

April 14, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

Through the intercession of Our Lady and Saint William of York, may Jesus grant you His peace.

As I have told you before, you are very present to me through prayer and simply through the fact of our being the Mystical Body of Christ together. This is how we experience our Lord Himself, and our Lady, mystically, spiritually, definitely.

Father Lino, Dan D'Agostino and I offered the Holy Week liturgies very simply, with devotion and love. You were always with me.

Some two hours before the beginning of the Easter Vigil, Paula Guierrieri and Theresa Hardaway, two of my Secretaries of the Interior, decorated our sanctuary with the help of their faithful volunteers and it smelled and looked to me more beautiful than ever for all the challenges they met with so much determination, love and devotion.

Some months ago, at lunch one day, I told Father Lino that I didn't think I could do the Washing of the Feet on Holy Thursday this year because of the arthritis in my knees, and asked if he would like to do it. It was a kind of letting go for me but it wasn't hard. I have been preparing myself for a long time to be ready to relinquish the things I can't do as I grow older. I never want you to be watching me struggle at the altar and draw your attention away from the liturgy. Father Lino said he would do the Washing of the Feet instead of me, and then he volunteered to preach on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and at the Easter Vigil Mass. I said yes right away because, as much as I can, I want to see Father Lino flourish.

As the Easter Vigil Mass began, I chanted the Exsultet, by ear, since I can't read music and no one complained. I sang the short form (naturally) as I found it in Magnificat. I got the words right and I chanted my best. Since you were not with us physically there was a wonderful echo in the sanctuary. It was like singing in the shower. Again, no one complained. Now, whatever you do, please don't tell Ashleigh Messer or Father Magat that I didn't read the music and made up my own chant. Remember, we are living through an unprecedented time and I had to allow myself this unprecedented liberty with the liturgy for pastoral reasons.

After Father Lino preached, I led him and Dan through the renewal of our baptismal promises and then sprinkled them with Holy Water. During the Agnus Dei, Dan brought the Blessed Sacrament back to the Tabernacle and the Lord was presently with us again, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. The three of us received Jesus in Holy Communion and soon the Mass was over. After the Solemn Easter Blessing, Father Lino looked at me and said, simply, "Well that was a beautiful Mass." And it was, it truly was. Every Mass here is a beautiful Mass. I keep imagining our first Mass together again; it will be beautiful.

Now we're in Easter Week, the Octave of Easter. Every day our beautiful sanctuary will be open for prayer from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. We will return to our pre-Lenten weekly confession schedule, consisting of four confession times, as follows:

Wednesday Confessions: 9:30-10:00 am // Father DeMartino

Friday Confessions: 9:30-10:00 am // Father Lino

First Friday Confessions: 9:30-10:00 am // Father Lino and Father DeMartino

Saturday Confessions: 9:30-10:00 am // Father Lino and Father DeMartino

Saturday Confessions: 6:00-6:30 pm // Father Lino and Father DeMartino

Remember, we were made for these times. That's why we're here. If we didn't see it coming, that's alright; Jesus did, and He is with us, the Lord of history, the Lord of our lives. I never doubt His watchful care of us for a moment. Now I send you my blessing through the air.

With kindest regards, and wishing you a very special Easter, I remain

Always, your grateful pastor,

Father DeMartino