

Pastor's Corner

Easter Blessings during the Coronavirus Pandemic

I go back to a story I shared last year. Before I entered seminary, I was a homeowner. I had a flower garden in front of my house. One day while I was weeding the garden, I was stung by a caterpillar. Almost instantly, there was a burning sensation on my hand and blisters formed. I don't remember what I did to medicate the pain, but I do remember it was very uncomfortable. I also remember deciding that I definitely did not like caterpillars.

Some weeks later, I was outside my house admiring the flowers in the garden when a butterfly began fluttering around the flowers. I was struck by the color, grace and beauty of the butterfly, and it hit me: that beautiful butterfly *might* be the same nasty caterpillar that stung me and caused me such pain.

The story of Jesus' death and resurrection from the dead is infinitely richer than the metamorphosis of an ugly caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly, but nature does reveal hints of the great transformation that we celebrate at Easter: Jesus, barbarously tortured to death, broke the bonds of sin and death and rose in a new and glorified body to live forever. Jesus offers the gift of resurrection after death to each of us. He also offers the gift of resurrection after our daily dyings here and now.

The coronavirus has been a death for our world. It has caused the actual death of many, illness for even more, and has burdened our world with quarantine, loss of contact with family and friends, shuttering of businesses, loss of jobs, loss of Mass and Eucharist, anxiety, stress – and the list goes on. We are getting glimpses of resurrection in the kindness and outreach of people and organizations. But there's no doubt about it. We are experiencing a long Good Friday and eagerly awaiting a big Resurrection when the pandemic finally ends.

While we wait for that day, I take consolation in the words of St. Teresa of Avila. She was a 16th Spanish Carmelite nun who faced incredible opposition in her effort to reform the Carmelite order. But the opposition and suffering did not unglue her. She wrote: "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you. All things pass. Gods does not change. Patience achieves everything. Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices."

May the reality of Easter resurrection over sin, suffering and death fill us with hope for the end of the virus and the return to normalcy. May we continue to pray for help, deliverance and trust.

Fr. Thien and I, our Deacons and our Parish and School leadership and staff wish you and yours a most Blessed Easter.

Fr. Joe