



## The Crossroads

April 2020

### Searching for God

Someone said that “this is the Lentiest Lent we’ve ever Lented!” I guess I would have to agree. I mean I could say that I gave up watching sports for Lent...it wouldn’t be a lie, but it wouldn’t take much discipline to do so either. This is an unprecedented time in the life of the church...unless, of course, you go back to the Spanish Flu (wasn’t from Spain...the same as Corona Beer doesn’t cause the Coronavirus!) when millions of people died of a pandemic viral outbreak.

It’s in times like these that we often ask ourselves, “Where is God in all this?” God is always with us. God is in the neighbor who calls to check up on us. God is in the relationships we develop virtually. God is in the small business owner struggling to sell their wares and the people who buy them. God is in our online worship services. God is with all the healthcare professionals who are self-quarantining so not to further spread this virus to their loved ones. God is with us in our anxiety about what to expect next. God is with us.

I choose to look for the positives in dark situations. We all have more time to pray and reflect on our daily routines which are now so far out of whack. We finish up those projects we never made time to complete. We no longer take for granted a simple handshake or the kiss of Peace. We have time to cook thoughtful meals and share quality time with loved ones as we sit down to a family dinner. We look forward to going back to work to a job we didn’t know we would miss so much.

I’m guessing that the state of affairs will get worse before it gets better. But it will get better! As people of Easter, we know that we must first suffer the Cross before we can celebrate the empty tomb. These words may not alleviate that suffering, but they do offer hope!

As we contemplate how to best offer our services in a safe and meaningful way, please know that you all are in my daily devotions and that I love you all very much. We will be stronger for enduring. And God’s presence is assured through the power of the Resurrection!

And please always remember that I am socially distancing yours in Christ’s love,

Fr Jeff+

## **Church Announcements**

Special thanks to John Costianes for his many years of usher service as he will be rotating off the schedule soon. Many thanks to John for his many years of taking on these responsibilities.

## **COVID-19 and the Church**

### **Palm Sunday**

Though we are unable to celebrate Palm Sunday congregated together, we will be offering something called “Palms to Go”! This is an opportunity to honor this sacred day by driving up to the church to pick up a palm leaf along with a printed Triduum booklet of all of the services in holy week. These services will continue to be broadcasted online at our Facebook and YouTube pages along with at our website. Non-perishable food donations will be collected for the Lincoln School Pantry and Warren Family Mission. If you are able, this is also a time in which you can drop off your pledges which are so desperately needed. This contact-free worship alternative will be available from 9:00 to 11:00 with service airing at 10:00.

### **Maundy Thursday/Good Friday/Easter**

If you can't make it on Palm Sunday to pick up a copy of the Triduum booklet, it will also be available on our website! Services will be aired at the following times:

Maundy Thursday: 5:00 pm

Good Friday: 12:00 pm

Easter: 10:00 am

### **Toastmasters**

The WarrenOhio Toastmasters who use our building twice per month will start virtual meetings through Zoom beginning 3/28 and continuing until the Club can start meeting once again in person.

### **Lincoln School Pantry and Warren Family Missions**

Warren City Schools closed on March 12<sup>th</sup>. Since that time there have been no Blessing Box items delivered. In communication with Lincoln's staff I have learned that Monday thru Friday between 11 am to 1 pm curbside school lunches are available for pick up. In addition, the School Pantry is open. Second Harvest continues to deliver as before the school closing. Despite the school being closed opportunities still exist.

Second Harvest was contacted to ascertain if a donation could be designated for a specific organization/program. It is possible providing the donor has designated the recipient

organization/program. Since CEC is closed regular donations to the Blessing Box are not possible. If your circumstances permit please consider a donation to Second Harvest Food Bank (2805 Salt Springs Rd. Youngstown, Ohio 44509.) Please note Lincoln School Pantry on your check.

Palms to Go is an unexpected opportunity to support the Lincoln School Pantry and the Warren Family Mission. There will be a collection box for non-perishable food and necessity items to be donated. Please put your donation in a plastic bag and it will be collected at the drive thru.

Once again thank-you for caring. Please stay safe.

