

May 10,2020

Happy Mother's Day to all of you. It is not easy to be a mother for so many of you these days, and for so, so many it is a sad and confused day to be a mother.

In no way do I suggest a sweet Jesus kind of solution to the sorrow of so many mothers and children on this particular celebration of Mother's Day, but the bitterness and grief and anger and confusion that many carry this day is a heavy burden that we can help carry by our prayer.

By prayer I do not mean sentimentality by handing this whole mess over to our idea of God to handle, but to try and feel with the bitterness and grief and anger and confusion, to take the time to allow our minds to be still of our own fears and wants and give some precedence to those who are in a pain greater than our own and recognize maybe only that there but for the grace of God, go I.

The temptation to under-belief, no belief, or over belief is great in times like ours before the virus and even more so now in the midst of the pandemic when we allow ourselves to forget or dismiss the suffering of our world.

I have suggested before that you take a picture from the newspaper or an image from the television or your computer screen of the suffering of another and hold that image in your mind and let it move to your heart, that is prayer, when you allow your heart to touch the suffering of another.

Take an image of your own mother, especially if she is gone, and remembering that none among us is perfect follow that image into your heart and just hold it there, no words are necessary but they can be wonderful, no formulas, nothing but the still holding of an image of love which can open us to all Love for just a minute or two.

In our theology called, The Mystical Body of Christ, we are all held together in the heart of Christ, all of us.

Now to the issue of reopening for Sunday Mass. In the materials prepared by our diocese there are some bullet points that Bishop McClory wanted emphasized. I take particular note of the following:

We want to get this right, not rushed.

Don't open if you're not ready.

We are not ready, and I do not want to be a test case of a rushed reopening and see that it was a tragic mistake. No parish in our diocese is required to start public Masses and I suspect many will but we will wait and see how that goes.

We will watch very closely the actual numbers in Lake County, I will continue to consult with public health authorities as I have been, and we will consider all of the contingency issues that need to be firmly established and in place before we issue a plan for reopening.

Our reopening will unfold in stages and you have to accept and realize that we cannot begin where we left off. It is too soon to speculate on dates.

We will have to observe diocesan and public health rules regarding distancing and capacity density so you will not just be able to walk up for a Mass but will need to be pre-registered in advance and you will not be able to sit anywhere as seating will be pre-assigned but you will be at Mass in our church with some of the familiar faces and sounds and customs but not all and not all at once.

I believe that we can come up with a plan that is far more gentle with much kinder language and not make the Mass a mechanical operation but a human experience in spite of the dehumanizing power of this virus.

We will eliminate the idea of invitation and exclusion of anyone other than someone who is or feels sick, so that people over 65 will decide if they want to come. I am thinking of increasing the number of Masses on the weekend so that each weekend we can accommodate more people and respect the capacity limits for each Mass.

It will not be the same as we left, just yet, but if we do this in a smart and cautious manner with expert health care people involved we will be taking care of ourselves and our fellow human beings and not go the "Mass at all costs" route only to realize too late that the virus has not conformed to diocesan plans and as a result leave more suffering and death in our wake that was not necessary.

Thank you for your trust in me and thank you for your care of me.

