

Ironically in our present circumstances, this fourth Sunday of Lent is traditionally named “Laetare” Sunday – “Rejoice” Sunday. This is taken from the Entrance Antiphon at the opening of Mass: “Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful...exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.” This Sunday (also Mother’s Day) is seen as being well on our way in Lent towards the joy of the Resurrection at Easter.

It is ironic that this particular Sunday is the first Sunday, possibly for some time, that we are forced not to celebrate Masses with a congregation because of the current public health emergency. And yet, those words of the Antiphon remind us of God’s closeness to us and our faith in Him. God invites us to nestle into his consoling presence, whether we are a child, a family, a couple or on our own.

Only last Sunday we heard Jesus say in the Gospel, speaking to the woman at the well: “The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem...the hour will come – in fact it is here already – when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.” That hour has come for us now.

The Word of God for this Sunday speaks, in fact, very appropriately to our current situation. The theme is that we should open our eyes to God’s presence in each of our lives and see clearly what is truly important to us: God’s love for us and our compassion and love for each other. They are what makes us truly human in God’s original and undying plan for us.

In the so familiar and comforting Psalm (*The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want*) we are encouraged to make these our own words in response to God: “If I should walk in the valley of darkness, no evil would I fear. You are there with your crook and your staff; with these you give me comfort.”

This needs to be our mantra for the coming weeks. We continue to pray as one community, not just in this parish but world-wide as Christ’s disciples and, in his words, “friends.” We pray, after all, to “OUR Father”, wherever we are.

Like the man born blind, whom Jesus heals in this Sunday’s Gospel, let us open our eyes to the presence of Christ right beside us in each one of our lives and to the needs of each other. The current situation reduces our lives to our core humanity, where, even in its suffering and pain, we will find a thing of great beauty dreamt up by God himself - the individual that you are and whom God gave to the world. With eyes wide open we can see ourselves fashioned in God’s image and never abandoned by God.

In solidarity, let us keep each other in prayer, admitting our anxiety, anger, fear and frustration, but relying on the love of Jesus and, like the beloved disciple at the Last Supper, leaning on the breast of our Lord.