## **Security**

Even though the church is not being used, we still need to go in to insure that the roof is not leaking, the furnace is working, and the building is secure. The sextons are not there to look for these things.

Continue to sign the log book. -Steve

## **Disruptive Behavior Policy**

Christ Church vestry may deny entry to the church property, or attendance at any church service or function, to any congregation member, congregational friend, or visitor deemed to be disruptive or harmful to the church. This behavior includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. Threats to the safety of any adult or child.
2. The disruption of worship services, church functions, or church activities.

If a congregant, friend, or visitor's behavior warrants immediate action, such action will be taken by a vestry member, a responsible church member and/or the rector. This may include asking the offending person(s) to leave the property, or suspending the meeting or activity until such time as it can be safely resumed. If further assistance is necessary, the police department may be called. If not directly involved, the members of the vestry or rector must be notified of this action as soon as possible.

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There are a wide variety of resources available at the diocese website regarding COVID-19. To access them, go to [dohio.org](http://dohio.org) and scroll down to "Resources During the Coronavirus Pandemic". There you will find everything from PDF



versions of the Book of Common Prayer to information about protecting your family's mental health during this time.

**Tuesday, March 24, 2020**

**3:00 p.m.**

### **A Message from the Bishop**

It is hard to live with ambiguity, especially perhaps for us who have so great an access to certainty in our scientific and technological age. Between Google and the Weather Channel, we can get answers to many of the questions that cause us even the slightest bit of anxiety. Our current health crisis takes this challenge to a new level, even for those who have experienced the ambiguity of a serious health diagnosis or an extreme loss of emotional or financial security.

Perhaps because signs of uncertainty are currently ubiquitous, we cannot help asking ourselves, one another, and God questions that have no ready answers. How long will this last? Am I carrying the virus? Is the tickle in my throat serious? When will we be permitted to go out, to congregate, to give or receive a hug? When can we go back to church? Will I have enough money to get food and other essentials?

It may not so much be specific answers that I am looking for, as it is some semblance of certitude that I crave, some bit of normality for which I yearn. When I wake up in the morning I take my temperature to see whether it, at least, is "normal." Sometimes, I have checked it later in the day, just to see if it has abandoned me yet. When I take a walk with one of the dogs, I carry my phone in case I am needed, and it takes more discipline than I care to admit to keep from pulling it out simply to see if there is some new and unimagined piece of information that might provide the slightest security.

The Gospels are full of stories about people yearning for some certitude in the midst of ambiguity. And Jesus consistently responds to them and to us that life is uncertain, but the love of God is not. Indeed, it is the love of God in the companionship of Christ Jesus that leads us to live creatively amidst the vicissitudes and vagaries of our earthly existence. To be sure, in the coming days and weeks some of our questions will be answered. Some of those answers will be welcome, some disappointing, some discouraging, and some, perhaps, devastating. We will, nevertheless, continue to be faced with ambiguity, as that is largely the nature of this life. And we will always have the Gospels to turn to for the companionship of Jesus and those into whose ambiguity he walked time and again.

This morning, on my walk with Rascal the Uberhund, we heard a woodpecker high in the trees and saw a young hawk take flight. We came upon a red-winged blackbird in the bulrushes on the bank of Horseshoe Lake, which has been drained for a coronavirus-delayed dam repair. The little, black bird with his red and gold epaulets allowed us to walk within a couple of feet of him, defying all

expectations of “social distancing.” I wondered whether he had recently returned from his winter migration to some southern state, and the thought of that regular, instinctual journey gave me a lift. Later, after hearing a woodpecker high in the trees and the plaintive song of a mourning dove, we passed a fellow walker going in the other direction. Greeting one another from opposite sides the street, I remarked on how quiet it was. She replied, “It’s desolate.” It made me wonder whether she was referring to the absence of foot and automobile traffic or to how she was feeling.

Living in a desolate moment does not necessarily lead to desolation of the spirit and soul. It may increase our vulnerability to it, but need not leave us in despair. In this uncertain time, surely St. Paul’s words to the church in Rome speak with all the certainty we need:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

You are in my prayers.

The Rt. Rev. Mark Hollingsworth, Jr.  
Bishop of Ohio