

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Jesus Has Risen to New Life and Wants You to Follow Him

Lent is often a difficult period for many of us. We spend six weeks fasting, praying and almsgiving. The fasting can be difficult because we often choose something that we really like, such as chocolate, alcohol, television or video games. The praying and almsgiving are usually the types of things that we know that we need to do, but we struggle to fit them into our every day. Perhaps we had great plans for how our lives would improve with our Lenten observances. Then the Coronavirus came and changed everything!

Some people just gave up completely on the plans that they had for Lent. Perhaps they thought that the new protocols and directives, especially social distancing, were harsh enough. Perhaps their ideas about what they would do for Lent were impossible, such as attending daily Mass when the Churches were closed to public participation. Instead of changing course, they just threw their hands up in exasperation.

And now we're asked to celebrate Easter in a completely different way. How can we celebrate Easter when we can't even go to Mass? Normally our parish is so crowded that we add extra Masses. Because of travel restrictions, we may not even be able to gather with our extended families in the way that we usually would at Easter.

So what is there to celebrate this year? What reason do we have to cry out, "Alleluia!"? Well, I have been reflecting on this for a couple of weeks now, and I believe that we absolutely have reasons to celebrate this year. I believe that if we look back at these past weeks, we will find blessings in them. Let me list just a few I've found:

1. Surprisingly, social distancing has made us realize that we are all connected. So many people live "in their own little worlds" that they never even notice their neighbor. Now, at least people are taking notice of others.
2. This new awareness has allowed some to begin to consider others in their decisions and in their prayers.

3. Some are even thinking of others in ways that encourage them to reach out to their neighbors in need as they may have never done so before.
4. Because they cannot get together with others so easily, people are finding new ways to connect with the ones they love, and these relationships are valued more than ever.
5. Because they cannot get into the Church, some people are finding new ways to connect with God, with personal devotions like the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Some have even opened Bibles that have long been sitting on shelves. Some are using technology to continue to gather in prayer with others.
6. Some people are also gaining a new desire for their Sunday ritual of Mass attendance. They miss the social aspect of Mass, but they are also beginning to miss the spiritual fulfillment they receive. Even our daily Communicants are desiring and appreciating the Mass more than they did before.
7. This new appreciation has extended to the Eucharist as well. What used to be for some a wafer that was received because it was available, has now become a special food that IS Jesus Christ – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – nourishment for body and soul.

When Jesus rose from the tomb on the third day, the world would never be the same. When we are allowed to carry on our lives without the current restrictions, I pray we remember the lessons and the blessings that we have gained this season. If we do, then our world will never be the same again – it will be so much better!

You are in my prayers and the prayers of all of our clergy and staff this Easter. With hope in Jesus, who rose to New Life, we know that we will rise again to a new life too.
Alleluia!!

