Rector's Message

Lenten Reflection

By Reverend Monsignor Robert T. Ritchie

"'Even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.'"
- Joel 2:12

Lent, our time of reflection, penance, prayer, and giving in preparation for Easter, is upon us. The word Lent is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencten*, meaning spring. How appropriate for this Lenten season as we emerge from the darkness of this past year of pandemic. Hope, healing and, maybe just as importantly, a rebuilding of community… our faithful community, has begun. A new spring has arrived.

Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, like all Churches around the world, struggled with a new reality. The pastoral challenge of ministering to our faithful with shut doors and limited ability for the faithful to pray as one. However, God, in His miraculous way, provided other means. Through the gift of technology, we were able to continue celebrating Mass daily virtually. Reaching more of the faithful than we ever could have imagined or hoped for. This past year over 5 million people, across 170 countries were able to, over TV, radio, computers, tablets and phone, hear and see the forever hopeful, reassuring, eternally true Word of The Lord during the Celebration of Mass. I am grateful and overwhelmed by the generosity of people from around the world in their giving, that allowed us to “keep the lights on”. Thank you!

I grow more joyful and hopeful, as our doors are now open. To again see our pews slowly fill for Mass with familiar faces, wedding vows exchanged, baptisms performed, confessions heard, has further affirmed my faith in His guiding hand through this and all times of challenge.

Throughout my almost fifty years of a blessed pastoral journey, I have witnessed the power of faith, hope, community and forgiveness. Manifested through sacrifice, compassion, prayer and devotion. Through times of personal tragedies, violence, war, political strife, and most recently, this pandemic. God’s grace, the Holy Spirit’s strength, and the example and inspiration of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice for us all, has allowed the faithful to transcend darkness and despair through Him.

Finally, as we emerge from this latest challenge, please pray with me for those who have suffered loss through this pandemic and that they may receive Our Lord’s loving peace.
Join the Saint Patrick’s Cathedral community for **Day of Giving**, a 24-hour celebration of America’s Parish Church and the power of giving back, starting at Midnight, EST, on **March 17, 2021**. For more information visit: saintpatrickscathedral.org/dayofgiving

**Want to get involved?** Visit our website to learn how to become a Saint Patrick’s Cathedral Ambassador!

saintpatrickscathedral.org/volunteertoolkit

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This was not your traditional New York City Christmas eve. Neither bitterly cold, nor air so frigid it burned to breathe deeply. It lacked the stinging icy fingers of frost warning you that winter was here, and the cooler longer days of autumn had bid farewell.

Though a howling wind raced down 5th Ave. escorted by sheets of rain. It was as dark a night as anyone could recall and the streets around Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, America’s Parish Church were deserted. Not a soul in sight up and down one of the most famous streets in all the world. A street that had garnered the nickname Millionaires Row in the early 20th Century because of the presence of mansions belonging to Mrs. William B. Astor and William A. Clark. The pandemic of 2020 had cast a blanket of sickness and misery around our city.

Standing on the steps of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral and looking towards Rockefeller Center one could barely see the lights from our famous Christmas tree. A symbol for the beginning of the glorious holiday season. A symbol that brings countless of thousands every year, now sits in quiet repose. A symbol not of where we are but hopefully where we are going.

Sadness and gloom beset us. In many ways a scene set by Charles Dickens himself. We were overcome with the sadness.

Then just before midnight a sound breaks the stillness. A sound that silences the howling wind, the rain on the pavement and the darkened windows. It was the bells that have called us to prayer since childhood. The bells that have signaled it is time to return to prayer, to rejoice, a time to reconnect with God. Just before midnight the bells rang out across the city.

