



IMMACULATE HEART^{OF}MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR MAY 17, 2020

Dear friends in the Risen Lord,

“What do you do the rest of the week, Father?” That’s a question priests have always gotten from parishioners who see us mainly at Sunday Mass. Most of us learn early on how to describe “A Day in the Life of a Priest.” I was asked by a student last week what I was doing every day during the shutdown, and I found that I couldn’t just reprise the answer I’ve honed by repetition over 36 years. For priests, as for many of you, a lot has changed.

Some things have not changed: Most weekday mornings, I wake around 6:00, spend some time in prayer, have a bowl of cereal and some coffee and read the news. At 8:00 I make my way over to morning Mass. But that’s where the similarity ends. The Mass, of course, is currently livestreamed from an empty church. Pre-pandemic, the hours after daily Mass were usually filled with appointments with parishioners, meetings with staff or visits to the school. Those often still take place, but now primarily by Zoom.

Before March, lunch was often an opportunity to catch up with Father Carlos, our deacons or other colleagues, but social distancing has made working lunches impossible. The hours after lunch were typically my time to make visits to hospitals, nursing homes or the homebound; but most healthcare facilities no longer permit visitors—even clergy—especially if a patient is at high risk from Covid-19; so a phone call is often the best I can do.

Some priestly duties—celebrating Mass, praying for our people and the world, preparing homilies, study and spiritual reading—continue as before. But there do seem to be more hours in the day. After about a month of sheltering at home, I realized that indulging my love for cooking was not a healthy way for me to fill those hours. (I gained 20 lbs in March and April.) Now I’m trying to spend some time each day doing yardwork; I’m managing to read the entire issue of *The New Yorker* (instead of just the cartoons!); and I’m presently in the middle of *The Edge of Sadness*, Edwin O’Connor’s Pulitzer-winning 1961 novel about a Catholic priest in New England.

I very much miss being with you in person, and I long for the day when we can safely resume public Masses. In the meantime, let’s continue to hold one another in prayer and to look out for those most vulnerable—or, as I tell the kids at school: Say your prayers, wash your hands and be kind to one another!