

## BECOMING THE PARISH WE ARE CALLED TO BE

As we enter Holy Week, the challenge I have encountered is how to best hold you, be confident for you and help you find a way in the midst of uncertainty. I have longed for outward expressions of the inward reality, Jesus is alive. With a desire to gather and the realization we cannot, with a desire to bring Jesus to you and not keep Him locked in a church, I have struggled. My creativity has tried to mastermind plans of how to interpret the rules and regulations and still find a way to allow you to express your desire to be present to the Lord. Yet all of this has to be done with social distancing. So in the end, it is in the best interest of the community that none of my plans were fully implemented. My great challenge in leadership is to allow you to find your own way of expressing in your home, safe from the virus. I always have viewed my leadership style as focused on helping build a community by inviting you into the power of God I have found. To do that, the community chooses to unite in times and places and the Lord who will not deny His presence joins us in the places He promised. This Holy Week will be like no other. The sacrifice of the outward expressions matches our anxiety of not being able to gather. Staying in place is the most important thing to do.

As a staff we will go to the things that are common to us. As of this writing, we are still working on ways to invite you into this great Mystery. More will follow. Please watch the website and look to our APP for updates. The power of God will resonate, the faith of God will find us and nothing will be diminished, because God chooses life. He sent Jesus into the world so we would have life. Our identity will be stronger than ever before because God chooses us.

On Easter Sunday the Easter Mass will be found at the usual place of YouTube and the parish website. In the glory of its power Christ will be proclaimed as alive, for He truly is. At this time I ask you to tune in, here or in other places that feed you. Make these days special in the ways God intended this year, from your home. Stay safe and in place.

Know that I love you all and miss having you here, but the words Jesus spoke after He rose from the dead will also be heard when we do everything we are supposed to do *"Peace be with you."* Let Jesus tell you these words, allow Him to calm the storms and allow Him to be new life in the holiness of this week. He will find you.



Father John

## THE HOLINESS WILL FIND US THIS WEEK

In the Liturgy today, we begin with a procession proclaiming Jesus as King. *"Hosanna in the Highest"* we all exclaim. In the same liturgy we recall the Passion of the Lord, His arrest, His trial and His untimely death by crucifixion. It is a paradox...those who gathered and lined the streets could not be found on Calvary. Where the Kingdom was most present, with Jesus crucified on the cross, only a few spectators were found. When all this happened even the followers of Jesus who walked closely with Him were filled with fear. No one understood what was going on. Sometimes we all might feel that way. It is a paradox. We know our faith and we long to profess it and we long for these mysteries that unite us and identify us.

I used to identify myself as a runner. I used to run a marathon a year in the fall, and a half marathon in the spring. Training upon training was my prayer time and the passion in that chapter of my life. I have struggled lately to find any kind of energy to run. While I will still walk and sometimes get out for a walk/run on the Fox River, the times are sparse and not as frequent as they used to be. I can get caught up in the laments of it being not as it used to be. The other day as I went for a walk, since we are staying in place, I walked the neighborhood wrestling with what isn't and what can't be. As I made the corner and entered the parking lot, I stopped to pray. I went to the next spot and prayed. I prayed for everyone who ever parked in this spot, whether often or just once in a great while. In each parking spot is a story. The vehicles that parked between the lines carried passengers, some handicapped, some so young they needed to be carried in. Sometimes we park in the same row and same spot like our daily Mass crowd, others just go where they can find an open spot and thank God they found it. The parking lot contains our story. As I prayed and went from spot to spot, I realized that God was inviting me to realize holiness will come to us. While we have usually found our way over obstacles to present ourselves to the mystery, God is now overcoming the obstacles in these great holy and sacred three days, which I love. All the power which God places in them for us to experience, He still will, and this year holiness will find us. I found peace in the lines of the parking lot. I found holiness finding me. The next day, so did my passion to get out and run. It all began with putting on running clothes from the start. It began with allowing the passion and desire to come to me instead of me trying to go and find it.

These are unprecedented times. While my faith is stronger than ever, my expression of it has changed since the locking up of the place where we worship. I am in agreement with all that is being done to keep us doing the right thing to curb the outbreak for our families and friends. I know holiness will find us. I believe that the power of God will light a fire within us that will connect to our Easter fire. He will invite us to a renewal of Baptismal vows that will find us washing the feet of one another. He will give us new eyes that will recognize Jesus in the Breaking of the Bread. Fear not, for holiness will meet us this Holy Week.



Reverend John J. Ouper