

Saturday/Sunday
March 28-29, 2020

Dear Friends:

Another week of our spatial distancing and home-living has come and gone. The news each day has been assorted variations on what the Corona Virus is doing, I am intrigued with the creativity that occurs when isolation strikes. Here at Santa Clara I have been impressed that EVERYONE got the news regarding our suspension of Masses, last weekend NOBODY accidentally showed up expecting Mass, it was better than what usually happens on the days for beginning/ending Daylight Savings Time when people are out of sync with the time change and ONE HOUR thoroughly disrupts both their hair and their attitude. To say that it feels WEIRD having an empty parking lot and Church building on Sunday morning would be putting it mildly, I became aware (again) of how SO MUCH of my life revolves around being of service to YOU, greeting you, chatting with you, celebrating Mass with you, wishing you well and sending you forth back into the world to be about your lives.

A number of people (5) have suggested/urged that I do some recorded homilies or video some Masses for people to feel 'more connected.' Christ Cathedral, and a handful of other parishes, is already doing that and since it is the SAME Mass, I do not see the value in repeating what is already available. As to recording homilies...unfortunately, as you probably already realize, my homilies are CONVERSATIONS with the community at THAT Mass. A conversation is nuanced by the participants and it is very difficult for me to have a conversation with a camera. Thus, you are receiving these weekly email letters from me, as I am pretty fluent in composing letters, which can be read at leisure by those receiving them.

As I mentioned in the first paragraph, last weekend was an EMPTY world here at Santa Clara. It being the first weekend without any Masses, I was concerned that some people might be confused or had not received the info that all our Masses were suspended (yes, there really are people who NEVER seem to get the news) and so I made a point of being here on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. To my pleasant surprise....PRETTY MUCH ALL OF YOU (99.999%) had received the message and NOBODY showed. On Sunday morning, here at an empty parish, I trimmed the rose bushes, dumped some kitchen/office trash, enjoyed the quiet of the Memorial Garden and spent some time just enjoying the unusual peacefulness of the morning. Around 10:30 I decided to head to Costco. There was no delay in entering and the parking lot was pretty much empty. Upon entering the store, it was lightly populated and I headed for the section where toilet paper was stocked. With so much news of people hoarding their Charmin I thought, even though I was not in a panic situation, I ought to at least pick up a few rolls to be on the safe side. No sooner had I arrived amid a cluster of people with their designated single container of TP in their carts than it was announced that they were out of toilet paper and people could stop searching and go about the rest of their shopping. I sort of stood there for a few moments, figuring out what else I needed, when unexpectedly a man, probably in his 40's, rolled his cart up to mine, took out his package of Charmin and put his toilet paper into my cart, with the statement: 'Here sir, you can have my rolls, I don't need them that badly.' I think I actually stuttered my thank you, I was so surprised. I was touched by his generosity and kindness; I had never thought of toilet paper as being a 'valentine' of sorts. BUT THEN, as I was walking away, I started thinking...**did I somehow look like I NEEDED toilet paper? Did I have a desperate look on my face?** Did my body look clenched? After tumbling the experience over a few dozen more times in my mind I decided to simply take it for what it was, an unexpected act of generosity and kindness from a complete stranger! Good to experience and even better to share, with the negatives so rapidly reported and election posturing so nasty and negative, I hope my Charmin story gives you as much relief and reassurance as it did for me.

Next weekend is Palm Sunday. Normally a weekend commemorating and initiating our HIGHEST of Holy Days, Palm Sunday, here at Santa Clara, is usually celebrated with ample decorative palm fronds, the lengthy reading of the Passion narrative and homilies zeroing in on the Cross carried by Jesus and the necessity for each of us to embrace whatever crosses may be afflicting our lives. This year, the cross of Covid19, is present within our society, loud and clear. Our societal response to it is heightening our awareness of what is MOST important for each of us. Yet, as my Charmin story in the preceding paragraph demonstrates, even as the Cross afflicts us, there is kindness and compassion all around us. **Next weekend, while we will still NOT have any Masses, A LARGE arrangement of BLESSED**

PALMS will be out in FRONT OF OUR HALL from which you can take as many blessed palm fronds as you wish. Easter will eventually come, which we will celebrate on whatever weekend we start having Masses again. While our lives and routines have been disrupted, God's presence and grace within our lives has remained steady and constant. Let the Blessed Palms of next weekend remind you of HOPE, LIFE and KINDNESS....and please remember, you are LOVED!!! FKB