

*“Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified.
He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said.”
(Matthew 28:5-6)*

I am often drawn to this reading from Matthew that describes Mary of Magdala’s reaction when the body of Jesus was not found in the tomb. There are so many ways that I can relate to Mary at this time - she was frightened, her sense of normalcy had been shaken. We have all found ourselves in this situation over the past year. I also reflect on the fact that she encountered the risen Christ outside, just as we have been doing on the green grass field for the past year. There is a sense of peace in the outdoors, a sense of authenticity that brings us back to the ancestors of our faith and, in fact, binds us with many of our contemporary brothers and sisters in Christ who worship outside for lack of a church.

The first communities of believers would gather together in communal life and share their collected belongings, caring for each other. I have witnessed this in our own time and in our own parish. So many of you have shared the beautiful and sacred action of taking food and other necessities to those who are in need. You are the living testimony of our faith, demonstrating in words and deeds that we are in solidarity with the suffering of Christ on the cross. Your generosity will always be blessed by God.

We also care for the health and safety of the general public. As more people receive a COVID-19 vaccine, we are still reminded to continue our health precautions by wearing masks, maintaining social distance, disinfecting our hands, and, of course, receiving our own vaccines as soon as possible, all of which are still vitally important to our community. This is important at our Masses, too, especially when we are celebrating Mass inside the church. Guarding the wellbeing of others, especially when it feels like a personal sacrifice, is another testimony that Christ is alive and well in our hearts and in our world.

I would like to point out that our holy Father, Pope Francis, has stated that receiving a vaccine against COVID-19 is a moral obligation. He, himself, has been fully vaccinated and encourages all people to receive their own vaccine out of Christian charity. Please be assured that all three of our priests, Fr. Juvy, Fr. Carlos, and myself, have been fully vaccinated and we still continue to take the necessary precautions (wearing masks, social distancing, and disinfecting our hands) to ensure your safety.

During this Easter season, I ask for your continued prayers for the people of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). The people of my birthplace are going through difficult times. Hundreds of people, including children as young as seven, have been killed because they wish to preserve democracy in their country. We, ourselves, know the blessings of living in a democratic society and we understand how precious and fragile democracy is. I assure you that I have let my family know that we are praying for them and this knowledge helps to keep their faith strong. They are grateful.

I am grateful, myself, for the many blessings God has bestowed on our personal lives and on the life of our parish. As many of you have mentioned, being able to safely celebrate Mass in our church again is a true blessing. We pray with excited expectation for the safe delivery and installation of our mosaic, altar, ambo, and presider’s chair, as well as the marble for the baptismal font, to complete the sanctuary renovation. I am grateful for the technology that allows us to now live-stream our Masses. (We will continue to live-stream the Saturday 4:00pm and 5:30pm Masses.) All of these up-grades to our church have been, and continue to be, made possible through your generous donations to the Pastoral Services Appeal. Thank you.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the St. Pius V staff and many volunteers who have worked so very hard this past year to keep our parish running smoothly. The myriad tasks, especially the setting up and taking down of the weekend Masses, takes considerable time and energy. Their assistance has been vital to our parish community.

This Easter season may bring us new challenges, but we have shown that we are able to meet challenges and bring our faith to life in our parish community. And so, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I greet you in the ancient tradition, as the first Christian communities would greet each other, “Χριστός ἀνέστη!” - “Christos Anesti!” (“Christ is risen!”) and I know that your response will be “Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη!” - “Alithos Anesti!” (“Truly He is Risen!”)

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Fr. Paw Lwin