

MOVEMENT AND PATIENCE

By now everyone has heard plans are being made for the opening of our parish. After lots of communication, the Catholic Bishops of Illinois, working with multiple government agencies, as well as with the Office of the Governor have agreed to a phased plan to welcome parishioners back into the building of the church. It is a time to be patient with this process.

On our part we have been proactive to do all we can. We have created a compliance team. They have attended the training in regards to the necessary safety program made available to us through the Archdiocese of Chicago. We have also contracted our cleaning company to help us with the measures it will take to complete cleaning between Masses. Having said all of this, we are still learning what it will take to maintain a healthy environment, one in which the potential of contact with the virus is kept as low as possible.

Masses will not be filled to capacity and those over the age of 65 will have to search their hearts to discern if it is wise for them to return to public gatherings at this time. We will be staggering attendance so that everyone who wishes to, can experience an in-person sacramental celebration. All of this is something for everyone to ponder and pray about.

In the meantime, while we learn more and share more with all of you, I ask you for understanding. This is a complicated and complex undertaking. Our hearts want all of you here. To do this it will take time and understanding. I just ask that we find it within ourselves to be patient with our staff and compliance team as we go through the process. There are separate directives to be able to open up the chapel for private prayer. Additionally there have been separate directives given to us as to how weddings and funerals and Baptisms will be celebrated. It will not look the same.

However, in the end, our approach will be done with the guidance of the Diocese, the recommendations of our compliance team and the sensitivity to the ever changing recommendations that may be adjusted at any time due to new outbreaks and hot spots that will arise.

What is for certain is what is always for certain: God is with us, He has not abandoned us and we will rise with the Lord to give the name of Jesus Glory.



Father John

THE MAKING OF DISCIPLES

Today is all about sending us forth. This was not just one moment in time, but this message is meant for all time. Our faith is to be lived and freely proclaimed in the depth of our actions. This time is like no other and our responsibility to be disciples, our commitment to our faith, is to be manifested in not what is impossible but what is possible. If you are like me, my mind has been at the crossroads. At times I am facing the virus head on and planning for the safety of the community. At times I am thinking about the faith, pure and without restrictions. I am thinking about beyond the safety, it is necessary we find our way to great joy. Can we get there? Yes, we can! Jesus is about the action of redemption and we are to be about the proclamation of a Baptism that forgives sins and sets our compasses in a new direction. With the power of the Trinity present in this action, how can we fail? We can't. Now is our time and as we open our lives to social distancing, we open our hearts to the pain and suffering of the world. We find neighbors that need help and friends who need support; we've got this. The power of our Baptism is alive in us.

This Solemnity of the Ascension invites us to always change our direction. As the Risen Lord ascended into heaven and was taken from the sight of the eyes of the disciples, He invited them to find Him in new ways. It was a change in focus, a new normal and they had to chart a new course. Everything in which they had grown to find security had now changed. The same is true for us. All the things that they took for granted had changed. Jesus would not be seen in the same way to them and it was a whole new way of being for them. The same is true for us. What did the disciples do? They went on the move to begin the process of Baptizing the world. This mission is still incomplete, it is not finished. So now it is our turn to get on the move, to be the shining light in the midst of a pandemic and to announce to the world God is alive. He is about the forgiveness of sins; He is about redemptive love and He is about salvation history. We are to make history. We are to rise up from all of this pain and suffering and be steadfast in hope. We've got this. We have been Baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Trinity dwells within us. Sacramental grace will not be silenced. Buildings are just a part of the way of evangelization entrusted to us. All of this requires a change of perspective. It requires following the new compass that God gave us, the one that has always been there. It is a time to speak the truth that Jesus is Lord. In His name we have not only been Baptized, but commissioned to go into our world to proclaim a Baptism that opens the doors to eternal life.

Trusting is the first step. Our homes have been transformed. They have become workplaces, classrooms and places to watch the celebration of the Eucharist. Exercise routines have changed and hair may not be as well kept as before. None of this has crushed the power of God. Instead it has forged new alliances and a new need for Him. What was, still is. God is inviting us to make disciples. We are called to place so much trust in Him that others will just be amazed. We are to show the world we are strong and committed. We, you and I, have been chosen to live in a time of pandemic and it is now the new background to proclaim our faith. Be bold, be strong! Our time is now! Going to all nations, begins in your own home. Going to all nations, begins with the person across the street. Going to all nations, begins with the co-worker who is stressed. What we have is the power of our Baptism. What we rely on is the power of the Trinity. How do we do it? God will show us how!!

Find your compass. It is still pointing to Him, as it always has. Follow it, while you raise your head and voices. He is the Savior of the World.



Father John J. Ouper