

Dear Friends of St. Lawrence,

Thank you so much for the outpouring of financial support - so many of you have responded extremely generously, and for that, I do not really have any words to properly express my gratitude!

There is no question that this Holy Week is one for the records - the world is shut-down, and sadly, this extends even to our churches. We are not able to worship the Risen Lord as we would normally do on Easter Sunday, and there is an obvious sense of loss we're all feeling. It reminds me of that very first Easter Sunday Morning 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem when Mary Magdalene went to visit the tomb of Jesus, and He wasn't there. Remember how dumbfounded she was - how overcome with sorrow and grief over what she perceived as her very own sense of loss - she thought that the gardener had taken the Body of Jesus and placed It elsewhere. Just imagine her horror ... what should have been a glorious Sunday morning, quickly became one of crisis and mystery. And how many of us feel that way? We're looking for Christ in our churches, yet due to the statewide mandate, our church doors are locked and like Mary Magdalene, we cannot pay tribute to Him where He really ought to be. Therefore, our encounter of the Risen Lord is very much like that of Mary Magdalene, and it's really quite painful.

Throughout the last several weeks, many of you have been sharing with me your own insights and how seemingly strange it is that the Corona Virus is hitting it's apex during Holy Week. Your thoughts and words have been very wise and very comforting. As this pandemic drags on, many of us find ourselves bored, uncertain about the future and even depressed. These are all natural human reactions to this crisis. Just do not allow yourselves to become **discouraged**. When I was in the seminary, I had a very wise, learned and holy spiritual director (now known to us as Bishop John Flesey) whom I would go to on a biweekly basis. Like any seminarian studying for and preparing for future priestly ministry, I experienced a vast array of emotions, and more times than I'd care to remember, I had my fair share of frustrations and doubts. However, he would always, say something along the lines of "Eric, I know priestly formation is a difficult process and you are entitled to your feelings, just don't ever get **discouraged** because *discouragement* is the favorite choice of weapon that Satan uses against us." How true that is, especially in these unfortunate times. We can feel sad and we can mourn and we can shake our fists at the world, but we must not allow the devil to rob us of the hope, courage and faith that this terrible virus will pass (and it most certainly will). My friends, push yourselves to not allow Satan to conquer your

spirits - he will dampen them, but he cannot claim victory over them so long as we anchor ourselves in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Passion, Death and Resurrection. Let us pray for a speedy end to this terrible affliction and pray also for our health care professionals who are doing their best to minister to the sick and the dying.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,
Fr. Eric