

Jesus cured Peter's mother-in-law and she got up immediately and waited on them. She responded to Jesus with a desire to help and to serve both Jesus and the church. Four chapters later in Luke's Gospel, we see a similar response. Three women in particular have been cured of evil spirits and infirmities. They, like the Twelve, accompany Jesus as he proclaims the Good News. Through their financial support, they help to provide for the needs of Jesus' ministry.

Susana is only named once in the Gospels. We know very little about her other than that she traveled in good company. Joanna is mentioned here, and her name reappears on Easter morning when she and Mary Magdalene go to the empty tomb and report their discovery to the Apostles. Without the support of Susana, Joana, Mary Magdalene and many others, Jesus would not have had the backing he needed to journey from one town and village to another.

If we take time to count our own blessings, we might think of how Jesus has healed us. Perhaps it was through forgiveness of our sins. Perhaps it was an answer to a prayer. Or maybe it was a miracle that restored us to health. Through the words of Scripture and the Sacraments of our Church, the ministry of Jesus continues today. Like Jesus, we need the help and support of many to continue the mission of the church. I am grateful for the continued financial support of so many of our parishioners in the local community that have been very generous during this time of pandemic when we have not seen all of our flock.

Jesus journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God (Lk 8:1). It has been a little over 6 months since we entered a period of heightened awareness about the coronavirus and the traveling from one town and village to another came to a screeching halt. While mobility is greater along the road system, many of our rural communities continue to be very wise and cautious about the movement of people in and out of the villages.

I am reminded daily that the villages of Stebbins, Saint Michael, Unalakleet, Mountain Village and Saint Mary's have been without their traveling priests for a 10-month period. Please keep Fr Aiden and Fr Alphonsus in your prayers so that they are free to travel and to return to ministry in our bush communities.

We take so many things for granted in life. Everything we have is a gift from God ... the air we breathe, the sun that warms us, the rivers that provide fish, the tundra that offers up its berries each fall. If everything we have is a gift, then we should look to this pandemic and ask ourselves, how might we thank God for it? We never wish ill or suffering on another, but even amid struggles and crosses, we can look for God's hand guiding us and helping us.

I for one have spent a lot more time thinking about the Sacred Scriptures. Were it not for the pandemic, I would be more mobile and going from one appointment to another. With the pandemic, I spend less time moving and more time pondering. With the absence of priests in our bush communities, I ask myself is there some way I can help from afar. With all this in mind, I am thankful to God for encouraging me to reach out with a daily homily to offer words of hope, inspiration, and encouragement. And I have to look within and ask myself, is God trying to gently lead me forward in my own ministry so that like Susana, and Joana, and Mary Magdalene, I am a more devoted follower of Jesus, offering more of that precious resource of time back to the all loving God who has given me so much.

"Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full" (Ps 17:15b). I am sure amidst the tremendous struggles during this pandemic... all look forward to a time when the pandemic is gone and we are filled with joy and thanksgiving that it is over. But that day may still be a great distance away. In the meantime, we need to recognize the glory of the Lord amidst this pandemic with all of its challenges ... and opportunities to draw closer to God.

How has Jesus blessed you? I offer this prayer for you from Blessed Charles de Foucauld who lived a solitary life of witness and thanksgiving in the Saharan desert a century ago:

Father,

I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will.

Whatever you may do, I thank you:

I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures.

I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul;

I offer it to you

with all the love of my heart,

for I love you, Lord,

and so need to give myself,

to surrender myself into your hands,

without reserve,

and with boundless confidence,

for you are my Father.