

## MESSAGE FROM DEACON LOWELL

Greetings everyone, I hope you had a blessed Holy Week and a blessed Easter Sunday. For over a month now, many of us have been living in a locked room so to speak. We haven't had a public gathering to celebrate Mass since March 15.

What day is it? I haven't worked my "full" part-time schedule at Pella Engraving and Sign since March 25 and my grandsons haven't attended school since March 13. I have been paying our bills the same day we receive them, so I have no need to look at a calendar to insure I send payments in before the deadline. Due to social distancing and semi self-isolation I have practically been living in my PJs, getting dressed only to go for a walk, to run our reduced number of errands, or to work outside. It is a good thing Denise is trapped here with me or I might not even shower and shave every day.

One of the blessings Denise and I have been able to share, is more time spent with our family. Since the grandsons have not left their house or yard since the middle of March and our daughters and son-in-law are working from home, we feel safe in traveling to West Des Moines once a week to spend a couple of days with them. We have rediscovered card games, board games, and several variations of dominoes. I even won a game of chess. Ok, it was against an eight year old and it took more moves than it should have, but still a win. During a moment of senior attention deficit Gavin captured my King's Bishop with a pawn UGH.

Over the last several weeks I have been in contact with several parishioners. Most are doing well. They are getting the basics they need; things like food and prescriptions. One parishioner told me, her refrigerator door is opening more than usual. Some are getting outside to walk. Jigsaw puzzles are making a comeback. Social media has given us a platform to stay in contact and to share some humor; like a post I saw poking some fun at the toilet paper hoarders out there. It was a picture of Red Forman from that 70's Show with the caption. "*Attention all you (explicative deleted);it's tornado season, so you better stock up on light bulbs in case the power goes out.*" Another one of my favorites was Vincent Van Gogh's self-portrait with a face mask drooping on the left side.

Everyone I talked to expressed their disappointment and sadness that we are not able to gather as a faith community and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. I am confident that this too shall pass and we will be able to worship as a family again and share in the mystery of the Eucharist.

In the interim I am deeply concerned for the victims of the CV-19 pandemic: the most vulnerable; such as the elderly or those with underlying health issues, the residents of care facilities who are not allowed visitors, the inmates of correctional facilities, those whose anxiety has been fueled by the fear of being stricken with CV-19, those whose mental health has been further compromised by isolation or lack of psychological care. I pray for those who are facing financial setback or financial ruin due to lack of work. I feel sadness for families who cannot grieve the loss of loved ones through traditional funeral services or Masses. I worry particularly about the teenager, the elderly people, and their families in Guatemala who Denise and I sponsor.

There are so many people to pray for. The USCCB provides us with the following prayer of solidarity during this time of a worldwide pandemic:

*For all who have contracted coronavirus,  
We pray for care and healing.*

*For those who are particularly vulnerable,  
We pray for safety and protection.*

*For all who experience fear or anxiety,  
We pray for peace of mind and spirit.*

*For affected families who are facing difficult decisions between food on the table or public safety,  
We pray for policies that recognize their plight.*

*For those who do not have adequate health insurance,  
We pray that no family will face financial burdens alone.*

*For those who are afraid to access care due to immigration status,  
We pray for recognition of the God-given dignity of all.*

*For our brothers and sisters around the world,  
We pray for shared solidarity.*

*For public officials and decision makers,  
We pray for wisdom and guidance.*

*Father, during this time may your Church be a sign of hope,  
comfort and love to all.*

*Grant peace.*

*Grant comfort.*

*Grant healing.*

*Be with us, Lord.*

*Amen.*