

From the Pastor—April 8, 2018

Grell on Gospel Twice in this Sunday's Gospel, we hear Jesus address the disciples with the words, "Peace be with you." I heard Chris Stefanick give a Catholic radio short-play where he said something like this, "If certain people or situations disturb you all the time, it is not the fault of those people or situations; you are just too disturb-able." I know Stefanick's words to be true in my life and in my heart. A peace that only the Lord can give is a peace that is unable to be disturbed. For me, I can be disturbed by the very phrase "trade-wars" or "stock market crash" or by the latest negative idea which is trending on Twitter. The peace the Lord desires for us is un-disturb-able. As Jesus encountered the disciples after the Resurrection, Our Lord knew they would be filled with feelings of shame in how they deserted Him. He knew also that we feel shame when we have turned away from our strong resolutions to serve Him, to love Him, to spend time with Him in prayer. Shame is a big lie. Shame is the opposite of the peace which Jesus gives. The remaining part of the equation to go from shame to peace is that mercy must be added. Jesus provides mercy by breathing the Holy Spirit onto the disciples, giving them the power to forgive sins. Each of you can receive the Risen Lord's peace by trusting in His mercy. Or, you can easily be disturbed and feel ashamed. Which will you choose?

Holy Thursday Our liturgy on Holy Thursday was marked by two unique actions: the washing of feet and the procession of the Eucharist to the garden. The washing of feet is a sign of Jesus' service to all humanity. He washed the disciples' feet that night, even though Peter openly protested. Our Lord wanted to teach his chosen band that their true measure of discipleship as the first priests would be how they served one another and all humanity. The Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper has no dismissal and final blessing after Holy Communion; rather, the Eucharist is carried in procession to an altar of repose. This imitates Jesus and the disciples leaving the Last Supper to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. Over the years, I have learned from brother priests that a laudable custom is build a garden around this altar. Such a garden, while not strictly required, lends a "real-feel" to being one of the disciples in the garden with Jesus on that first Holy Thursday. I am thankful to all who helped me wash the feet of 12 disciples and who set up the Garden scene. Thank you also to those who prayed in the Garden up until midnight, to the servers at Mass, and to the musicians.

Good Friday I was pleased with the steady flow of Confessions on Good Friday. Your repentance on this day of the Lord's Passion was consoling to His Most Sacred Heart. At the Stations of the Cross and Divine Mercy devotions, our parishes meditated well on the sufferings of Christ Our Lord. The Liturgy of Good Friday in the evening was austere with its solemn and quiet beginning and ending. This liturgy is seen as connecting Holy Thursday to the Easter Vigil, and so has neither a beginning with the Sign of the Cross and greeting, nor an ending with blessing and dismissal. This liturgy is not a Mass. We read the Passion from the Gospel of St. John and then chanted the Universal Prayer (intercessions). We adored the Cross. We can all relate to this Adoration of the Cross by the crosses we have tried to carry lovingly when having

been given them by the Lord. Finally, Holy Communion was distributed from Hosts consecrated at a Mass earlier in the week. Thank you to those who helped prepare what was needed for this liturgy, and for all of you who were able to attend it, for the servers, and for the musicians.

Holy Saturday On Holy Saturday, the Church waits with a strange stillness and silence as the Lord is in the tomb. For our parishes, it was the day to transform the sanctuaries into lily-filled wonders! (A big shout-out to our church decorators and altar preparers☺). It was also a day for final preparations for the new converts entering the Church that evening. We held a marriage ceremony to convalidate the previous marriage vows of one of our converts, and we had First Confessions for our converts and a practice for what would happen to them at the Easter Vigil. I am so thankful to our RCIA teaching volunteers who guided the student converts to the Catholic faith, and for those of you who attended the class as you were able to. So, Holy Saturday was a beautiful day all around. But we were all keeping an eye on the sky, to see what the weather would bring us.

Easter Vigil We started the holy new fire of Easter with a definite chilly-ness, or downright coldness, in the air. It was a beautiful fire, lit just outside the south main doors of church, and the ceremony of blessing it and then blessing the Paschal (Easter) candle, and then processing with the candle into church, was just beautiful. It means a lot to me for all the preparations that went into this part alone of preparing for the Vigil. We went on to read the Scriptures, to sing the Responsorial Psalm, to pray, and then do this all over again. It was so great to immerse ourselves in God's Holy Word! After the Gospel and homily, we blessed the Easter water and I sprinkled the congregation, with their candles lit, after we renewed our baptismal promises. Then, the new Catholics were welcomed into the Church by making a profession of faith and by receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. Priests have permission in our Diocese to confirm people whom they receive into the Church at the Easter Vigil, so this was a great privilege of mine. The new Catholics received their First Holy Communion. When all of our intense praying and worshipful rejoicing was completed, we had given about 2 hours and 10 minutes to the Lord!

Easter Sunday Wow, we had snow for Easter Sunday! Unbelievable! A friend of mine in Lincoln taught her kids a rendition of, "I'm Dreaming of a White Easter", where the "tulips glisten and children listen to hear bunnies on the snow." ☺ Our congregations showed such faith in the wintry conditions. Easter Sunday Mass went longer than a usual Sunday Mass, and with the snowy roads, I was late in beginning the St. Joseph Mass. I told the congregation, "Thanks for not starting without me!" Especially the renewal of baptismal promises on Easter Sunday at both parishes was just beautiful. Thank you to all who made the Easter Sunday Masses so joyful!

Easter Recovery! In my mind, I intended to see my family after Easter Masses; turns out that my body had other plans. I rested and relaxed and prayed; and with the snowy Sunday, going home to Gage County would have been difficult.

God Bless You!

Father Grell