

*St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church*  
316 Queenston Street St. Catharines, ON, L2P 2X4

**Pastoral Ponderings in a Time of Pandemic**

Did you notice that Lent was extra special this year? Did you notice that Easter was extra special this year? Did you notice?

Lent is a time of emptying our lives of things that lead us away from God. Lent is a time of emptiness like when the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years. Why the desert? Because deserts are empty and this would make the Israelites totally dependent on God for everything. Speaking of empty, was Lent special to you this year?

We could not worship in our churches this Lent and Easter, the churches were empty. Perhaps the message here is that though we miss worshipping and praying in the brick and mortar of our buildings, we, the people, are the living stones of the Church, the Body of Christ. In or out of the building we should be more afraid of the things Jesus came to save us from, sin, and death of the soul.

Did you notice that Our Lord and Saviour did this on Good Friday, after he left us the Holy Eucharist the night before as His living presence among us for all eternity? Did you notice?

Did you notice the quietness of the tomb on Holy Saturday? Did you notice the empty tomb on Easter Sunday?

Another message is that before miracles can occur there has to be suffering. As far as I can see there are no miracles in the Bible without suffering. The miracle of the empty tomb could only have come after great suffering.

Exile is one of the themes running through Sacred Scriptures. We are in a kind of exile now. Exile for the ancient Hebrews as slaves in Egypt, exile of the Israelites in Babylon, exile of the Holy Family to escape Herod. There are many more examples. Before a miracle there must be suffering, before the Promised Land there must be suffering and in every case there is a homecoming. We cannot possibly understand Easter without understanding Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday is totally impossible.

Quarantine comes from the Latin and means a length of time, i.e., 40 days. We are still in quarantine now and hopefully this time of quarantine will cleanse us physically and spiritually. Moses spent 40 days on the mountain, Elijah spent 40 days on the mountain with nothing but the power of God to sustain them, as did Jesus, in the desert, a period of fasting and cleansing and a renewal of faith. In other words quarantine is another word for Lent.

Let us continue to be cleansed of the contagion of the virus and all other negative things in our lives and through prayer, charity and almsgiving, helping and praying for others and that we accept the salvation offered to us through our Lord and Saviour and know why. Meanwhile I continue to celebrate the Holy Mass privately in the rectory and will honor any mass intentions that you give to April.

Please accept these humble ponderings from one in exile like yourselves and that can only skim the surface of what can be pondered at this unique time.

So continue to ponder the themes I have so inadequately set before you, emptiness, exile and quarantine and remember that Lent and Easter are much more than seasons of the Church year, but a way of life.

**God bless, from your pondering pastor,**

**Fr. Charles**