

Dear Parishioners of St. Lawrence Church,

I hope that all of you are keeping safe and that you are well and healthy! This is such a difficult time for our world and I'm sure that many, if not most of you, have doubts and questions regarding God's "plan" in all of this. I, for one, do not know - this is a philosophical question and unnecessary suffering only makes sense in light of the Cross of Jesus. How a loving God and Father could allow His only begotten Son to undergo such cruelty, humiliation, sorrow, torture and death! It's no coincidence that Covid-19 is plaguing our world during the Season of Lent when we are particularly called to reflect upon Our Lord's sorrowful Passion. I know that God does not 'will' the Corona Virus for humanity, just as He did not 'will' the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus 2,000 years ago. However, God allowed His Son to suffer and die in order that all of us, His beloved children, could be redeemed and inherit life everlasting! Perhaps God is inviting the world to share in the agony of Christ in order that we might understand His plight better ... we really cannot know for sure. Yet as a people of faith, we are called to trust in God and to realize that ultimately, we will prevail and we will emerge stronger and better than ever before.

All of this reminds me a bit of Hurricane Sandy, and how devastating it was to our church - my goodness, did the Archdiocese ever come so close to actually shutting the doors on St. Lawrence Church once and for all. However, all of you prevailed! You never gave up on YOUR spiritual home here in Weehawken and because of that, I'm sure that your faith is stronger now than it was 10 years ago. In like manner, we will all face this challenge together and I know that Saint Lawrence himself will bless us with the gift of patience and perseverance from above.

Up until a few days ago, I had informed all of you that I would keep the church doors open on Sunday mornings for private worship and adoration of The Blessed Sacrament. Sadly, the Archdiocese has mandated that all doors to all churches within the Archdiocese are to remain closed (that is, until further notice) - even on Sundays. While I may not be in agreement with these extreme measures, I made a promise of obedience to the Archbishop at my ordination and as a result, I have no other choice but to comply. Now, I could bend the rules, and ignore this directive, but that would be disrespectful to Cardinal Tobin, and as the Shepherd of the Archdiocese of Newark, it is God's will that I obey and comply with his wishes. Obviously, Cardinal Tobin is a very intelligent and wise man, and given the unprecedented nature of what is happening in our world today, I trust

that his decision was made for our protection and that he is doing the best he can - and that is all God asks of him!

As mentioned above, I know that you are all resilient, given your prior history with Hurricane Sandy and that you will not let this deter you or shake your faith. Before we know it, we will once again congregate in our pretty little church and sing God's praises together. I ask you, on behalf of Cardinal Tobin and the Archdiocese of Newark, to please be patient and bear with us as our community tries its best to conquer this hidden evil and illness of Covid-19. I really do miss all of you and I pray that God, in His clemency, will guide us in ways that are level and smooth. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. May God bless you and Mary keep you!

Sincerely in Christ,~Fr. Eric