

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate Mother's Day, and in a special way we remember all of our own mothers and the mothers of our parish community. It is fitting that we honor our mothers during the month of May, the month dedicated to Our Blessed Mother. I am grateful for our mothers who are wonderful examples of self-sacrificial love, support and encouragement of their families and whose generosity emulates the example of Mary, our Mother. During today's 9:30 Mass and 11:30 Spanish mass, children from our parish will crown Mary as we celebrate our annual May Crowning. Please remember in a special way our parish second graders who traditionally attend this Mass following their First Holy Communion. I am grateful for the patience shown by our children and their parents during this time of uncertainty.

This Sunday's readings speak to us of the call to discipleship, a gift of grace given to us by God to spread the Good News to all whom we encounter through the various circumstances of our lives. Venerable Walter J. Ciszek, S.J. was a Jesuit priest from the New York Province who went to Eastern Europe as a missionary and who was subsequently imprisoned by the Russian Communist authorities. When he was released from prison in the 1960's, he wrote some very inspirational books on suffering, discipleship and truly finding God in all things. He offered these powerful words which are an excellent way of praying and reflecting upon our call to service of the Kingdom.

He wrote, "God in his providence does not leave men at peace until they are converted in a crisis that, sooner or later, must come to every heart. God's grace demands the total transformation of man, for man belongs to God. Only in faith, only by a change of heart, can a man enter the kingdom of God. Sooner or later man must learn that this changing and unstable world cannot be the source of his security, of true peace of heart." These words make so much sense to us today, as we are living in truly unpredictable and historically exciting times. Although there is anxiety which we are all feeling very personally, this is such an important time to remember that our witness and discipleship is especially meaningful. Father Ciszek wrote, "We experience daily just how difficult it is, therefore, to promote the kingdom of God in our personal lives by fulfilling his will in every respect. No one who has tried seriously to live each day in this way will say it is an easy task. It can only be done with the help of God's grace.

That grace is always given to us, but we must learn to recognize it in the people and circumstances presented to us by God's providence, in the thoughts and inspirations that tug at our minds and our hearts. We know that we do not always respond to God's grace, for his grace always demands of us sacrifice, renunciation of self-will, effort, and an untiring spirit of dedication - and the practice of these things does not come easily to the young, or the tired adult, or the old. Yet that is what the kingdom of God is all about." This presents us with a big challenge but also one full of hope and possibility.

The Scriptures proclaimed today bring to life in such dramatic detail just how operative and expansive is the kingdom of God, especially in light of this Easter Season. In the Acts of the Apostles, we see growing pains as the Church began to expand geographically into the Hellenistic, or Gentile, world. In response, the community came together to form the institution of the diaconate, men chosen from among the believers who would tend to the material needs of the Church. The first deacons, “brothers among you,” included Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenus and Nicholas of Antioch. This is a very practical example of the Church responding to the signs of the times. 1 Peter extends the invitation of Christian discipleship, a beckoning to “come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God. You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Even in times of upheaval when so much of life can seem a big question mark, our Christian faith is a tremendous grace and anchor for us, to sustain us and bring us consolation. In a very real sense, we can very much identify with the disciples and early Christian communities; they were embarking on an unknown journey, in a sense. Yet, and most unmistakably, God’s providential plan was and is being revealed to those who trust and follow Him. Jesus gave comfort when he told his disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled; you have faith in God, have faith also in me.” Like Thomas and Philip, we may now know the way or can question and doubt; however, in the final analysis, all of the experiences of life are meant to draw us more intimately to the heart of the Master who loves us and ultimately leads us home!

My continued gratitude to our Sunday technicians, musicians, Cathy Yee, Denise Kirksey, Tony Eiras, Kristian Eric, Omar Bravo, Oscar Ortiz, Chris Swan, Kristin Bright, Elvira Cabahug, Catie Costa, Julie Brand, Stanford Community, LisaMarie Lombardi, Blake McNally, Marcela Lagarda, Alejandro Ramos, María Ramos, all who have been faithful ministers during these past months. I am also deeply grateful for the continued financial support of our parishioners and to the Redwood City Police Department (who have been vigilantly keeping our campus safe)!

God Bless!

Fr. Tom