to evangelize, what has always struck me is when the Apostles see the risen Lord and they worshipped, we are also told that, “They doubted.” Yes, “They doubted.” How is it possible to doubt in such circumstances? How does one doubt in the presence of the Risen Lord?

This particularly very honest detail invites us to reconsider what doubt really is. Most of the time, we see doubt negatively. We see doubt as the opposite of faith. In other words, you either believe or you doubt. But today’s Gospel is teaching us that doubt can call one’s faith to become deeper and more mature. What do I mean by this?

Sometimes we believe that the faith given and taught to us as children will serve us the rest of our lives. As we go through life, we are asked to confront the curve balls thrown our way. A simplistic approach of faith is inadequate to face the challenges of an adult life.

For this reason, this is where doubt can serve as a companion of faith in developing a deep and mature trust in God. For example, when we encounter heartbreak and tragedy, it is natural to question whether God cares or why would He allow this to happen to me. These doubtful thoughts can be an opportunity for us to understand that God’s promise to care for us is not a promise that we will be shielded from every pain or suffering. Rather, it is a reminder that his fidelity is in the truth that He walks with us in those challenging times of our life.
And in these past months of difficult times socially, physically, spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and financially, our worries and anxieties pertaining to our health, our family, our jobs, our plans and celebrations e.g., wedding, funeral, 1st Holy Communion, Confirmation, Graduation, and School Auction, Bar Buffet Bingo, Tea Benefit Fundraisers, is an opportunity to see doubt is not necessarily the sign that we are losing our faith but rather a sign that we are growing in our faith because we are placing our trust in Him more. We do our best and place it in His loving, caring, and protective hands. And if we are able to do this, our faith during this pandemic is a great witness of evangelizing to all the nations…in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!

Blessings,
Fr. Michael
24 May 2020