

Reaching Out and Reaching Up

There are two lessons from the pandemic that I have learned over the last six months that I would like to share with the whole Diocese.

The first is the need for the saints of God to reach out. Probably at no other time since the Spanish flu has this need for Christians to reach out to others been so urgent. My neighbor is a nurse in the Covid ICU at a downtown hospital, and I have seen the look of exhaustion in her eyes and the toll of witnessing death after death. We have health care workers and first responders who are living daily with the stress of this virus. We have members who have had a family member die alone in a nursing home. They were not allowed to be with them in their final hours, and even their belongings were set out on the curb for them to pick up after the death. We have other seniors who have been locked away in assisted living centers or their own homes with no human contact for months on end. We have members of the clergy who are ministering in an exhausting time and under circumstances they never anticipated. They continually second guess their own decisions and suffer the same sadness that comes from social distancing, no in-person pastoral visits, and virtual classes and Bible studies. Many people around us are struggling with depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Sadly, every hour of the day, a veteran takes his or her own life in the United States. Death rates are up in almost every category, even when Covid is not directly responsible.

This is an age when we as Christians need to be reaching out to our neighbors, our family members, our co-workers, and our fellow brothers and sisters in the Church. We are equipped through prayer with the healing power of the Holy Spirit and the saving message of the Gospel, and now more than ever people are hungry for both healing and salvation. Just a personal connection may be all that is needed to open someone's heart to the saving love of Jesus. I pray our clergy are staying connected to the flock of Christ, and that the flock, in turn, is reaching out to those near to them.

The second thing I've learned is that this is an age when more than ever we need to be reaching up. Despite many churches having closed to worship since March, we are doing all that we can to continue to offer up Word and Sacrament to the people of God and on behalf of the world. More than ever, the prayers of the saints are needed. Along with a raging pandemic, there is racial strife, attacks on law enforcement, rioting in cities, and the looting of businesses. This is a time when we are called to prayer and to worship. If you can't join your local congregation in person, take advantage of all the online opportunities that are offered throughout the Diocese and join other saints in prayer and in Spiritual Communion. The world needs our prayers, and the Church needs to be fed to do the work that God has called her to do.

It is time when we need to be courageous and cautious as well as challenging and charitable. The Christian faith is incarnational and grounded in relationship to God through Jesus and with one another through the Divine Life of the Holy Trinity. In the midst of social distancing, we must be intentional in our willingness to reach out to others and to reach up to God allowing our prayers to rise to heaven like incense.

May God protect, provide, and bless us today and in the coming months, and may we do all that we can in this age to bring glory to his name.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16)

Because He lives,

Bishop Reed