

Others Lead us to the Empty Tomb

In the Gospel for Easter Monday, we read that “Mary Magdalen and the other Mary went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to announce the news to his disciples.” (Matthew 28:8). It takes a bit of time for Jesus’ friends to come to understand what has happened until He appears to them, telling them to be at peace. But this process is set in motion by Mary as the first witness of the resurrection.

Peter meanwhile is with the rest, holed up and hidden. Likely he’s still feeling remorseful for his denial, and he’s afraid of what has happened. Yet the fear is dispelled by the hope when he comes to the empty tomb.

I imagine this Easter is perhaps a bit like the first in the sense that many people are hidden and afraid. Millions cannot be in church this Sunday, due to an invisible enemy called the Corona virus.

In the midst of this, it can perhaps seem like dawn has not arrived, and that we are alone, like the disciples may have felt before they knew Jesus had risen. But yet through this, we see signs of hope all around us.

We see the progress being made in reducing infections and the work of doctors and nurses. But then there are the things that happen in our own parish and in our families.

For instance, last week on Palm Sunday, we welcomed nearly 300 cars through the parking lot. People came to pick up palms and say hello and it was a great reminder of how we are a true family as a parish.

Beyond this, there are those who are helping to make our Masses via video possible so people can stay connected. There are the staff people calling parishioners to check in and see how they are doing. There are the people who are praying with and for one another. Within the family, there are people supporting one another and checking in on one another. From people signing outside a nursing home, to kids painting rocks and leaving messages of hope along trails in Rosemount, to the leadership of teachers and our principal Kelly Roche who keep families and kids connected to both their academics and faith, signs of hope are all around us.

More than ever now, I think we need that reminder that the tomb is in fact empty. Sometimes in the midst of suffering, it can be hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We can naturally wonder “okay God, where are you in all of this?” The answer as we’ve reflected upon these past few days is God is right there in the trenches with us, suffering with us, and stands with us in our pain. But so too, does his mercy come to us in the form of so many people who help lead us out of the locked rooms we might be in to remind us that we are never alone.

This is the most difficult Holy Week and Easter I’ve ever been a part of. I offered Masses in the empty sanctuary. The Easter Fire was not lit this year because there were no candles to light of

the people who could not physically be there. Feet were not washed on Holy Thursday because there was no congregation. And on Easter, the lilies were there, but the church was empty on what is typically one of the most packed Masses of the year. On the surface, pretty depressing. But there is more than meets the eye. What I remind myself is that though the people were not physically there, they will be again soon. But they also were spiritually there, watching at home, praying with me, and joining with me around the altar to welcome our God who is not dead, but alive. No virus can separate us from the love of God and one another.

Sometimes we all need a reminder that while the churches may be empty, the tomb is empty too, and that Easter changes everything. So may this God of love raise us from our tombs as well, and may we never forget the power we all have to bring one another the hope and joy that is the love of the Risen Lord.

Easter blessings to you and your loved ones,

Fr. Paul