

Dearly Beloved,

This morning I got up sooner than I thought it was. Surprise! These days seem to be full of surprises, many unwanted. I went ahead with my routine, trying to not wake up Jane, shaved, got dressed and went outside. It was a wonderful surprise that greeted me. It was dark, cool, and very clear. In the dark sky above me there were stars, beautiful, brilliant stars. I thought of the dark, thick, threatening veil over us all at this time and as I looked at those stars I was reminded again to see them as pinholes revealing the light that shines in the darkness for us, that light, that Love that no darkness can put out.

It is no surprise if you are grieving in the midst of what we are all going through. I am grieving many losses. I'm grieving with a widow who is having to delay the funeral for her husband and can't be physically comforted by her friends and me. I am grieving the cancellation of the public graduation ceremony for those graduating from Oregon State, which includes our granddaughter. I am grieving over our not being able to celebrate Holy Week together as has been our custom. I've heard many lamenting that we can't celebrate Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter this year.

Grieving the loss of people we have loved and the loss of anything we have cherished is natural and normal. We don't grieve the loss of someone, or something that wasn't important to us. But, having said that, we do not have to grieve as people without HOPE. To hope in the midst of loss is to believe and trust in that light that shines in the darkness that can't put it out. It is to believe and trust that God has not led us this far to leave us where we are now.

We can and we must still celebrate what is important to us in the days of Holy Week, but we will have to do that differently. No, our ways of doing that will not, cannot be the same as what we have been accustomed to, but we must not surrender to the present darkness our relationship with Jesus and his abiding presence and promise to love us through this.

Tomorrow I will send another email to you with suggestions on ways to celebrate Holy Week and Easter at home. In my suggestions I will have in mind that some of us are the only person in our home, while others live with other people. They will be suggestions that I pray will encourage you to celebrate, but possibly to be more creative if you feel moved to do so. If not being able to remember and celebrate the "mighty acts, whereby you have been given life everlasting through Jesus Christ our Lord" is a source of grief for you, I pray that you will choose to be open to his love for you by celebrating as we are able.

One more thing. I have heard frequently now and many times over past years the agonizing lament that someone loved had to "die alone". No one lives and no one dies alone. The one we celebrate this Season is always with us in life and in death to love us always into new life. What I grieved when my mother and father died was my not being able to be with them to love them in familiar ways as they were leaving this life for another. But, they were not alone.

Let us continue to pray for each other, to call someone each day to check on them, to breathe slowly, and to look daily for Grace Moments. Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in mutual love.

In Christ's Love, Fr. Bob