

the mini message for April 5 2020

Over the last few weeks, I have heard through various conversations that the churches are closed and that Easter is cancelled. Some people have even questioned, with the churches closed, “What are the people of those faith communities doing now that they do not have a place to go to worship? What are the faith communities doing to reach out to those who are in need of support during these challenging times?”

Faith communities are being questioned all over the place because they are no longer acting like what churches should act like.

Sadly, many of those who have asked these questions are the same people who are not regular, if at all, church goers. They have a preconceived notion of how churches function and what they do. And, if the churches are not having Sunday worship, well they must be closed. And if they cannot meet on Sundays then they are not helping in the greater communities.

You could say churches are cheered for having worship on Christmas and Easter and are looked down upon if worship and outreach look different than expected. This sounds very familiar. In fact, our readings for Holy Week reflect the cheers and the boos when things do not go as expected.

In Matthew 21, Jesus rode into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting. “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

The people shouting Hosanna had an expectation of who Jesus was and what he would do for them. He was going to save them from Caesar,

slavery and poverty.

Yes, Jesus came as the Saviour, but his way of saving the people was not the same way as they had wanted him to save them.

By the time we get to Matthew 27, the same people who were cheering Jesus with “Hosanna in the Highest” have now turned against him for not saving them in the way they wanted to be saved. Pilate asks the people “Which of the two do you want me to release for you: Jesus or Barabbas?” and they said, “Barabbas.” Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” All of them said, “Let him be crucified!”

How fickle people are. One-minute they’re cheering and the next they’re shouting in frustration because things are not going the way they think they should. We see it in reading the story from the Palm parade to the Passion. But we can also see it throughout the stories of the bible. When Moses took the Hebrew people out of Egypt, they cheered as they left slavery and then booed Moses when they travelled for so long through the desert. Now we are experiencing a bit of the same in these challenging times, just like Jesus and just like Moses. Changing the way churches function, cast questions upon faith communities.

What are we to do?

First of all, the churches are not closed and Easter is not cancelled. We are just doing things differently. It is our role as disciples to let others know what we, and our sisters and brothers in Christ, are doing. We are not all doing the same thing, but I can tell you we are all reaching out and worshipping the Lord.

Some faith communities are using social media: Facebook, Instagram, Texting, FaceTime, DUO, or Zoom to connect with each other. Others

are posting worship services on YouTube, while still others are producing messages the old fashion way, printing them and sending them out. Let us not forget that there are still worship services on the radio and television.

I have heard some faith groups doing coffee hours via Zoom. I also know, just like our faith community, members are being called by pastoral care teams.

Outreach has come in the form of volunteers offering to deliver groceries to those who cannot go out. Food bank collections are being organized with specific drop off points for pick up.

In our case we have a great group of volunteers who are ensuring that the Inn Out of the Cold continues to function within the walls of our church building.

The music has not stopped either. Lauri continues to work with her junior choir through social media and she has been sending music to the senior choir to practice.

Meetings for our church continue through Zoom, emails and phone calls.

In some respects, knowing the many ways our and other faith communities are reaching out, churches are busier than ever before.

So, to all those in all the faith communities, lift your heads high, celebrate the Palms this Sunday, for you are all doing a great job, doing the work of Christ, reaching out in many different ways. If you are one who feels you are not doing enough, a simple suggestion – Every day at dusk light a candle of hope and pray for the many people in need of support.

The Church isn't empty. The church has been deployed. God Bless.