

May 2021 Pastoral Message

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. – Romans 12:15

Beloved family and friends of the Neighbors in Christ Parish,

Welcome to May! Is it me or has this year flown by so quickly? It feels like we were still in our winter jackets last week...wait we were. But May is here, so maybe NOW the temps will be above average and the buds on the trees can come into full bloom. If you haven't seen them yet, the flowers and plants are slowly but surely poking their heads up out of the ground and are coming back. Resurrection and new life have returned to where we live, work, and play.

This month I want to share with you some of the insights I have been having over this Easter season. You may be aware that most of the assisted living and nursing homes in our greater area are also slowly but surely opening back up; they too are readjusting to this COVID normal we continue to get used to. I have made visits to the facilities in and around our greater parish communities: Gibbon, Winthrop, Fairfax, Hutchinson, New Ulm, and Gaylord. There are a lot more of them than we may think there are, and our congregational friends and family call them home.

Recently, I have been visiting with some folks who are new to the facilities and they also continue to adjust to the new normal as well. Some have transitioned from farm and two level homes to a simple apartment style room with an included bedroom and lavatory. This has been a significant change, but for the most part, they are getting used to the downsizing of their physical possessions and new homes. Most have moved into these facilities because of the necessity of being safe, but also the need for greater help and care looking in on them. Family and friends as care givers can only come so often. Others people have become new residents in these unfamiliar places because they are convalescing or healing after surgeries and medical procedures.

Depending on the time and place they have entered these facilities, and whether or not they have received a COVID vaccination (or two), they may have had to enter into a 10-14 day quarantine away from others inside and outside of the buildings. I know this has been difficult for some because of the isolation – isolation from family, friends, medical personnel, and simple physical and relational contact with other people. After all, we have been created to be in relationship with other people. But they have gotten through it, and for that I am pleased. The toll of not seeing or being with anyone that you are close to, other than through a phone call, is a lot different than what some have been used to.

Yesterday, I visited an angelic soul who is healing from a surgery that keeps her from being able to move around on her own. She also has trouble seeing so that makes her days a bit more tricky as well. We talked about what it is like for her to continually adjust each and every day to her new surroundings. We talked about her family bringing in some more pictures and

decorations for her room and that brought a beautiful smile to her face, and I also complimented her on the gorgeous looking orchid in her room. It radiates a purple color on the window sill where it is situated in the room. She is so happy about that.

I also reminded her that God, through a resurrected Jesus Christ, was in her room too. And that smile came back. Reminding her of our Lord and Savior gave her something else to ponder in her days, often silent and by herself. Even though she knew it, it was a welcomed relief to hear that good news from someone else, especially in this the season of new life and healing. I continued in that message through prayers of healing, thanksgiving, hope, peace, and assurance, and then we celebrated our Lord's Supper together. I personalized it more than it is...because Holy Communion is an absolute in personalization...and again reminded her of the bread and wine, and how the body and blood of Christ is given and shed for her...for all. That made both of us happy, and for that I again give thanks and praise to God.

This month, I would like to encourage you to add those in nursing homes and assisted living facilities to your devotionals and prayer concerns. Maybe even consider dropping a card in the mail and letting them know that you are thinking of them, and wish them well. And if you are up for it, possibly even stopping by where they are and visiting for a little while. Most facilities now require a phone call for visits, or an on-line scheduled appointment to enter into the buildings, but they are quite simple to set up. If you choose to go that route, you'll be screened for COVID symptoms when you enter, have your temperature taken, sign a simple release form, and off you go. If you are unclear where they are living, as me and we can go from there.

This past year has been so difficult for so many of us. And in my opinion, even more difficult for those in nursing and assisted living facilities. Though we may see the places as we drive by, those looking out from their windows have found it extremely hard because of the safety precautions and isolation from the outside world. But as the COVID hoops we have been jumping through relax, it is now even easier to see those whom we have missed and continue to miss in our lives. There are smiles awaiting us behind those closed doors...smiles that we can share with others and let them know that they are loved and are not forgotten.

God bless you; I'll see you again soon, and may the peace of the resurrected Christ be with you now and all the days of your life.

Rev. Erik Karlson
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