

The quarantine has been very hard on us faithful Catholics. Suddenly, we are huddled in our homes, afraid of catching the coronavirus. We cannot attend Mass together and receive Jesus in the Eucharist. Watching Masses and the Easter Triduum liturgies is just not the same. We follow the prayers and we hear the readings proclaimed but, our Sacrament is not available to us. To me the liturgies are incomplete. The undeniable fact is that watching Mass on TV is no replacement for being together and receiving the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. As hard as we try, “spiritual communion” just doesn’t seem right.

Our priests feel it, too. Even though they can receive Eucharist during their private Masses or the Masses they live-stream online, they miss their parish family. They miss the friends and neighbors that they love. Some parishes, like St. Philip, only have one priest and his days can be long and lonely in the parish rectory. Even though Fr. Bob may joke that we are missing some of the best homilies he has ever given, we know he misses us as much as we miss him.

The worst part is we don’t know when this will end and we can gather together again.

In John’s Gospel for Sunday, we find the disciples huddled in fear in the upper room. Jesus had been taken from them and they can no longer see him, talk to him or have his comfort and love in person. They fear going out because they’re lives could be at risk. They could be arrested and persecuted by the Jewish authorities. Sound familiar? Sort of like our government threatening prosecution for violating stay-at-home orders? Or, we are afraid to go out because we might catch the virus?

But, then Jesus appears in the midst of the disciples and says, “peace be with you”. Suddenly, Jesus is with them again. He gives the disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit and tells them he is sending them to the world, as his father sent him.

Thomas represents and voices the doubts that creeps into many of our lives when we can’t see the Lord. We want proof. We want some tangible visible evidence that Jesus is with us.

We sit in our homes and watch the Mass and we have that longing to receive the Eucharist and we have the feelings that live-stream and TV Masses are a poor substitute. Unless we receive the precious body and precious blood, we are not really in touch with Jesus and have not received him.

But, what does Jesus tell Thomas? “Do not be unbelieving but, believe...have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” John ends his Gospel by telling us, “these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

Even though we cannot physically attend Mass and receive the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus is always with us. Even though we can't – at this time – see, we still believe.

Even though live-stream and TV Masses are poor substitute for attending Mass in person, we still pray the prayers, we hear God's Word proclaimed and Jesus is with us. We should not doubt that fact. Jesus is with us in our homes, watching over us, protecting us. Even though we can't see his precious body and his precious blood and receive him in the Eucharist, we still worship him as our Lord and Savior.

Don't give up and don't huddle in fear. If you get too anxious or fearful, close your eyes and picture yourself in that upper room. Picture Jesus appearing in front of you and speaking to you those calming, loving words, "peace be with you."

Even though we can't be together. We are all connected in the Body of Christ. We are together in Jesus' body just as much as if we were attending Mass together at St. Philip.

I'm praying for all of you and I wish I could be with you. I've talked with Fr. Bob several times and I know he feels the same way. We look forward to that happy day when we can gather together again at Mass at St. Philip. I believe there will be many tears of happiness and joy that day!

"Peace be with you". Pray every day and feel the comfort of the presence of our Lord in your home and in your life.

May God, in his mercy, bless you always.

- Deacon Pete