

Pastor's Corner

*“You can choose your penance;
you can't choose your cross.”*

Many years ago, I heard the expression: “You can choose your penance; you can't choose your cross.” I have no idea who came up with that thought, but it sure rings true today. Most of us chose a Lenten penance this year: giving up desserts or coffee or alcohol or reducing social media time, etc. None of us chose to deal with coronavirus. It is a cross.

Two weeks ago, coronavirus was a blip on our radar. It was a Chinese problem. Today, it is defining our lives. To prevent the spread of this disease, public Masses and public prayer have been suspended, school has changed to ‘home learning,’ and there is no handshaking, sports, cinema, gyms, Broadway or Disneyworld; there is no dining in restaurants and no gatherings in anything but very small groups. Thanks to coronavirus, there is little normalcy to life. Coronavirus is a cross that threatens us health-wise, community-wise, finance-wise, emotion-wise and spiritual-wise.

Fortunately for us who are disciples of Jesus, we know that crosses borne faithfully lead to new life. That is the story of Jesus: his crucifixion led to resurrection, the reopening of heaven, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Church and the sacraments.

This present danger provides a golden opportunity to change our world for the good: from extreme individualism to more community and family-centered; from self-absorption to selfless love and service of neighbor; and, most of all, from ‘God on the sidelines’ to “God is the center of our life.’

If we pray, fast and do penance in these troubling days, Jesus assures us that our suffering will be fruitful: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a single grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.” John 12:24.

We didn't ask for the cross of coronavirus, but we're stuck with it. May Jesus help us to carry this cross all the way to resurrection and new life.

God bless,

Fr. Joe