

Reflection for Thursday of Easter week 16/4/20

As we continue to celebrate the Easter season during these abnormal times it is a great temptation to think that Easter is over, Jesus has risen from the dead and there's not much more to learn. But nothing could be further from the truth as we can see from the gospel reading of today's Mass. It is so uplifting and inspirational I have decided to include an extract here:

Luke 24: 35-48 ...why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and feet. Their joy was so great that they still could not believe it, and they stood there dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes.

He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'

At the current time it is very difficult for us to preach 'repentance to all the nations' as we are commanded by Jesus and equally it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to receive the sacraments, especially confession and Holy Communion. But the Church, whom we sometimes call a Holy Mother, has not left us as orphans. If you are wondering how we can receive grace during this time of lockdown there are many opportunities, it all depends on our intentions.

If going to confession isn't possible then make an act of perfect contrition telling God from your heart that you are sorry for your sins, telling God you will try to do better from now on. This is called a firm purpose of amendment. The catechism tells us that the greatest act of a penitent is contrition, true sorrow for sins. If we do this, God will

forgive all our sins, even mortal sins as long as we have the intention of returning to the sacraments as soon as possible.

Similarly, what can you do if it's not possible to receive Our Lord in Holy Communion? We can make a spiritual communion. The prayer of St Alphonsus for making a spiritual communion is well known and available on this website. It's important that you tell Our Lord that receiving Holy Communion is something you desire with all your heart even though it's not physically possible at this time. You will then receive the graces you would have received in Holy Communion during Mass as long as you have the intention of returning to the sacraments as soon as possible.

Another opportunity we can take advantage of at this time is making a plenary indulgence. This can be a great comfort and consolation for us because we can apply it to ourselves and to those we love who have died and gone before us marked with the sign of faith. As well as saying prayers for the intentions of our Holy Father the Pope we need to go to confession and receive Holy Communion to satisfy the requirements for a plenary indulgence. In these extraordinary times an act of perfect contrition and spiritual communion is sufficient. If you are familiar with the Chaplet of Divine Mercy you can recite this devotion for those affected by the virus and obtain a plenary indulgence for them even if you don't know them personally.

To conclude I would like to give you a quotation from Pope Benedict XVI which may help us in our spiritual lives when we are deprived of the sacraments;

‘...sometimes we need to experience hunger, spiritual and physical, to appreciate once again the Lord's gifts and to understand the suffering of our brothers and sisters who are hungry. Bodily and spiritual fasting is a way of love.’

May the Spirit guide our hearts and keep us close to the Risen Lord.

Deacon Kevin