

CHURCH OF ST. PATRICK

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

May 3, 2020

Dear Parishioner,

Many of us have never been so alone, in our homes, in our hospitals, even dying alone. Some of us feel a deep loneliness, a real sense of depression, of being apart, but we are afraid to admit that we are lonely. The elderly, the unwanted, the marginalized are supposed to feel lonely, but not us. Ronald Rolheiser, a spiritual author, in his book, "The Restless Heart," says that everyone is lonely and he gives a number of reasons why we are even more lonely in our modern society.

- a) We keep ourselves so busy that we don't give ourselves time to feel anything, but we are running away from our loneliness.
- b) The extended family has broken up and become the nuclear family and even that has been broken up so that each member lives in his individual room looking at his own TV and playing on his own computer or iPhone.
- c) With constant mobility we relate to few things and few people for very long. They pass in and out of our lives.
- d) The people that we see in the media don't seem lonely. They seem happy and fulfilled. So we have to keep pushing ourselves to achieve that level of happiness in our lives – and we have to keep really busy so that nobody, including ourselves, see that we are not that happy or fulfilled.
- e) Many people are alienated from family for various, often petty, reasons. Many live in bitterness and rivalry with their coworkers, their neighbors, and even their friends.

Rolheiser maintains that everyone, in every age, feels lonely whether actually being alone or being with other people. He claims that it is part of the human condition, and that there is a "restlessness," a "dissatisfaction", that comes not from anything outside but from something deep within us. Augustine says: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You." It is as if God gives us a glimpse of the Love that takes away all loneliness while we were in the womb. For a moment we felt it, and we spend the rest of our lives looking for it in places and people that can never give it to us. We look for that ultimate fulfillment which only God can give; we want to reconnect with the Love that we have experienced. God has put the desire within us, and that is what drives us, that is what makes us restless, that is what keeps us looking for God in all the wrong places until we finally give up and really look for Him.

Now, with all the time that we have to think, with all our frantic running around and busyness suddenly stopped, with plenty of time to spend with our family and with God, we begin to THINK about what it is all about, and we begin to FEEL the restlessness that we have been trying to avoid, the call of God to turn toward others and especially toward Him as the only answer to the restless longing within. Gerard Manley Hopkins, the poet, said that he fled Him (God) down the nights and down the days until, finally God found him. Maybe this is the point at which He finds us and we find Him. Maybe this is the point at which we realize what is truly important in life: friends, family, and God. Maybe this is the point at which we realize the pettiness of our resentments, and intolerance, and prejudice. Maybe we can now stop running and allow God to catch us. It is not the final answer to our search. There will still be some degree of loneliness because we have not yet reached the total fulfillment of heaven, but it is a long way from the fake fulfillment we are seeking in the things of this world, and a great stride toward the day when "He will wipe away every tear and there will be no more death or mourning, crying out of pain, for the former world has passed away." (Rev. 21).

Now we see our loneliness, we feel it – but we know the solution and we have the time to apply it. Let us not miss the opportunity to find the One toward which all of our restlessness and desires are pushing us. "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Him."

God bless you, your family, and friends, keep you healthy, safe, and at peace.

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

Jeff Conway, Pastor

JPC/smb