

Living the Spirit
A Pandemic Letter

Dear Readers,

I admit that I have been remiss in my writing of inserts. I miss my loyal stuffers, who make this ministry of the word possible for me. Perhaps it is simply because there is no paper bulletin. That means I miss the joy of feeling useful.

The pandemic has certainly touched our lives in many ways. We would be foolish to think that it has not caused some disorientation in the spiritual aspects of life. There have been so many emotions that have invaded our normally ordered life. I have noted the confusion in the information given about the virus. Can one admit there is some fear that has touched us? We are left with advice about what we should do and we really do not like what we hear.

Many have been denied the presence of the Lord in the reception of the Eucharist. Our union with Christ in Holy Communion is a vital part of our spiritual life. It gives us grace, that is, a sharing in the very life of God. It is a mainstay of our spiritual activity. During this time we have been denied something of that special presence. Of course, Jesus is present in many other ways to us, but we miss the Eucharist.

As a priest I have been able to say Mass, and receive the Eucharist. But I would add what I heard just a day or so ago from Cardinal Dolan. The priest finds something missing in his celebration of a “private” Mass. It is the people. The Mass is for all of God’s holy people. How happy I am to be able once again to concelebrate and be with the faithful who have managed to come to Mass, with masks and all.

I have listened to many programs on TV. I have to say that I enjoy the Mass as televised by the University of Notre Dame. The Holy Cross Fathers have been creative in meeting the challenges the pandemic has provided. Last week Fr. Corpora described the Lord as relentless in his seeking out the sinner for forgiveness. He spoke of how those with a history of having a rough life have also found many blessings in their life journey. They make space for God and find His message of love for them.

Many times I have heard in these long months others speak on television about relationship. That was what I had taken up as a theme before the pandemic. Again I want to remind you that there really is a connection, a relationship between you and God. It is one of love, and with that love are so many of the virtues that adorn true love . There are such things as patience, humility, obedience to God’s commands, peace

The pandemic has made us sadly aware of evil in our world. No matter what good aims so many have, there is too much evil in our world today. We must weigh our judgments of what is happening with the scales of morality. I think real justice will always require giving to others what is their rightful due. We must pray that our society will find its way back to God in ways that make it a just society. A just country will be a happy country.

In this time it may happen that one has been experiencing isolation and loneliness. Years ago I read a book on that subject. Reading a book does not make the feeling of being alone go away. We must try to find God as present to us. We do well to find others as well. In them we try to see God. Most people have some goodness about them, even when they seem to be hiding it by their actions. Hear Jesus tell you to come to Him. He waits as always in good times and bad. He really is relentless – a good word to describe His desire in our regard.

When this pandemic is over, and we must trust it will someday be so, we will regain what we may have lost. Not lost perhaps, but allowed to be diminished. We will have ready for our acceptance the faith given us so long ago. We will find our family anew, even in the communion of the saints. We will have our parish, our neighborhood, our family, friends and all will be the subject of our hospitality, given and received.

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During this long time of quarantine I found myself remembering the past. My thoughts were much as one finds in Psalm 7 which tells us the author thought of days long past and remembered the years long past. I found myself aware of the many blessings of my past days and years and how they came to me as the people in my life.

Yesterday I recalled my maternal grandmother. I could tell many stories about her. She was born in Germany I 1873 and came with her family to the United States. She was for me a very Catholic woman.

When my grandfather died, my great Aunt Louise told my grandmother that she “could come back” to her original faith. She told Louise [and me] that she did not become a Catholic to marry my grandfather. She also did not allow Louise to say such things. As a youngster I wanted to know why and how she became a Catholic. She said that as a young girl in Germany she asked her father to let her go with a friend to the Catholic village at Christmas. There she went to the Catholic church. She told me, “I knew God was present there.” I asked why she knew it. She answered me: “The candles.”

I have thought about how much my faith has been supported by our Catholic liturgy and the special beauty of our churches. Have you ever thought about this? It is a beauty we desire to give to God in His churches, a beauty foreshadowing what is yet to come. How we want our churches to be open for us!

During this pandemic I have said Mass in a private way. I have heard Cardinal Dolan say he did the same, but there was something missing. It was the people. How happy I am now to be able at times to concelebrate the 6:45 AM Mass. I look out to the people. They are special to me, reminding me there really is a life of normality that is to come.

Know that you may be special to the priest celebrating the liturgy. But know more that you are special to God. He is present in our churches, waiting to love us. And yes, at Mass we have candles. [Do they keep our faith warm and bright?]

It is time for me to close this effort at being with you. I do so asking the Lord to bless you with whatever graces you need in whatever way you need them. Let us take time to remember the blessings we have received – and thank God for them!

God love you always!
Monsignor Morrison