Standing for a moment and not caring a lick for the wind and rain we listen to the magnificent concert being performed high above us. A concert performed in the northern steeple, pointing skyward towards the heavens to carry our prayers skyward. From the massive Saint Patrick (bell/chime) with its resounding Bb and 6,608 pounds to Saint Godfrey with his inspiring G weighing 173 pounds. Playing in concert were the Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, Holy Name, Saint Michael, Saint Anne, Saint Elizabeth, Saint Augustine, Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Agnes, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Bridget, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Peter, Saint Cecilia, Saint Helena, Saint Alphonsus Ligouri and Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Our concert has 19 performers weighing 29,000 pounds. After being cast by G. & F. Paccard Company of Annecy, Savoy, France with a range of nearly two octaves they arrived in July 1897 on the steamship La Touraine. They were displayed inside the Cathedral near the 5th Avenue entrance and on August 15, 1897, they were blessed by Archbishop Michael Corrigan before nearly 5,000. They were first rung for the Silver Jubilee of Archbishop Corrigan on May 4, 1888 playing “Hymn to St. Casmir,” “Hymn to St. Joseph,” and most fittingly “Hymn to St. Patrick.” The Saint Patrick bell was the first to be rung by the new automated system and he gladly plays the “Angelus” throughout the day. These performers have not missed a performance. What a magnificent group it is.

With the end of the call to prayer we enter the magnificent concert being performed high above us. A concert performed in the northern steeple, pointing skyward towards the heavens to carry our prayers skyward. From the massive Saint Patrick (bell/chime) with its resounding Bb and 6,608 pounds to Saint Godfrey with his inspiring G weighing 173 pounds. Playing in concert were the Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, Holy Name, Saint Michael, Saint Anne, Saint Elizabeth, Saint Augustine, Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Agnes, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Bridget, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Peter, Saint Cecilia, Saint Helena, Saint Alphonsus Ligouri and Saint Thomas Aquinas.

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A Parishioners COVID-19 Journey
By Maureen Peters

The unusual sound of birds chirping and singing was my first inkling that something had profoundly changed. I have lived on the Upper East Side for many years and am accustomed to hearing pigeons protest. I moved in after September 11, so I don’t have that event or time to compare. My home faces York Avenue and the morning routine and commotion is filled with buses, ambulances, cars and service vehicles traveling about. Accompanying them are the many school children on their way to grammar, high school or college. All that stopped in mid-March of 2020 and continues onto today.

Of all the burdens to bear, that a pandemic can bring was the loss to receive Eucharist. Being a lapsed Catholic for many years, I had become a faithful and practicing member since 1987. Now, I was not allowed to profess a “thank you” to Our Lord in the reception of the Eucharist in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. This Sacrament is the core of our Catholic beliefs. It is what sets us apart from all other Christians. Not publicly being able to say, “thank you” saddened me. Everything seemed much harder to bear without the grace of this Sacrament. I was privileged, midsummer 2020, to hear of a covert Mass being held in a location accessible by public transportation. It took me 3 trains, a bus and a ferry ride to get there. It was wonderful, I was even able, to go to Confession. Sadly, this Mass abruptly ended. Once again I was not allowed to receive the Eucharist. I was able attend Zoom Masses regularly and I faithfully tithed to my local parish. There became a huge gap once again.

Through discernment in my daily prayers I was reminded of a special scripture quote, “when one or two are gathered in my name...”. While the rosary was not a daily part of my life, I began in mid-March to include the rosary daily. My sister, Mary Pat, and I began a morning Zoom meeting to pray each day the Holy Rosary.

It has made all the difference in my outlook on life during a pandemic. We only missed one day, when her husband contracted Covid-19 and was hospitalized. Her example of faithfulness and friendship has helped sustain me throughout this crisis. My daughter, Erin, and some other family members join in and off. God continually reveals spiritual gifts to me that none of us are worthy of. We continue to pray the rosary daily each morning. I wouldn’t miss it for the world. My fervent prayer is that it continues forever, but that is in God’s hands.

Another practice that sustained me was meditation which I participate in once a day. The combination of prayer and meditation have super charged my spiritual life. I feel God’s presence ever more acutely than I have ever have. I felt God’s presence daily during this unprecedented time.

