

My brothers and sisters in the Lord,

Under the circumstances of limited social interaction, we are not publishing the bulletin in its usual format yet I still want to maintain some contact with you through a weekly column. First of all, I wish to reflect with you on the beautiful Gospel for this weekend, the story of Lazarus being resuscitated from the dead. It is a powerful story with a hopeful message for all of us: death does not have the “last word.” We believe in Christ’s Resurrection and our share in it.

A curious detail in this story that probably bothers most people - as it did Martha and Mary, his sisters - is the fact that Jesus waited several days before He chose to go and visit them and care for Lazarus in his need. Why didn’t Jesus go immediately? It would appear that Jesus deliberately waited so that Lazarus would truly be dead and buried and then some greater sign could happen rather than just Jesus curing him from a severe illness.

When we think about it, sometimes God appears to be “dragging His feet” when we are dealing with suffering and problems. We are used to quick and immediate answers. Right now God seems to be asking us to trust His loving care even in this uncertain period in which we cannot control things. We have to trust that by following the wisdom of the medical profession and our leaders that eventually we will be able to survive this Corona Virus. It is not easy to watch and wait but in a very real sense that is a major aspect of the act of faith. It struck me that perhaps we could say that this year our Lent is actually an “Advent”: we are waiting for an uncertain period of time for the resolution of things. God seems to let things run their course and so let us continue to pray and hope and try to make this very act of waiting an act of faith and love. Sometimes when we have to wait it helps clarify and purify what really matters most!

Pope Francis recently issued a special message that he is granting a plenary indulgence for anyone suffering from the Corona Virus, for those caring for someone with the Corona virus and those who are in the medical field dealing with this disease day in and day out. The plenary indulgence includes forgiveness of sins and the punishment due for the sins. Therefore, if a person is perhaps at the end of his or her life because of the virus or is severely threatened, that person need not be anointed. By making an act of contrition best as possible and Our Father and Hail Mary for the Pope's intention, since other means are not available, the person(s) would enjoy God's merciful healing. Please convey this hopeful message to anyone who would be worried or anxious as he or she might be facing the real possibility of dying.

As of this writing, still no word yet about Holy Week but my instincts are we will be celebrating Holy Week in a different format – probably through Livestream. I hope you are joining us through Livestream. The Daily Mass is livestreamed at 6:00 am Monday – Saturday and the Sunday Mass at 10:00 am. In all cases, the Masses, my talks and other devotions such as Stations of the Cross are then immediately archived: for example, you can find all four of my one-hour long Lenten talks on healing on our website. Also, please keep watching our website for new original content such as some short meditations that I will be offering for everyone's spiritual renewal.

Thank you for your faith and for your generosity to the parish. Many of you are mailing in or dropping off your weekly contributions and that is greatly appreciated. Please know of my prayers and do not hesitate to call the parish line if there is some special need.

With prayers and loving affection always,
Msgr. Zenz