

# St.Thomas

THE APOSTLE



Serving as the hands of Christ

St. Patrick's Day, 2020

Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15: 12)

Dear Friends in Christ:

You have all been very much on my mind, and in my prayers, during this COVID-19 pandemic. In this time of anxiety and concern, our impulse is to do the very thing we have been rightly counselled not to do, which is to gather, and feel the warmth of our fellowship in Christ, and to share Holy Communion. In my dog walking, I often bump into folks (while keeping a safe "social distance") who ask whether we have closed our Churches; as both Ringo and I wear collars, they know I am a Priest 😊. While we have suspended public services of worship and cancelled meetings, the Church as the People of God is far from closed! I know that you are very active! I have been calling elderly parishioners and those who live alone and may be vulnerable, and in every case, a friend in Christ has already been there, with a phone call, or a drop-off of food, or other necessity. Praise God!

Parishioners are doing a lot of good ministry, while cooperating with Public Health advisories on how to "flatten the curve" of COVID-19 transmissions. The old-fashioned practice of phoning people goes a long way to overcome isolation, check up on each other, and try to respond to needs as we are able. During the pandemic I will not be making "routine visits," but I am most willing to go to people in urgent and serious pastoral need. Just call me and we will sort it out together as to how best I can help, and how our Parish might help. I am in and out of the Church Office, and our Secretary Administrator, Nanci Askwith is as well, while also working from home. Your Wardens, Treasurer, and other lay leaders are practicing social distancing, but the well-being of the Church is very close to their hearts. We remain steadfast in our commitment to the important leadership roles entrusted to us, in watching over God's Church.

COVID-19 has already had a major impact on our lives as Canadians and as global citizens. Nothing has been left untouched, including work, school, worship centres (churches, temples, mosques and synagogues ...), day cares, nursery schools, government, commerce, the stock market, entertainment, sports, cultural events, and travel ... But above all we, remember those who are sick, their families and caregivers, and sadly, those who have died. Pray also for everyone working in our health care system who is being stretched to the limit in their care for the sick, in an ever-increasing workload.

Shortages of hand sanitizer and toilet paper remind us of what happens when we act out of fear. In the case of hand sanitizer, it is thinking only of one's self, taking more than we need, while leaving nothing for others, especially those at greater risk than ourselves. In the case of toilet paper, perhaps it is some sort of reptilian brain "fight or flight" response. Why do people suddenly need 6 months' supply of toilet paper, especially when diarrhea is not a symptom of COVID-19??? Runaway fear can trump good basic Public Health information! But I do not judge my sisters and brothers. When I stand in front of the toilet paper section in Metro and see near empty shelves, part of me says, "better buy some!" even if I really don't need any! To be intimately acquainted with the impulses of selfishness and fear is to be human.

In the Bible, the opposite of faith is not atheism, it is fear. Fear can separate us from God, others, and our best self. God's perfect love casts out fear. Draw close to God's love in these troubling and anxious times. Help others by finding ways to share that love with them.

Never doubt the power of prayer to link us together at a time when COVID-19 would isolate us. Over the years, I can think of many times when, for no apparent reason, I have thought of someone, said a prayer for them, and later discovered that they were in the midst of some kind of trouble! Our material world is actually composed of "energy," so that sending people the "good energy" of God's love, compassion, and mercy is surely not in vain! As a spiritual practice, why not picture the faces and names (if you know them) of people who usually sit around you in Church, and pray for them; lifting them up into the light and love of our Heavenly Father.

Last Saturday Clergy and Lay Members of Synod did something that represents our belief in the future: we elected a new Bishop to succeed Bishop John Chapman; that person is the Very Reverend Shane Parker, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral. In these trying times we look to our civic and religious leaders for inspiration and guidance. We are all in uncharted waters. The Church needs to offer our familiar ministries, but in new ways, mindful of good public health practices. Pray for our leaders in these trying times.

The Reverend Michael Garner, Curate to the Church of the Resurrection, Nicole Jerome (our Ministry Intern) and I are planning a Worship Service which we hope to broadcast via the internet. We are currently working our way through the technology. I can't promise excellence in production quality, but I pray that it will be sincere and reverent. You can access the service "live" on Sunday March 22, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. and then archived after that.

Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJjb\\_TU\\_9BueIFopX0hBgFQ?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJjb_TU_9BueIFopX0hBgFQ?view_as=subscriber)  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Anglican-Church-of-the-Resurrection-Ottawa-Ontario-298047463577582/>

I want to share with you that because of wise and prudent money management, our Diocese and our Parish are both in good financial shape going forward, at least for the time being. Even though we have lost our Sunday Collections and rentals, donations through PAR (pre-authorized remittance) are assuring us an important revenue stream. I want to thank everyone for their ongoing financial support in these troubled and uncertain times.

By now, we all know the drill about how to do our part to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. Follow the news through trusted sources, especially updates from Public Health. This pandemic is a very fluid situation which changes daily and sometimes even hourly. Pray, keep the faith, take care of yourself and others, don't panic, and together as Christians and as Canadians we will get through this!

Yours in Christ:

*Peter+*

The Ven. Peter Crosby