

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Over these past several months, I have often reflected on the crisis in which we find ourselves these days. As with you, I simply could never have imagined our way of life being so altered and restricted in a multitude of ways. A way of life that, I quite honestly, I had come to take for granted. This reality came not from a lack of gratitude for all of the blessings God has given and continues to give to all of us, but rather from the truth that, compared to so much of the world, our lives are relatively stable and routine. Our lives are so generally predictable that when the Covid-19 hit, I thought it would disrupt our way of life for perhaps a month or so. Here we are, in late September, as uncertain about the immediate future as we were in mid-March. Amidst all of the unknowing and challenges these times present, this has also been a time of affirming in innumerable ways the amazing grace of God which continues to imprint upon our minds and hearts both individually and as a Catholic community of faith.

As our pastor, I have been in the unique situation of hearing stories from our parishioners and of trying to be present in listening. There have been the difficult conversations of parishioners and family members who have lost jobs. Some families, facing reduction in work, have benefited from the continued financial support of the parishioners for the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Several parishioners have made anonymous donations which have enabled Fr. Edgardo and me to assist families with groceries. Our school children, with the assistance of their teachers and parents, have begun again to reach out to our seniors to say hello and check in with them. Over forty of our parish men gathered on a Saturday morning to put up the Men's Club tent for use for our outdoor Masses. I am convinced that so many came out as a direct reflection of the incredible work being done by our parish family to remain present during a time when people naturally feel isolated and disconnected from their spiritual family.

I am grateful beyond words for a wonderful staff which works hard for the mission of our parish. The generosity and enthusiasm exhibited on a daily basis is a reflection of our mission to promote Gospel values in the service of others. There has had to be necessary adjustments to our working routine and everyone has been supportive and understanding. There have been times of frustration and fatigue, to be sure; overall, however, our challenges have been met with a "can do" spirit and energy and a healthy sense of humor. We are supportive of one another and there is a sensitivity to the needs of our staff and their families. This certainly includes our preschool and parochial school staff as well.

I am enormously proud of the herculean efforts on the part of our administration, faculty, staff, parents and students to make our educational mission viable and supportive during these unprecedented times. Again, my deepest thanks to our parents and students who have been patient and understanding. I know that this positive and constructive energy will only serve to strengthen our community today and in the future. The words of St. Paul to the Philippians proclaimed in today's second reading seems particularly salient: "Brothers and sisters: Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me." These words remind us that our ultimate destination is heaven!!!

Keep faith, my brothers and sisters and all will be well! --Fr. Tom