

## Pastoral Letter

Dear Christian Friends,

Jesus says in St. Matthew's Gospel, "do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (6:34).

Later in the same Gospel Jesus also says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (11:28-29)

The news over the last several weeks has been concerning in so many ways, from health woes to economic woes as our world grapples with the reality of COVID-19. There are any number of responses that we have seen from apathy and ignoring the situation to the hoarding of toilet paper and bottled water. I'm not so sure that any of those responses have been helpful.

I encourage you to continue prudent cleanliness habits and the considerations of one's own health (and limitations). Along with the various physical preparations that we can take is the truth that it is for such times as these that a vibrant life of faith in Jesus is an incredibly valuable aspect of life. Was it not said of Jesus, "in him was life, and that light was the light of men. The light shines and the darkness has not overcome it"? (St. John 1:4-5)

I have had many conversations with my Brothers in Office all around the country over the last week, as well as speaking with our own congregation's leadership, concerning a path forward as a congregation in these uncertain times. In light of those conversations, and seeing the importance of a vibrant life of faith, we will continue to worship and study together as the people of God in Oak Creek.

The size of our congregation falls well within Gov. Evers' recommendation of gatherings being no larger than 250 people, and we also have plenty of room in our nave to spread out for the "social distancing" that's recommended by the state as well for those who wish to do so.

Along with this reasoning, while we respect the State and their pursuit of the health of our fellow citizens, the life of the Church is one of gathering around Word and Table to hear the Word of the Lord and receive His gifts of life, forgiveness, and salvation in the Eucharist (a very necessary thing in days like these).

Our janitorial staff is very conscientious about the care and cleaning of our facilities. Our Elders and Altar Guild are also very mindful about cleanliness when preparing the Sacrament of the Altar. We will continue our practice of distributing the Sacrament as we always have.

Please remember that you are free in Christ to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord, "the medicine of immortality" as St. Ignatius calls it, as your personal piety and concerns allow. You are also free in Christ to refrain, if it is a matter of concern for you. And, you are also free in Christ to remain at home if you are concerned about contact. Also, as we greet one another, please be aware of and respect each others' choice of physical contact and spatial awareness. Above all else, take to heart the words of Martin Luther, "Pray...and let God worry."

The Peace of Christ be with you all.

Rev. Matthew Uttenreither