

Companions on the Journey

April 4, 2021

Dear Friends,

Last year at this time we held our Holy Week Services in the Church but no one was allowed to be present or participate in live fashion except for those who were in ministry during Mass. You may remember that our last pilgrimage to the Holy Land had to be curtailed because of the pandemic. It was happening in Israel and the Mid-East region of the world as it was happening here at home. We were intending to visit Bethlehem in the West Bank but it was closed because of an outbreak. Then our conclusion in Jordan was denied us because that country was completely shut down. Some of our members were returning home after the Israel portion of the pilgrimage and we hoped to join them. We could not. All the flights had booked up very quickly and any empty seat was quickly snapped up. We were barely able to fly out that Sunday and the country of Israel was closed down that Monday.

You will also remember that I would celebrate Mass in the Chapel in the New Rectory each day and record it on my Smartphone. Immediately afterwards I would post it on YouTube and it would be accessible to all by about 7:15 each morning. That went on for three months until the beginning of June when we were able to reopen. Which we did. So for us here at Saint Anthony's we have been back and celebrating for the past ten months. This includes funerals and weddings, first communions and first reconciliation, confirmations and other parish activities.

There have been no outbreaks of covid19 from anything we have been doing here at Saint Anthony's. I find those who have been participating in person have been very careful, wearing masks and keeping social distance throughout the service. Even afterwards there is no mingling or stopping for mere social interaction. Although by now many of us yearn for some of the ordinary social interaction usually associated with church.

We are blessed that we made the decision when we did. There are other congregations in the Wissahickon Faith Community Association that have not yet re-opened their sanctuaries for participation of their faithful congregants.

Or all of them it has been over a year since they have gathered in congregation to worship the Lord together. They have been availing themselves of live streaming as we have. But I think that all of us now know that there are blessings to live streaming and there are shortcomings to it as well. It is helpful but it is limited. It meets certain basic needs but it does not satisfy certain other basic needs.

Let us pray that all our Houses of Worship will be completely re-opened this year and that the faithful will return in significant numbers to thank God for deliverance from the ravages of this terrible disease. Let us remember to be thankful ourselves for all the Lord has done for us. And on this Easter Sunday most especially for the victory Christ has won over the ravages of sin and death by rising from the dead. Happy and Blessed Easter to all of you.

In the Peace of Christ,

Msgr. McHenry