



Church of the Holy Family
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3rd Sunday of Easter, Year A, 2020

Dear Parishioners of Holy Family Church

We have just entered the 4th month of the COVID-19 Pandemic since the first case in Singapore was announced by the authorities on 23rd Jan 2020. Now the number of infected cases here has entered the 5-figure range. I did not expect this to happen but it has. Indeed it has baffled many epistemologists and other experts all over the world in the way it spreads to and infects people. That goes to show that this virus is versatile and virulent. Thus we need to cooperate with our leaders if we are to score a victory over this pestilence.

The Gospel text prescribed by the Church for this Sunday is taken from St Luke's Emmaus episode of our Lord's Resurrection appearance. On the evening of the first Easter Sunday, He appeared to Cleopas (feast day: 25th Sep) and an anonymous disciple. Both were departing for Emmaus but they could not recognize him when he accompanied them. If Emmaus is 7 miles (11.2km) from Jerusalem, that journey would take about 2.5 - 3 hours to complete depending on the terrain and weather.

For 150 -180 minutes, Jesus was patiently explaining to these two disciples the way to understand the mission of His which did fulfill what promised by the oracles of the prophets. If the Risen Lord shows them and us His patience and offers mercy time and again, then let us convert the constraints of these 'Circuit Breaker Measures' into time, space and lessons for us to deepen our patience with one another, deepen our relationship with the Lord and deepen our prayer life.

Christ by his Paschal Mystery has overcome sin and death shows mercy and patience to St Peter who in the First Reading (Acts 2:14, 22-33) of this Sunday proclaims boldly and loudly about Jesus in front of the very people that fifty days earlier he denied knowing Him. Jesus though forsaken by Peter earlier was not abandoned to the grave but was raised by God the Father and this echoes the 3rd Stanza of the Responsorial Psalm (Ps 15).

The Risen Lord shall not abandon us to die and certainly in these uncertain times, the Lord is walking with us to assure us that we shall conquer this Pandemic. When we do so, we can realize that we can survive, adapt and move on without the need of the many conveniences of life that we have thought that we cannot do without. This, I believe is one of the messages that God has been trying to communicate to us that we do have time for Him and to go about continuing the mission of his Son our Risen Lord Jesus Christ on top of our pet projects, responsibilities, duties and assignments. All these we cannot do without his help and his grace.

We shall still need His assistance to put all the pieces of the puzzle together as we step into the future with faith and hope in God (2nd Reading, 1 Pet1:17-21) just as the two disciples bound for Emmaus humbly seek the Lord's wisdom. Also, some of these activities that we have learned to curtail- which we thought was impossible- also reduce our carbon footprint thereby reduce stress on the environment and our planet.

Today (26th April) is the feast day of Pope St Cletus (Anacletus), the first successor of St Peter. He too relied on the Lord's strength to step into the shoes of St Peter so as to lead and coordinate the efforts of the infant Church to continue the mission of Christ despite the persecutions and the Church never looked back. On 27th April, we have the feast day of St Zita, Patron Saint of domestic helpers and we can ask her to intercede for them and their families in their home countries. On 28th April, there is the feast day of St Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort; and St Peter Chanel. St Louis founded 4 religious orders to run schools and for overseas missions. St Peter Chanel is the Proto-Martyr of Oceania.

On 29th April, we celebrate the feast day of St Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Patroness of Italy and Europe and Doctor of the Church. She was the youngest of 25 children and her early childhood coincided with the outbreak of the Bubonic Pandemic of the Middle Ages yet she survived to contribute to the Church by her writings and courageous efforts to restore respect, dignity and integrity of the Papacy.

On 30th April, we have the feast day of Pope St Pius V who appealed for the Rosary to be prayed for the victory at the Battle of Lepanto and these prayers were heard. On 1st and 2nd May, we celebrate the feast days of St Joseph the Worker and St Athanasius, Doctor of the Church respectively.

Soon, we shall enter the month of May, the Marian month. Let us remember that our Mother Mary did move on from her 7 sorrows without doubting that cooperating with God's will is in her best interests under God's plan.

Next year, the Church in Singapore intends to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of her establishment. We can use this time to examine God's wisdom in guiding the trajectory local Church has grown and thank God for his love and care for our pioneer missionaries, the local clergy and the lay faithful who has stepped up to serve God through His Church.

Let us stay safe and ask the Lord to show us the path of Life (Resp. Ps), Alleluia!

Fr Stanislaus PANG