

## THE SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM AND EASTER

As we prepare to enter into the this most holy time of our liturgical year, I know that many of you are suffering from our inability to come together and celebrate as a community due to this Covid 19 outbreak. Many of you may experience a sense of isolation and separation because you are unable to fully participate in the rich and meaningful liturgies that we normally gather together for at this very important time when we commemorate and celebrate the salvation which, through his Passion, our Lord Jesus Christ won for us. But let us still take the time to pray and reflect on the great events of these next three days. Watching Masses on TV or the internet can be a comfort and help you enter more deeply into the spirit and mystery of Christ's Passion.

I know that many of you are saddened at the thought of celebrating Easter without loved one, parents, grandparents, children or friends, due to the physical distancing rules that are presently in place. However that should not stop us from reaching out, when possible, through phone calls, emails or face time with those we love. Any contact is better than no contact. Let us all pray for a speedy end to this pandemic.

I pray that you are all doing well in these difficult time. I would like to thank those parishioners who have reached out to ask how I am doing. I must confess that when we were forced to cancel Masses, I thought how nice it will be to celebrate Mass alone, not distracted by late comers, early leaves, people not participating, those talking. However I soon realized that without all those people in the pews, there is not church. This is especially evident as we celebrate the Passion of the Lord and how he suffered and died for the good of others, not for his own good. As priests, we are ordained to serve the faithful, not ourselves. There is a feeling of still being in the desert, not near the resurrection

In a recent article, about the pain of our separation from the Sacraments, Fr. Paul Scalia of Washington, D.C., wrote "Here is another painful exile: that of the priest from his people. The faithful throughout the world

suffer the pain of life without the Mass. Priests suffer the pain of life without their people. Those men have given their lives for Christ's flock. Now they struggle to understand their lives apart from that flock. *Tend the flock of God in your midst*, Saint Peter exhorts the Church's pastors. (1Pt 5:2) But what to do when the flock is no longer in your midst. . .and not allowed to be?

The whole situation sets in stark relief this truth about us parish priests: we are ordained '*propter homines*' - to serve the people of God. Our lives don't make sense without a people to serve or a flock to tend. When asked what he thought about the laity, Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman famously observed that "the Church would look foolish without them."

As we enter this sacred time, I continue to celebrate Mass for your intentions, and ask you to keep me in your prayers. Let us also pray that we will soon be able to celebrate together the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

Despite these trying times, may you all have a blessed Easter.

Fr. Paul