Fifth Sunday of Lent + March 29, 2020

Readings: +Ezekiel 37:12-14 +Romans 8:8-11 +John 11:1-45

Dear Parishioner…Around & About Ste. Rose,

The Liturgical calendar is celebrating the 5th Sunday of Lent. The Gospel of St. John conveys the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. As miraculous as this event was, the pharisees plotted even more intently to do away with Jesus and to rid of Lazarus as well. Though great deeds were accomplished by Jesus, it was a thirst for power and control over the people of which the pharisees were seeking to maintain. Ultimately, however, the more the pharisees sought power and control over the people, the more they lost their ill-conceived lust for power. The people of Jesus' time were no fools. In Jesus they found hope and joy.

As we now prepare for the third "Mass-less Sunday" since the COVID 19 outbreak has occurred; as we find ourselves in our homes "in isolation;" as we find ourselves "making do" with what we have; as we find ourselves living in close proximity with family members; as we find ourselves having more meals in common, we have a profound opportunity to re-discover what really matters in life: faith in God and belonging to a family – as imperfect as our family may be. I find myself telephoning my mother every day to be sure she has all that she might need. I find myself telephoning others as well so to stay in touch and be sure all is okay. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said that "loneliness" was the single greatest cause of death. It is in a family that we live and move and have our being.

COVID 19 can teach us a valuable lesson: we are not in control. We were not in control on the day of our conception and we were not in control when we first fell off our bicycle once the training wheels came off. We are not even in control of when and where we will breathe our last breath. COVID 19 is teaching us how we ***need*** one another along the journey of life. We can find hope and joy by the great gift of ***presence*** in one another's lives. St Paul said to the Corinthians that in the end there are three things that last: faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these is love.

During this time of social isolation/distancing, I pray that each of us re-discover the things that matter most in life: family, faith, and community. How I long to return to the Eucharistic Table with you gathered as a "community of faith." How I long to be reunited in word and deed as people of faith. Perhaps "collectively and individually" we will reconsider that "taking things for granted" will no longer occur.

Palm Sunday is quickly approaching! Palm branches were ordered several months ago. In as much as the likelihood of not celebrating Palm Sunday Mass is becoming more evident, the palm will be blessed and placed in front of the church for your taking. Please wear "protective gloves" and keep social distancing in mind as you approach the display of palm. You may take what you need and feel free to take palm branches for those who are unable to leave their homes.

Holy Week services are also unlikely to be celebrated. And, I dare say, Easter Masses may not be celebrated either. These Mass-less days summons each of us to more intense personal prayer.

Pray in your home, pray with your family members. The following website has all the readings for each day in the liturgical calendar: www.usccb.org Take advantage of being united with your faith community by reading and reflecting on The Word of God throughout Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter. There are many opportunities to attend Mass through television: there's *The Chalice of Salvation* on Sunday morning at 10:00 AM on Channel 22 (Channel 787 on Spectrum as well as *Catholic TV* out of the Boston area, and *EWTN* also on Spectrum.

First Communion & Confirmation are most likely needing to be re-scheduled. Bishop Rozanski will re-schedule Confirmation to the Fall season. First Communion will need to be re-scheduled in as much as Governor Baker has extended the school closure to May 4, 2020. As soon as dates are available, the dates will be posted in the weekly bulletin.

Financially, as you can well-imagine, the parish is in uncharted territory. This will be the third weekend of no Mass, therefore no collection of the Sunday Offering. To date the parish has received almost $5,000.00 through either a drop-off at the Pastoral Center or from the USPS. For those who have made their contribution – thank you. By this weekend the parish will realize a -$30,000.00 drop in collections – averaging about $10,000.00 per week. While these are very difficult economic times, please be sure to take care of your own financial responsibilities first. If you are able contribute to the parish – thank you!

And finally, together we will get through the COVID 19 pandemic. If you recall, in the aftermath of 9/11 there was a resurgence of communities pulling together and to rebuild. The American spirt of re-building and re-connecting is part of our DNA!! It is my hope-filled prayer that once the crisis of COVID 19 is over we can embrace that same spirit in our families, faith communities, and civic communities.

May God Bless you and those you love! Stay safe – stay smart!

Fr. Bill