

My dear parishioners,

Our lives these days are far from ordinary. The rhythm of daily life has been upended. Normalcy has been put on hold. Justifiably we are worried and anxious about our families, friends, neighbors and ourselves.

We are beginning the most solemn and holy week of our Church's liturgical year with Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord and moving forward to the Solemnity of the Resurrection of the Lord (Easter) and our Catholic churches across the globe will be widely and eerily empty. Far from ordinary indeed. What is next we wonder?

The New Testament scriptures extend to us the hope of Christ Jesus in an amazing study in paradox. Reflecting on the life and mission of Jesus we are presented with images of his triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, only to see the story played out as He was led out of the city in disgrace days later and nailed to a cross, dying for our sins and effectively restoring life and hope in its wake to a fallen human race. We encounter Jesus Christ and His chosen disciples at a solemn ritual meal in which He blesses the common elements of the table, bread and wine, inviting them to eat and drink for “this is My Body” and “this is My Blood,” “do this in memory of Me.” Assuredly this moment of communion was a pledge of His eternal, loving and living presence in and for us, real, true and substantial, while at the same table of celebration one of His disciples was following a darker path towards self-destruction. The chaotic scene at Calvary with curious onlookers and jeering crowds was *eclipsed* by the overarching and poignant words of a dying Jesus, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” The stillness and darkness of a garden tomb for three days were overshadowed by an astounding message of an angel to a distraught disciple Mary Magdalene and other Mary, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He has been raised.” These images, these events were truly extraordinary, even for those who still walk by faith. They were new, difficult to fathom, bewildering and frightening. Still they gave to them and to us today hope and promise. The sacred liturgies commemorated and celebrated this week speak of things eternal, of God's comforting presence to us in the world at this time of crisis and insecurity. Jesus assures us that He “will be with us until the end of time.” Therefore we journey together these days with confident hope in the Lord and with a genuine mindfulness of each other.

I do miss seeing and speaking with you regularly around and about the parish. Still you are always in my heart, my mind and my prayers. For the time being, until this world-wide crisis passes, let us stay close in thoughtfulness and generosity. Please share this Easter message with other parishioners who do not have access to our parish's website or with others feeling lonely or anxious now. Tell them I love them and I am praying for them daily. On behalf of Father Greg Hoppough, Deacon Pat Mussulli and the entire pastoral staff of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish I extend to you and your loved ones a blessed and happy Easter, with prayers and remembrances at the Easter liturgies. God bless you, good friends.

Your friend in Christ Jesus,

Fr. Richard