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Dear parishioners,

This coming Sunday is the Feast of the Ascension. The Gospel reading starts with; “The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw Him, they worshiped, but they doubted.” That sounds about right.

I was out for a drive the other day and up ahead, a large healthy looking black bear sprinted across the road. My first reaction was to be impressed with the size of the bear and my good fortune at having spotted him/her. It is not everyday that you get to see such a majestic animal, but then, I started to doubt that seeing the bear was good for the bear.

I would have to say that doubting has become a real part of life these days. For instance, I doubt that I am going to ever fit into some of my pre-covid clothes. I pulled out a summer pair of pants to add to the mix of my current wardrobe, and I could tell right away that they were the wrong size 38.

Of course, Salvation Army has many of my clothes that I should have tried on in the store before buying them and taking them home. So maybe they never fit me. That’s possible. And maybe I put them away for that time when I would start going back to the gym.

Hey, that’s one good thing about the virus, I can take going back to the gym off my list of things that I never really wanted to do anyway. That’s good I guess, unless you happen to own a gym and then it’s bad. Once again the virus has taken a good thing and turned it around so that now I am feeling guilty, or at least I feel bad, for real people with real

problems. (I heard this morning that gyms can open up again but with restrictions. So we'll say a prayer that they, and every business that will have to adapt, will be able to make a living in spite of the virus.)

So this is another doubt that I have been struggling with during the shut down. I don't always know what I am feeling. Or maybe the problem is that I am feeling different emotions at the same time, which is really annoying. I liked it better when we were blessed enough so that we could just turn off the world for a while, and waste time worrying about how the Blue Jays were going to do this year.

Talking about baseball, they are considering that when they start up again, they are going to institute the designated hitter rule across baseball. This is a big deal, or at least it used to be. The fact is, I simply don't care nearly as much as I would have a few short months ago. And I am doubting that I might be able to regain that kind of innocence, or healthy state of denial that once made me happy to entrust the world to God, for a while, and find my rest among the lazy hazy days of summer.

Now, if you are not a sports fan, then you can substitute a subject of your own choosing that used to really matter and now not so much. Don't get me wrong, I want to care, it's just that I will take any baseball right about now. And I am tired of thinking about how the future will unfold, whether it's baseball or being church, only to doubt that it is going to be the same anytime soon.

This is what I mean about baseball. I heard someone say of baseball; "Of all the *unimportant* things in life, it is the most important." It will be nice to get back to a life where we can celebrate and get lost in the important/unimportant parts of this great life that God was kind enough to give us.

And it will, you know; it is just going to take some time and patience. This is going to be over and there will be a day when we will tell stories about the time of the virus, and the stories of our survival

will become funnier and less painful. Like the bear though, we are going to have to take a chance if we want to get to the other side.

Like most of you, I am sure, I was thrilled to hear that the province is going to allow for the opening of what they are calling Personal Service Establishments on Tuesday. Which is great news, because now I can get that tattoo I promised myself.

We are also making plans to reopen our parish churches. The Bishops will soon be putting out the guidelines and timelines for our getting back to church.

I think that the best way to move forward is to assume that everyone has the virus and that everyone is vulnerable to the virus. That way we will keep our guard up and keep ourselves, and each other, as safe as possible. We have to be careful that in our rush to get back to a new normal, that we don't doubt the tenacity of this virus, and have it circle back on us, and we find ourselves worse off than we were before.

I think that we can take our cue from this encounter that Jesus has as He prepares to ascend to the Father. Jesus has learned who He is dealing with, and so He is not surprised with the doubts of His followers, and yet He gives them their marching orders just the same.

“Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And why is Jesus able to so confidently entrust this mission to such doubters like us? Because He does not doubt in His ability and His desire to fulfill this promise; “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

So keep this in mind; for Jesus, doubting isn't the problem. Feeling unsure about our abilities and our prospects is a normal response to the unknown, and we have a lot of unknowns these days. I read this short quote that; “Mood follows action.” And Jesus obviously gets this. He needs His disciples to get to work, doubts or no doubts, and in taking the risks, discover their gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit.

What is unacceptable is trying to build a life that is safe from the cross. I don't think that we are supposed to go out and make crosses for ourselves unnecessarily, but the cross cannot keep us from the work of the disciple. St. Theresa of Lisieux said about our journey here on earth; "This isn't our home, it is a ship." And I read this quote that said; "A ship is safe in the harbor, but that isn't what a ship is for." We can say the same thing about life and faith.

Lucky for us, we have such wonderful heroes to draw on for our examples. The Apostles who had to learn how to call on and depend on the gifts and the generosity of the Holy Spirit in order to move forward. We need to see this time as our opportunity to grow in faith, wisdom and courage. And we will, if we keep the needs of others before ourselves and trust in the promises of Christ.

The following is the prayer of the Holy Spirit. As we prepare to launch out into the deep, we need to take the hand of the Holy Spirit and pray for boldness and right-judgement.

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.*

*Lord,
by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit
help us to trust in your guidance
and always rejoice in your rewards.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

May God be gracious to us and bless us, now and forever.

Pat Monette/Pastor