



## **Allow Your Hearts and Homes to be a Temple of God**

As dictated by Bishop Phoebe and our local and national governments, we now know that all Worship Services and activities are cancelled until further updates. Of course, that means that we will not be able to hold Easter Services this year. Like many of you, I am deeply saddened by not participating in Holy Week and Easter services. Easter is truly the cornerstone and foundation of our Christian faith and has been remembered, ritualized and celebrated for two thousand years.

For those of us who are saddened or grieve our loss of our sacred space of worship together during this time, let us not allow our feelings and emotions to overshadow the most important theology of our faith. First and foremost, God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit resides in our hearts. Our hearts and bodies are the new temple for the presence of God. Among other meanings, the Temple curtain in the Great Temple at the time of Jesus' death symbolizes that God no longer resides just in a physical place or even on sacred ground, but God resides in the hearts of God's people.

We can learn an important lesson from our Brothers and Sisters of Judaism. During biblical times, Jews believed God's presence dwelled in the Jerusalem Temple. In effect, it was God's home on earth. It is where he dwelled among the people. For a thousand years the Temple was that place. And then, the Temple was destroyed . . . all worship services and activities were permanently cancelled at that space! However, from the wisdom of the Spirit and through the guided wisdom of Rabbis, the presence of God was now believed to reside within the community and within their individual homes. Their homes became a sanctuary of God's presence. Even their most sacred rituals, like Passover, was celebrated and honored in their homes. The home and the community of faith is the Temple. (Rabbi Moffic speaks eloquently of this theme in his book *What Every Christian Needs to Know about Passover*.) Of course, later synagogues were built to help the community to worship together but the primary presence of God for Jews and Christians alike resides among the people and in their hearts . . . not only in a particular place.

Having stated that most important theology of our faith, for two thousand years throughout history, Christians have worshiped and congregated in sacred spaces and places. Some have been humble spaces while others have been magnificent spaces of sacred worship. Do I believe that God resides in such sacred spaces and places? Absolutely! God forgive me, I may be one of those that overemphasizes the sacred in certain spaces and places. The Real Presence of the Holy Sacrament that is stored and used in our places of worship are not to be taken lightly. And of course, . . . space and place do matter as we come together to honor and worship our Lord. But let us not lose the perspective that God is everywhere . . . especially in the hearts and homes of his people.

Along with my previous published list of recommendations, this week I will add: "Allow your hearts and homes to be a temple of God."

- "Keep calm and carry on."
- "Take heart, do not be afraid."
- Pray for protection, healing and restoration.
- Fortify yourself with spiritual readings and study.
- Stand firm in our faith.
- Reach out to those in need.
- "Allow your hearts and homes to be a temple of God."

May the Peace of the Lord that passes all understanding and circumstances of this life be with you!

*Fr. Terry* †