

We Shall Rise Up!

April 19, 2020

Greetings,

A few years ago, I regularly celebrated Mass at the Church of St. Paul in the Columbus Circle area of Manhattan. As its Sunday 5: 15 pm liturgy, 500 young adults gather, it is a wonderful place for young Catholic adults in the city to meet. The Vatican News English Edition this week highlighted the Church's Young Adult Choir and Ensemble presenting "We Shall Rise Up". With the help of technology, the Director and the 34 choir and instrumentalists offered its front line response in the midst of the Covid's epicenter in our country: NYC. Though practicing social distancing, check out their united response of faith:

Vatican News Reporting from Front Line Faith Responses to Covid 19

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2020-04/on-the-front-lives-covid-prayer-action.html>

As distance learning continues, some students have uncovered an opportunity to be with siblings as adults. Usually away at school or work, they discover opportunities to deepen relationships at home with those who have grown or changed as they have grown or changed. That, too, is the experience of "Doubting Thomas" who is "away" when the Risen Lord appears. Thomas, returning to the other disciples sheltering in place, finds his close friends have "changed". They, unlike Thomas, have seen the Lord. (John 20:19-31) At best, it had to be awkward, and at worst frustrating.

I am impressed Thomas does not leave his friends. While not believing as they do, Thomas nonetheless feels attracted to his friends still, maybe more so. The scripture does not say they protest his company.

Thomas teaches us that we don't move from doubt to faith by ourselves. Thomas teaches us people questioning or even doubting need for the company of faith. Just as a single hot coal, pulled away from a heap of burning coals, soon loses its heat, separating from a community of believers makes keeping faith in God difficult.

During this pandemic, you may notice people attempting to try to connect with you. Some of these, as Thomas, may be reaching out to us with their doubts and questions. They may have difficulty seeing where God is in all that has happened with the pandemic.

Thomas prompts me to ask myself how patient am I with Thomas appearing in my life currently? (I bet there are more than one!) Thomas may sense some of my trust in God. Despite differences of opinions, am I not called to recognize the opportunity?

As I reflect on Thomas, and his goodness, let us cultivate a sense of peace in ourselves: moments of prayer, journaling, nourishing reading or participating in Sunday Masses on line. And for Thomas in our lives, let us look at them and see their desire for peace and joy. Let us not miss that!

Christians point to tradition saying that the same questioning Thomas found his way to Kerala, India in 52 AD bringing faith in the Risen Lord! The Thomas in our life may surprise us, too.

Pray for me, as I do for you,

Fr. John
jpm6@williams.edu