



Confessions from a Chaplain/Priest

Grace and peace to you from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit nudged me to share my Lenten reflection and thoughts. I recently read 2nd Corinthians 1:1-7 and the words gave me hope as I sought consolation from God. In the last two years, I have worked in conditions and experiences I would have never imagined. I worked each day as a disciple of Christ serving in God's Church and in the mission field. I have also experienced more emotions and frustration than I thought was possible. In the end though, *"God is great all the time and all the time, God is Great"*. I wanted to share my reflections and thoughts I have wrestled with these last few weeks, especially as we come into Easter.

It has been so wonderful getting our church services going again and those who have come back are overjoyed to be back together again. There have also been questions as to why church attendance seems to be low. I have heard many reasons and stories why attendance is low at church and in every conversation I hear, I affirm what I have been told. What I have not been able to articulate or share is the deep grief I feel when many of the seats are empty on Sunday. I affirm and validate all the reasons I am given as to why people choose not to come to church; it just doesn't take away the sadness I feel. I have come to the realization: I truly miss people I have come to care about and love deeply. The last two years have made many of us take stock in what is important in our life, including family, jobs and even leisure. What has been very challenging for me is seeing where God and the Church fit in that equation. I understand church attendance is not discipleship or even holiness for that matter, but attendance at church is usually where we see many disciples in one place. I am on a quest to visit with as many of the parish members outside of worship as much as I can. In the meantime, I am at a loss at what it will take to get people to put fellowship and worship back as a priority, not for the sake of numbers, but for the sake of the Gospel.

We are rapidly approaching Palm Sunday, Holy week, and Easter! There is something to be said about experiencing not only the triumphant entry of Christ into Jerusalem, but also our triumphant entry back to Church. We are a caring and a loving faith community that thrives on the fellowship and love we have for each other in worship. My hopes and prayers are like the cycle of Winter turning into Spring, the image of where we see new life again after a dormant period. I have seen the logs in the pond at church overflowing with turtles; there is hope indeed. I also liken it to the empty tomb: as Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, so will the Church be. To God be the Glory!

In Christ, Fr. Paul+

*"Our Mission is to bear witness to God's love and invite, encourage,
and prepare God's people to share that grace with others."*