

Homily for the 4th Sunday of Lent
March 13-14, 2021
First Anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the spread of COVID-19 around the globe a “pandemic.” That announcement set into motion the experience and turmoil we have lived through this past year.

Some of the measures that originally began as temporary responses to “flatten the curve” have now become a new way-of-life for us.

I remember well my own sense of shock, disbelief, and disorientation as the provincial government announced the suspension of public gatherings for worship back in mid-March of last year. Of course, we were not alone. Businesses and workplaces deemed “non-essential,” and schools, were in the same boat. Things have since letup to varying degrees but a close vigilance is being kept on the situation.

I do not need to tell you that this has been a trying time for everyone. To date official estimates put the number of deaths in Canada from the virus at 22.4 thousand and worldwide at an estimated 2.6 million. Many more have been sick or infected. And our Health Care system has been straining under the burden of dealing with the crisis.

We have all experienced the magnitude of the crisis. While most of us have been fortunate enough not to suffer the actual virus, we have all felt the restrictions on our daily lives, the separation from our families

and friends, and the anxiety that comes from wondering how this will all play out.

But we have also experienced the wonderful blessing that can be family, friends, neighbours and fellow parishioners who have come forward in this time of need. And God bless our frontline workers.

This time has been a challenge to our parish and sacramental life. Many parishioners have experienced a long fast from the Eucharist and missed personal contact with fellow parishioners. Fortunately, our Sunday Mass is online and we have various online devotions and activities that one can join.

Both the Knights of Columbus and Catholic Women's League have been proactive in contacting and having virtual meetings with their members and engaging in creative ways of connecting with others.

I want to take this time to thank some of the people who have made it possible for our church to stay open and to reach out to its members. These include Daniel and Divina Hogan, Ming and Catherine Leung; my staff Franca Morrison and Steve Short; Deacon Victor, Pearl Beausoleil, Laura Recoskie, Teresa Wong, Lynn dal Farra, and Angela Beimers; Jack Belletrutti and other members of the Knights; Rosemary Fikis, Audrey Wojcik and other members of the CWL; Joanne Parenteau and Jamie Burnette, our readers, and all those precious volunteers who have been faithfully greeting and ushering the parishioners at Mass. If I have forgotten anyone please forgive me but know that your help is truly appreciated.

I also want to thank all those parishioners who have not been able to return to church but have nonetheless continued to faithfully support the parish both financially and in prayer. Your thoughtfulness and generosity are deeply appreciated. You are in my prayers.

Even though we are not all physically together yet we are still united in spirit. But I must say, I do look forward to the day when we can gather together again for worship – without social distancing or masks – and enjoy each others company. It keeps me going.

But what keeps all of us going is our Faith. *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever”* (Hebrews 13:8). He does not change with the times.

So, whether times are good or bad He is no less God, no less loving, no less present with us.

Difficult times can be a grace-filled opportunity to examine our relationship with Jesus Christ and recommit to and deepen it. So that when our current trials abate, we can come out of them renewed in spirit, strengthened in faith, purified in heart, but as if by fire.

I will end with an excerpt from Psalm 91:

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.”

For He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;

...

Those who love Me, I will deliver;

I will protect those who know My name.

When they call to Me, I will answer them;

I will be with them in trouble,

I will rescue them and honor them.

God bless.