

Good Friday 2020

Deacon Jon DeLuney

We are essentially in the middle of the COVID-19 Virus pandemic and everything is being done by our government leaders, the CDC and local leaders to educate people and offer ideas to prevent the spread of this very contagious disease. Among those ideas and suggestions: social distancing and staying at home as much as we can.

Many have come down with this virus and many more will in the near future. As we have heard, those who are elderly and who have underlining medical issues have already suffered the most. As far as we know, children and the young adult population who come down with it have a very high percentage of full recovery. This high recovery rate of the young population gives us hope that the death rate will be lower in the country. But we must protect the elderly and we do that by isolating them to their homes and facilities and encourage others such as family, friends and neighbors to not visit during this time. It is heart breaking to see family members visiting their loved ones in nursing homes separated by a window in their room. This too shall pass so we can return to some form of normalcy. Let us not despair during this time. We have been encouraged by Pope Francis and Archbishop Hebda to pray and to be a source of hope for others.

We have been asked by Archbishop Hebda to refrain from Mass attendance and other church functions until this virus is under control. On March 22, the 4th Sunday of Lent, Joan and I viewed Mass on our computer screen that was telecast from Our Lady of Grace Church in Edina. Fr Kevin Finnigan presided. There were a total of 10 people in attendance per Health Department guidelines.

As we watched Mass that Sunday morning, we became very aware of how much the Mass means to us. It was sad to see an empty church and the 10 people sitting 6 or more feet from each other. The hardest part was that we could only pray the spiritual communion prayer. We can certainly receive consolation in that prayer but not receiving Holy Communion made our heart and soul ache. This is not going to last forever but it brings to mind how important Mass and the Eucharist is to all of us, the parishioners, the pastors and the bishops across the world. Some talk of the harm this will bring to faith in general but I believe it will make our Church stronger and more unified.

We became a broken world by this virus pandemic. While it could be said that it is causing all of us to become more separated and distant from each other, I believe the consequences of this virus will draw us and the world closer together.

As we gather this afternoon for Good Friday, we need look no further than the cross to see a perfect example of being broken; Jesus on the cross. But Jesus' brokenness became a blessing for you and I because He died for our sins and by doing so, took down the wall that Adam and Eve put up between us and God by their original sin. God sent His only Son that we may have eternal life, thereby taking that wall away. While we were blessed with God's unselfish act of giving up His Son for our eternity, we, as humans, experience our own brokenness by our faults, failings and our sins. Our blessings can come from our brokenness because without these trials and personal sufferings we experience, we wouldn't have a reason to move forward and learn from our brokenness.

Speaking for those who are around my age, we are not the same people today as we were 40 or 50 years ago. We thought we would live forever, made mistakes and suffered the trials that come with this brief life on earth. We changed physically over the years and not just by our grey hair or occasional memory loss; our interior changed.

We became more introspective, hopefully more patient and our faith became more important to us over the years. Our interior life changed. Our faith became a source of strength and hope for us during times of loss and difficulties.

It is no joy to lose a loved one or to suffer from health issues. We are meant to grieve them and somehow make lemonade out of lemons by finding some good that can come from these things. Many of you know my story and the blessing that came from my losses. God Blessed me with a 2nd chance and I am grateful. Many of you have suffered similar losses and tribulations and you have found ways to accept what God has given you and moved on.

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We all have our own stories. The first thing we must do in going forward from loss or trial is to own our story. This is who we are and we are who we are because of that unique story. We can't change who we are, how we were raised or the bad decisions we made early on. That means we claim our struggle, accept it and surrender to Jesus rather than choose to wallow in self-pity. So we are often defined by our story which is a double edged sword. We can let our story drag us down or we can allow it to lift us up and go forward.

By owning our story and claiming our struggle, we are anointed with a new found healing grace that will help us move forward.

Essential to this journey of moving on from our brokenness is a self-emptying like Christ's own emptying. Time and again, from birth to death, we have to let go and to let go means we have to die a little. It's painful and so we hang on, clutch our yesterdays, like Linus' blanket, refusing to grow. We can allow our brokenness to continue to bring us down or we can rise up from our proverbial ashes to make it a blessing.

We all know someone who has experienced a personal loss of a loved one, a home, or loss of employment or a business that has placed a hardship on their family.

We know the story of Jacob Wetterling and what Patty and Jerry endured over the years. I can't imagine the pain they suffered and still suffer from that loss. But they turned that tragedy into an organization that helps find abducted and exploited children. They turned an awful experience into a blessing for others trying to locate lost sons and daughters.

I am always amazed by military veterans who suffer PTSD and or loss of limbs who return to civilian life and become whole by learning to adjust with their new prosthesis or are able to deal with their PTSD effectively. Many rebuild their lives around acceptance of their situation.

They come to accept their story, claim their struggle, accept it and surrender to Jesus. The hope on this Good Friday is that we still have an opportunity to turn our brokenness into a blessing and that we go into the world to make a difference for others through our story. We go forward today owning and accepting our struggles and surrendering them to Jesus so that we will make things right with God and be a source of strength and hope for others. May God bless you.