

Monday of the Third Week of Advent

Who could have ever imagined last year what it would be like this year?

In what I find to be very difficult these days of Christmas 2020, I want to focus our attention on the incredible displays of self-sacrificing love and service afoot in our world.

The countless numbers of people who are laying down their lives for so, so many others in so many ways, so very many ways.

It is always happening I believe, but rarely do so many of us have the opportunity to take note of it.

I know that many of us have been largely spared the suffering that has afflicted others, most of us gathered here this Christmas have more than enough to eat, we have homes and cars and jobs or reasonably suitable pensions, and we have our health and our health care but please take note that that is not the universal experience.

Those of us spared the suffering of so many need to remember that it is an act of mercy, a work of love, to do what is asked of us, to wear masks, to stay home, to avoid crowds, to be vigilant, to put the needs of others ahead of our own.

It is tough being “merry” this Christmas, at least for me. So much, so very much sadness, so much anxiety, uncertainty, fear, I am sure, and anger and resentment and confusion across the land and the world makes it difficult to ride the usual waves of this season.

The grief flowing through the minds and hearts of so, so many families and parents and spouses and children all over, the sadness, the hurt, the loss of so much love so fast and with such cruelty and arbitrariness, touching the hearths and homes of the poor and powerless with a heavy, heavy hand, can make the reality behind what we call Christmas, almost trite, silly, unbelievable.

I am deeply troubled by so many identified as Catholic acting as if nothing has happened with a rush to return to what was thought to be normal, especially

the silence, the lack of urgency to encourage the universal practices to keep others safe, the boasting about our Catholic ability to keep our schools safe and our athletic teams competing while others are dying, our insistence on religion's rights without regard to our obligations.

I suspect our record of a near narcissistic concern for our own welfare in some quarters will not bode well for the future growth of our congregations when this is all behind us, our failures to care for the least will come with us.