By God’s grace Mass has returned to a physical building. I now belong to St. Patrick’s Cathedral parish and am greatly enjoying myself. What a historic and beautiful Church. The parish has many events for participation. I enjoy the Spanish Mass on Sunday afternoons as well as the organ recitals, it is a new adventure for me. I love walking the 2 1/2 miles to church. That has helped with my physical needs. As other social programs and activities have remained meeting on Zoom, the physical and emotional needs that fresh air and exercise provides prevents me from falling into loneliness and despair.

While, technology has afforded ways to live and survive a pandemic it has also changed human interaction. I am not sure what the future has in store for us as Catholic Christians, but I can honestly attest that life without the “Eucharist” is a life unfulfilled.

As I conclude my Covid-19 journey I want to thank you for reading this piece. I found solace, and still do, in discovering God’s will for me and having the courage and fortitude to do as He asks. Our “Lady’s” courage continues to astonish me. As our city comes to life again I am renewed and heartened by my neighbors and their resiliency. “With God, all things are possible”. Thank you for the privilege of sharing my thoughts with you. Please pray for me, as I will pray for you.
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Mass Times:
Monday - Friday: 7:00 am & 12:00 Noon. Saturday: 8:00 am, 12:00 Noon, & 5:30 pm (Fulfills Sunday obligation). Sunday: 10:15 am, 12:00 Noon, 1:00, 4:00 pm (Spanish).

*Watch Mass via Live Stream: www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/live

Confession Times:
Weekdays: 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm. Saturdays: 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm.

Reconciliation is available in languages other than English. For more information, please contact the priest on duty at St. Patrick’s Cathedral Parish House
14 East 51st Street
New York, NY 10022
212.753.2261

For any additional questions please call the Parish House: 212.753.2261

Location:
St. Patrick’s Cathedral
5th Avenue between 50th/51st Streets
New York, NY, 10022

Subway Directions:
E or 6 trains to 5th Avenue/53rd Street
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Charitable Bequests
There are several ways to name the Cathedral as a beneficiary of your will or living trust. You can make a cash bequest, leave a specific asset such as appreciated securities, or designate that the Cathedral will receive all or a percentage of the remainder of your estate, after your other beneficiaries are provided for.

Gifts of Retirement Plan Assets
Retirement plan assets could be the most heavily taxed of all your assets if left to heirs. With the income and estate taxes, more than half could be whittled away. You can preserve more of your estate for your heirs and meet your philanthropic goals by leaving your retirement plan assets to a tax-exempt charitable organization such as the Cathedral.

Gifts of Appreciated Securities
Giving appreciated securities is now more advantageous with the rise in the value of securities and higher tax rates. For securities held longer than one year, you can deduct their full market value (top Federal rate 39.6%) regardless of what you originally paid for them. You also avoid paying capital gains tax (top Federal rate 23.8%).

Charitable Gift Annuities
A charitable gift annuity is a simple contract that offers a tax-advantaged way to provide fixed guaranteed income to you and/or another individual. At the death of the last income beneficiary, the remaining principal is transferred to the Cathedral. You can begin to receive income when you need it most, either right away, or at a predetermined future date such as retirement.

Charitable Remainder Trusts
You can donate a wide variety of assets to a charitable remainder trust, including cash, appreciated securities and real estate, and receive a percentage of the trust’s value as income. In years when the trust assets appreciate; the distribution will increase; if asset values decline, distributions are lower. At the death of the last income beneficiary, the remaining principal is transferred to the Cathedral.

Contact Us
We would be most grateful for the opportunity to discuss these gift arrangements and other giving ideas with you, your family and your professional advisers.

Robert Meyer
Sr. Director of Development, St. Patrick’s Cathedral
(646) 537-7830 ext. 847
robertmeyer@saintpatrickscathedral.org

As you think about your giving this year, you may wish to consider some giving options that could benefit you and provide for the Legacy of the Cathedral.
A Blessed Lenten Season to All!

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