

CHURCH OF ST. PATRICK

53 ST. PATRICK'S PLACE STATEN ISLAND, NY 10306

April 5, 2020

Dear Parishioner,

Sunday is Palm Sunday and we would be listening to the Passion According to Matthew. We would hear about Jesus' arrest, abandonment by his disciples, trials, beatings, scourging, crucifixion, and death. We picture Him dying on the cross with nobody but his enemies around Him. We listen as He cries out in desolation: "My God, My God, why have you abandoned Me."

Maybe this year, more than most, we can identify and empathize in some small way with what Jesus experienced. We are under "house arrest." We too are isolated from those we love as a merciless disease hunts us down. Now maybe our ears are open to Jesus' sufferings and our hearts are cracked open to feel what he felt. We look to Jesus and we know that we are not alone in our suffering. He suffered for us then, and He is with us in our suffering now, as someone who is uniquely capable of guiding us along the path He has already travelled.

So our suffering now can bring us closer to the God who suffered in the person of Jesus. These days of Lent can be an opportunity, a time of grace in which we turn to God more fully, rather than following our inclination to wallow in fear and self-pity.

We in America have lived such privileged and undisturbed lives that we find it hard to identify or empathize with suffering people at home and around the world. As we sit in our enforced isolation, as we worry about our own health and the health of those we love we suddenly begin to feel for those who live in fear and uncertainty every day:

- those huddled in camps and cages at our border and so many borders throughout the world.
- those displaced by war and famine.
- those exploited and kept in poverty so that they can serve the interests of the rich and multi-national corporations.
- those in third world countries that die of diseases for which we have a cure.
- the homeless who live from day to day, not knowing what horrors the next day will bring.

We saw all these stories on TV, and read about them in newspapers and magazines, but we turned away in cold indifference, or in a belief that these things were exaggerated or unreal. Now, as we go through pain, suffering, loneliness, fear and uncertainty our hearts are cracked open to the suffering of our brothers and sisters here and around the world. This Lent can be a time of grace for us as we identify and empathize with the poor and suffering around us and throughout the world. Lent is supposed to bring us closer to God and to one another. If we take the opportunity of this time apart from our busy lives this can be a time of renewal in which our hearts are cracked open in love for God and people, especially those most in need.

I pray that the love of God fill you, the gifts of the Holy Spirit come upon you, and the Blood of the Risen Christ protect and heal our parish, our relatives, and our friends.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey P. Conway". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Jeff Conway, Pastor

JPC/smb