

Love is Greater than Social Distancing

The past few weeks we've all become familiar with the term "social distancing" that health authorities stress we try to practice when out and about in public, keeping a safe distance from one another to reduce the risk posed by the Corona Virus.

For all of us, these have been incredibly stressful and anxiety-filled times as we deal with these challenges. Unlike with a blizzard or a flood, we can't see a clear ending point just yet. And there are the unknowns of what will happen to our world, our economy, our loved ones. I know it's easy to ruminate on the "what ifs."

But these past couple of weeks, I've also seen the power of love display itself through so many people.

There's been the staff at our parish many volunteers in our parish, who have explored ways to reach out to people. We've done that through having the Sunday Masses available online, recorded every Saturday night, along with other reflections and a weekly children's Mass we'll be having online too. The staff have also been reaching out to our elderly parishioners to check in on them. I can't tell you how uplifting it is to see how they care so deeply about our parish, and truly work here because they have such a deep love for all of the people of Saint Joseph's.

There's been our school principal, Kelly Roche, and amazing teachers too. We aren't sure when we'll be able to open the school again, but until that day comes they have been working so hard to communicate to parents and to come up with resources so we can continue to provide a Catholic education online. They have sacrificed so much to make this happen and are so dedicated to our students.

I've also been reminded too of the power of love in how people have shared how they are praying for our parish and one another, and as I shared last week in the many good things people are doing for others to help them out. And I'm also blessed to frequently talk to my own parents who remind me of their love and support.

In this week's Gospel, we see Jesus once again standing with people who are hurting. His friend Lazarus has died; the Gospel tells us Jesus weeps with Martha and Mary and all who are mourning, and then raises Lazarus and restores him to his family.

That's what love has the power to do: restore. The hardest part for me personally through all this is the isolation. Just as it's hard for people not to come to Mass, it's also difficult to say Mass on a weekend and have no one in the sanctuary. It's hard to not be able to visit family out of concerns for the Corona Virus. It's hard not to be able to visit kids in the school, or even sit at the same table as a staff at a meeting. Humans are not meant to be isolated; so much of what we do we do in solidarity and as a community, perhaps most notably the celebration of the Mass.

But as I walk with Emmett (who thankfully will never practice social distancing, that's not a Golden Retrievers thing) past the sign announcing the suspension of Mass twice a day, and continue to hope for the restoration of normalcy, I'm reminded constantly that love has an incredible power that no virus can touch. There is truly so much good in our world, and each of us has the power to be that love to one another. Many may not be able to receive Holy Communion right now, but inside all of us is the presence of God, and let us never forget our actions can do so much to bring people closer to God.

Thank you for your love for God, and your love for Saint Joseph's. Together, we will get through this, and will be together again in the church at Mass. Until that day arrives, I just want to thank so many of you for your prayers, for your continued financial support of the parish, for your emails of support, and for the countless ways you live out your faith. May God bless you!

In Christ,

Fr. Paul