

Hello Emmanuel and friends. How you doing? Here's hoping you and those you love are safe and warm. The late March snow I railed about last week has melted into the ground over here (good for our well, which will draw on those underground reservoirs next August). My daffodils have poked up – barely. They're being cautious; keeping their heads down. There are no heroes in my front-yard crowd of emerging greens, just sturdy and faithful watchmen looking over the walls of Winter for Spring, ducking the wild winds which broke the top off one of my pines a couple of days back. The flowers know what's going on in the neighborhood. They will survive. That 'survival' scare is on all our minds, I think, a genuine fear, but it really smudges our thinking. For example, sometimes I want to embrace boredom just to dismiss the call to action that this extraordinary opportunity of quiet solitude now offers to us. I like to make noise sometimes, just to prove to myself I'm here and I can. So, I go out back and talk to the trees, some of whom are very busy running sap up their elevators to the top buds, now swelling. They're busy with life, doing their own thing, but take time to show me they are listening, so they often nod in agreement (like during a sermon, even if half asleep). Very satisfying. But, I know it's a form of escape and accomplishes very little. Truth is, I miss you.

So, how do we cope with this enforced quarantine? We accept it. We embrace it. We learn from it. For one thing, we learn a little bit about humility. I can control myself (most of the time), but I can't control the weather nor other people nor this virus. Nobody can. Not the Governor, not the President,

nobody. We can only react to it, and do our best to contain its spread, because it is way beyond each of us. Even if we stay healthy, we might be carriers to others. So, let the virus huff and puff and blow out its fury. We will survive this by thinking as a community, to “commune,” to talk, to share. For each of us has a piece of the puzzle confronting all of us. We can talk our way into being an active community having insight, and before long we have a way of being together, safe and well. For one, I suggest you find time to be a telephone-visitor; think of folks that are alone and isolated. Give them a friendly “Hi, we’re thinking of you.” Maybe gather a small company of callers and divide the parish among you, and call out to others who are out of touch. Maybe you are doing this already. John and I have been talking regularly, and he has started something like this. Help him out. If you want to talk with me, call me (315.771.5055). There is no end to the mischief we can get into.

In other words, let’s be active, not passive. Resist the temptation to hide; if you like your neighbor, say hello over the back fence. If you don’t like him, do it anyway. Take away the stones of fear and escape we all throw down in our way at times, which prevent us from acting as God’s people. You’ll never know what that neighborly offer of friendship and concern will produce unless you try. Our biblical lessons for this week are filled to abundance with stories of resurrection, recovery, resilience. When you get a chance, read Ezekiel 37:1-14 – the raising of the dry bones – wherein God says, “O my people, I will put my spirit within you and you shall live.” The

Gospel, too, draws us into that same promise of rising up and out of the depths of despair. Read today's story of Lazarus, found in John 11:1-45: "Take away the stone," says Jesus, standing before the grave surrounded by mourners. "...Lazarus, come out," he calls, and the dead man comes out. Jesus then says to the astonished, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Here's a chance for us to be astonished by kicking away some of our own obstacles, stones thrown down that sometimes trip us up, and sometimes separate us; kick them aside. Get some help if they're too big for one to handle. But remember, always, they are moveable, and we can do it. So, be good. Be smart. Be loved. Fr. Jerry