

Dear OLHC Parishioners,

I pray that you are all staying healthy and have been able to make as good a transition into these unusual times. Here at the seminary, we decided early on to send all the seminarians home to be with their families in order to provide the increased distance within our community that was being called for. That required our professors to learn how to provide instruction to students on-line. Most are doing well with that sudden transition, and the seminarians have responded well. One of the unique things that happens daily is that many of our seminarians are meeting together virtually on-line to pray Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours. That is in addition to having them participate in a Mass that is being streamed on-line and making a daily spiritual Communion. Aside from these adjustments, we've also entered the final month of the academic year, so the time for the seminarians' annual self-evaluations and their conversations with the faculty have continued via the on-line meeting resources we have. I have also had the chance to sit on the panel for one of our transitional deacon's Master of Arts in Theology symposium where he presented his paper and engaged with us in conversation. (He did very well!)

As I sort through many of the same daily memos from our diocese that Fr. Ed reads every day, and keep up with the daily news, I am also attempting to stay focused on my writing for the dissertation. Needless to say, that's sometimes easier said than done with all that is happening around us. I had intended to write a weekly homily for all of you to go along with Fr. Ed's but that just hasn't panned out yet. But, I do continue to pray for all of you and the people of our diocese and all those in the world affected by this virus, especially the sick and those who have died.

That said, at the beginning of this unusual Holy Week, I did want to share one thought that came to me during a prayer time a little over a week ago and provide a little reflection upon it:

“The God who created everything is not afraid of anything.”

As I thought about that idea, it resonated with me in part because of the numerous times Jesus tells us in the gospels, “Do not be afraid”. I realized more clearly that God is not afraid, period. Not of any creature, nor of any person, nor of any idea—even ideas that deny him. He is definitely not afraid of Corona Viruses. If we understand this, then think about the fact that God came to unite himself to us through his beloved Son Jesus, who demonstrates to us that same fearlessness as a lamb in silence in the face of his own death. And he continues to show us that same fearlessness in the face of all the waywardness that is our on-going sin. And still, the God who created everything and who has no reason to fear anything, unites us with Himself through Jesus Christ.

What then do we have left to fear? Can we say together with St. Paul, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Trial, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? Yet in all this we are more than conquerors because of him who has loved us.” (Rm 8:37-39) And can we then not also proclaim more boldly today, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 15:55-57)

As we journey through this Holy Week, may our hearts be ever more grateful for the sacrifice Jesus has made for us—and more importantly the reason for it, namely, that we may learn to trust and accept the reality of God who IS mercy, the God who is Love, and who so desires us to want to be with Him that He paid the full measure of our sins with the life of His Son. May we hear Jesus’s words, “Do not be afraid”, speaking to the depth of our hearts once again as we listen to His Words, and watch His actions, and participate in whatever way that we can in the story of our salvation as it unfolds once again this Holy Week. May we come to see and to understand in this Holy Triduum how the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ establishes the pattern for our own life’s journey to holiness and the happiness we seek with God forever and ever. And may we follow Our Savior without fear whenever and wherever He calls to us.

May Jesus Christ be praised, now and forever! Amen.

Blessings,

Fr. Christopher