

Did you miss it? That's a question I've been asking myself lately. Did you miss it? Not exactly "take it for granted" but assume that it would always be there. Or at the very least, that it wouldn't be gone overnight. Did you miss seeing what was right in front of you until mid-March when everything seemed to change overnight? I've realized that I missed seeing a number of things . . . now that those things have been taken away from me. I've realized this because now I **long** for them, I *miss* them. What do you miss from before? What do *I* miss? Probably many of the same things that you do: I miss seeing my friends. I miss going to classes. I miss baseball . . . I miss the Eucharist. I miss my ministries. I miss being able to go to the grocery store without a mask, nitrile gloves, Clorox wipes, and quarantining my food in the garage! . . . I miss hugging my parents. Did I miss out on fully experiencing these things before the pandemic? Maybe not always . . . but definitely sometimes.

All of these things that we **long for**, from before, are the things that are important to us which we have lost. Losing these things is difficult. It is sometimes painful. Great or small, we are all **suffering** to some degree because of the virus. I know that I am. And I know that **if** I am suffering **then** it is because something important was lost, something I love. The greater the love, the greater the suffering. We suffer from the loss of health, relationships, career, life . . . and yet this suffering can demonstrate to us what is really important in our life.

In our reading tonight, St. Paul talks about suffering. Although different, there are parallels between what St. Paul experienced and what we are experiencing. St. Paul suffered; and we are suffering now. Later in this same letter, he provides a list of his sufferings. Perhaps his list is more dramatic than our own with talk of “beatings and imprisonments” but our sufferings, and his, are sacrificial in nature. They are Christ-like. St. Paul **endured** these things for the betterment of others. He was called by Jesus to proclaim the good news and often, it

wasn't easy. Why are we quarantining if it is not for the **betterment** of others? We certainly do not want to get sick but the real point is that do not want to unwittingly hurt another by spreading the virus. And so we allow these things to be so as to save others.

St. Paul tells the Corinthians that despite everything he endures that he is **renewed** each day. He finds the strength to endure --- and is renewed by the same thing: his faith in Jesus. It was *Jesus* who called him; it was *Jesus* who gave him purpose; it was *Jesus* who gave him strength. And it is this same *Jesus* who is calling us, giving us purpose, giving us strength to endure and be renewed, especially in this time. Where is Jesus during this time? This time of forced separation from so much that we cherish? Even from the celebration of the Eucharist? He is found in the silent and spoken prayers in our heart. He is found in the blessings of technology which allows us to gather for Mass: virtually in a physical way, and literally in a spiritual way. He is found in families eating meals together again. He is found in us every time we put on a

mask and gloves to protect others. No matter the circumstances Jesus is with us before, now, and tomorrow.

It is our **knowledge** that Jesus is with us in this time that helps us to see through to the other side. We do not know how long this so called “new normal” will last but we know that it will not be forever. Only one thing is forever, God and His love. St. Paul points us in this direction comparing the weight of his “present burden” against the “eternal weight of glory”. He knew what, he knew WHO, was on the other side of his “transitory” moment. It is the same for us. Once churches and schools and businesses are reopened, once we can embrace one another, once the umpire again says “Play Ball”, we can return to the “old normal” or, maybe, we can remember the sense of loss we are feeling now. Maybe, we can try a little bit harder not to **miss** those things in life which we should appreciate, those **blessings** from God right in front of us.

And when **this** transitory moment we-call-life is complete, and we are standing before our Savior, if He asks “what did you miss?” we can answer with confidence “Nothing!”