



June 5, 2020-Reflections for the Easter Season Ms. Albano

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear God, I acknowledge the Mississauga's of the Credit First Nation for being the ongoing stewards of this traditional territory.

A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to Timothy

“Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness’ sake, O Lord!

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.” (Psalm 25: 6-10)

Because of COVID-19, many organizers canceled or postponed events and gatherings. One postponement was for World Youth Day 2020 in Lisbon, Portugal. For those of you who don't know, World Youth Day is a yearly event celebrated on Passion Sunday throughout the Latin-Rite (Roman) Catholic Church. However, every three years, young people (roughly from 15 to 39) gather from around the world to learn and celebrate the faith with the world. It is like going to the World Cup Soccer Tournament or the Olympics, without the competition between nations. Each one I've attended has deepened my faith and changed my life and is partly the reason I serve in a high school today. With COVID-19, it makes me sad to know that other young people will not experience what it means to celebrate mass with over a million people from around the world.

In our isolated homes or small pockets of the world, we forget about the universality of the Catholic Church. We forget that we are part of a faith which is not rooted in one culture, but embraces all of them. It is the gift of World Youth Day where you can celebrate yours and other nationalities and culture. However, it also shows you that your identity as a brother or sister in Christ is greater than those national boundaries. Despite visible differences, what binds us together is Christ's life, death and resurrection. A sacrifice celebrated at the Lord's Table at mass. The celebration of the Eucharist which is undescrivable during World Youth Days. Imagine over one million people gather to celebrate the Eucharist. I still feel the chills of standing with over a million people in Germany, in silence as we adored the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration. This happens the evening before the Papal Mass on Sunday. A night where we pray and sleep in a field together. On Vigil Saturday, something stirs in the heart of all of us to reconciled with God and others. I have heard countless stories from youth, especially from the host nation, who find themselves before the Lord in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, weeping and confessing their sins. They did not plan to be there, but something amongst the World Youth Day pilgrims inspires them to take part. What pilgrims find during World Youth Days is the peace and courage to turn away from sin and return to the Lord. In short, you learn what St. Augustine meant when he said, “Our hearts are restless, until they rest in you.” You, being the Lord.

I pray that with the time you have, may you and your family take those moments to acknowledge the universality of the Catholic Church. Realize that we are a family, who have our differences, but if we remember we are one in Christ, we can struggle and celebrate together. Also, take a moment to look into your hearts and ask yourself what are those things that are keeping me from finding peace in my heart during these days of social distancing? What is causing my cynicism and distrust of others? Why do I turn to things or unhealthy behaviour or relationships to make me feel valued? Why is this time of isolation causing me anxiety and distress? May you write them down so the Holy Spirit can lead you to the truth and find ways for your heart to rest in the Lord. Keep close to your heart the words of Jesus who said, "Remember I am with you always till the end of days." Amen. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.