



.Faith and Family in Troubled Times

In an editorial in the Irish Times last Monday, the editorialist wrote of the 'tough reality' that, while it has been around for a long time, had made itself acutely felt during Lent and Easter this year. The piece was short and to the point, noting that 'half of Dublin's Catholic priests, being over 70, are now cocooned due to the coronavirus pandemic'. This served to underline what we already knew, that 'within the next decade [...] priests will become a comparative rarity in Ireland.' This reality struck home during the Easter period.

Holy Week and the Easter Triduum are the apex of the liturgical year. It is the time and season that is the source of our faith and our hope as Christians. In his wonderful poem *Clearance 6*, Seamus Heaney writes movingly his childhood memories. He speaks of these days as 'highpoints', recalling 'the midnight fire' and 'the paschal candle', as he knelt gladly 'elbow to elbow' with his family and his friends 'up there near the front' of the 'packed church'. Here they listened to the readings, following 'the rubrics for the blessing of the font', 'the dippings [and] towellings', the chrism and water, and in a minute detail, that only an altar server could have noticed, they hear the tiny 'cruet tinkle' during the blessing of the gifts. This was all the richness of the Catholic liturgy that formed out imagination. It's a powerful evocation, something that is outside time.

Much of what the poet writes about was what was missing in this strange and difficult year, this cruel month of April 2020. Our churches were empty as never before. We scattered and hidden from one another. As a faith community we were not *together*. It is hardly surprising, then, that Archbishop Martin described this as 'a void in [our] spirituality'.

However, it is important to seek out the positive in whatever life throws at us if we are to rise to meet the challenges. On Holy Saturday, I emailed a Jewish university colleague and said I hoped she'd had a happy *seder* or Passover. Her reply was simple but touching: 'Passover was a bit smaller than usual... but with young children one is never alone, or bored. Happy Easter to you and yours'. On Holy Thursday and again on Easter Sunday morning, I spoke of this link between Easter and the Jewish *seder* and what they had in common. It had brought out for me the importance of faith lived in the family and the idea of church as family rather than simply as an institution. Family really is where the 'nitty-gritty' of life and faith are lived out and should also be celebrated.

In an excellent article in *The Tablet* this week David Neuhaus, a Jesuit born to the Jewish parents, suggests Catholics might learn from their Jewish neighbours that church and home can both be places of worship. He writes: 'The central rite of Passover, one of the most important of Jewish Feasts, is not celebrated in the synagogue. Rather, the rite plays out in a beautifully formulated liturgical celebration around the family table at home.' This involves particularly both the youngest member of the family and the parents, as they recall 'God's redemption of Israel from slavery and the continued presence of God through the generations.' As he points out in his conclusion, this ceremony 'is a recognition of the home as a sacred space as a sacred space.' This is perhaps something we may have lost to some extent in modern society. However, it is brought back to us in these difficult times.

Of course, we have our own tradition and the Easter Triduum as celebrated in our churches is central to that. However, Fr. Neuhaus suggests, 'we need to rethink the place of the home in our spiritual lives. When Christianity began, church and home were both central. Believers met in the temple and at home to celebrate liturgy. *Day by day, as they spent much time together in*

St Mary's
Parish

Serving
the
Community

Serving
the
Family

Serving
the
City

Contacts: Fr Fachtna McCarthy, Administrator, Fr Patrick Claffey C.C. Fr Josip Levaković C.C., Deacon Greg Pepper Tel 01-6600075

Streaming and Website www.stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie email: info@stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie

Child Protection: <http://www.stmaryshaddingtonroad.ie/ministries/child-protection/> also www.csp.dublindiocese.ie

Streaming also at www.churchservices.tv/haddingtonroad

Funded by Living the Joy of the Gospel Campaign

the temple, they broke bread and wine and ate their food with glad and generous hearts.'

In terms of our outreach over this period, it is important to note the contribution of our Church Service TV transmissions, which have grown very significantly over the past month. In that period we have had a total of 13,384 viewers from 54 countries. These were principally from Ireland (3,626), followed by the UK (2,625) but with views from as far away as Ghana, Qatar and Hong Kong. Most of these viewers were just of 'for a look' and left in a minute or less. However, just over 3000 views stayed very often for full services. It is interesting to note that 643 people attended our Good Friday services, while up to 400 attended our Easter Vigil and Easter Morning masses. This is a very significant and positive development that invites us to further pastoral reflection.

Recently deceased

Carmel Dunne

One of our oldest and most loyal parishioners slipped away quietly, as she had lived, just before Easter.

Carmel has been in the Leeson Park Nursing home for several months, after a long period of ill health, which she bore with great faith and fortitude.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, a funeral mass was not possible. This will take place at a later date, when she will be fondly remembered by her many friends in St. Mary's.

May she rest in peace

In our prayers we remain mindful of the many family who have lost ones during the difficult time.

We also pray for the many people who are alone in their isolation, and the many families who are cut off from loved ones at this time.

The Lord is our help....

Assuring the Upkeep of Our Parish

Like any, family, body, or institution, the Church in its ministry and mission has always needed an income in order to allow the local community to live and to maintain an evangelising presence in the world.

This call to share, each according to their means (see Luke 21:1-4), remains one of the features of our life as a faith community. In our time, it is most often a question of practical question everyday expenses such as light and heat, salaries, repairs and maintenance, insurances etc that must be met from the parish financial resources. In addition, however, we need to fund new pastoral and evangelising initiatives in our parish and to allow the possibility of development in every area of the Church's life in the world.

As we know, our church has been closed for a number of weeks now and we have had no public masses in that time. A reduced service has, of course, been available via Church services TV or directly on our website during that time. Over the past month 3,626 have viewed our services. This was particularly the case over the Easter period. Of course, this does not replace what happens in our church every day during ordinary time but these are not ordinary times. It is also good to remember that for many older parishioners this is how they join our community in its prayer even in ordinary times, when they are housebound.

While our church is closed, it still has to be maintained and the financial needs have to be met. Since collection are not possible in the present situation, the Parish Pastoral Council finance section has been working on a system for our webpage to allow donations to be made to all of the usual collections in this way. This is to be found on the top right hand corner of the website where you will find the access button to the  page. From there, please follow the instructions. We know we can continue to count on your generosity.

Later this month our Finance Committee will be sending out a letter to parishioners regarding the one going financing of our parish.

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY