Message from Fr. Dan:

Today we celebrate Easter. The high point of the Christian faith. A time of great celebration. Yet, this year will be different. For many, it will be the first time we have not been able to attend mass, receive the Eucharist, and gather with family and friends. In some ways, we may find ourselves like the disciples and the apostles. Jesus told them what would happen, but they did not believe it until they saw him. We are in strange territory. We can feel defeated, saddened by what is going on around us, but we must remember that Christ IS among us. Even if we don't celebrate mass in church, receive the Eucharist, and celebrate with friends and family, Christ IS with us, he HAS risen. Through our prayers at home, we can celebrate his rising; we can celebrate his saving us from the darkness of evil, and opening the gates of heaven for us.

I ran across a story about an Orthodox bishop in the old Soviet Union that was asked to present the Christian position in a debate on religion. Now you have to know that in the Eastern Church (including the Orthodox) when someone is wished a Happy Easter, it is done with an affirmation of faith: “Christ is Risen.” The customary response is “He is Truly Risen.” After letting the fervent Communist opposing him have the first word, a long discourse explaining that God didn't exist, much less the Son of God, and extolling the virtues of Communism, it was the bishop's turn to head to the podium.

The bishop simply said, “Christ is Risen,” and the audience, some out of faith, many out of habit, responded: “He is Truly Risen.” “Thank you,” replied the patriarch, and returned to his seat. Nothing more needed to be said.

We know in our hearts that our faith will get us through this. That when we are able to come together again we will with even more joy.

On behalf of the staff at St. Peter and St. Joseph I wish all of you a very Happy and Blessed Easter. Know that my prayers are with all of you, and I look forward to that day when we will be able to celebrate together.

Bishop Joensen’s Holy Week Message

April 5, 2020
Palm Sunday

Dear Friends in Christ,

Throughout this Lent, we have been compelled to fast from our shared presence with one another and with God in worship and common prayer. This adopted “absence” is most acutely felt now as we enter Holy Week, beginning with Palm Sunday and cresting with the Easter celebration of Jesus’ Resurrection.
The Body of Christ still lives and breathes, sighs and keeps watch with Jesus as we seek the mercy and joy that he alone can bring us. I especially want you to believe that though you may not have been able to go to confession, be anointed or receive Eucharist, God’s compassion and saving love seek you out wherever you are: at home, in hospitals or nursing homes, in places of shelter or outdoors.

In these extraordinary days, there has been frequent mention of opportunities for what is called a “plenary indulgence” for ourselves and those for whom we pray. A plenary indulgence removes all the temporal punishment due to sin (Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 1471). It is an act of trust that thanks to the merits of Christ’s cross, the Church through the power of the keys entrusted to Peter and his successor Pope Francis can provide a healing remedy for us poor sinners and channel grace to all who are hurting or sick, before and after death.

During this time of pandemic, a plenary indulgence is available not only to the sick or to health care workers, but for all the Catholic faithful. We should express our spirit of detachment from any sin, (e.g., by saying, “I hate sin”), have the intention to go to Confession and receive Holy Communion when it is eventually possible again, and right now, pray for the Pope’s intentions in one of various ways: make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, read Scripture for at least 30 minutes, pray the Rosary, make the Way of the Cross, recite the Divine Mercy chaplet or the Litany of the Sacred Heart for the following intentions: an end to the pandemic, relief for those afflicted, and eternal salvation for those who have died.

Be clear: no one during these challenging days is denied the grace of salvation, which stands abundantly available to all. We should find solace and consolation, and be thankful that with great charity for our neighbor we can be good stewards of the life and faith given to us.

You might check out my most recent YouTube message; (inserted as hyperlink) And, if you don’t tune into your own parish’s live-streamed celebration of the Triduum and Easter, we will be streaming our liturgies from St. Ambrose Cathedral on Holy Thursday at 5:30 p.m., Good Friday at 3 p.m., Holy Saturday Easter Vigil at 8 p.m., and Easter Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

Jesus is the heralded Messiah whose entry into Jerusalem is met with great acclaim before his former fans fall silent. Jesus is the light that scatters darkness and all that holds us bound, including the specter of disease. We do not leave Jesus alone this Holy Week, for we believe that he loves us and suffers for us, with us. We love you, Jesus! We want to live with you, now and forever!

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.
Bishop of Des Moines