

# Pastor's Pen

Before I start, I want to thank everyone for the many ways you have been there for me when I was sick. I received so many cards and texts and calls and food and all kinds of tokens of love that I am truly humbled by your kindness. I kind of felt guilty that I wasn't sicker to deserve all of the attention I received! Please know how much I appreciate all you have done for me. What a great community of people at St. Charles and Nativity. I am privileged to be among you!

So, as we shelter in place until the 15<sup>th</sup> now, we continue to look for signs of new life in the midst of this pandemic. You certainly gave me new life in your love and care. The more stories we hear about the frontline workers, the more we see the wonder of Christ in our midst. The question often comes up: Did God cause this? Is God mad at us? Is this one of those plagues to shake us into submission? Are we being punished for our sins? Some would say "yes." That's the easy answer and we can cite all kinds of ways the God of the Old Testament acted toward disobedient people.

My take on this is that the God I know said "yes" to us by the resurrection even though we had put to death his only beloved son. If we experienced resurrection rather than punishment in that moment when God's heart was broken in the death of his beloved son, how can we see God as the punisher now? If God didn't take revenge on us at that moment, then we have to see God in a new way. God doesn't want a pandemic nor any suffering for the children he loves. No, God is in our midst in the grief of doctors and nurses whose hearts are broken as they lose patients to this virus and they feel helpless. God is in the midst of those who work endless hours to find a vaccine. God is in the midst of those whose hearts are restless to do something to help other people. God is in the midst of the tears of grief of family and friends who have lost loved ones, in the cheers of healthcare workers as they discharge a patient who has come back from the edge of death, in the kindness of people just caring for each other, in the simple faithfulness of grocery workers and in the wonder of realizing we are all so very important.

I don't know why suffering happens. It appears to be in the ebb and flow of life. Maybe I will know why things happen as they do someday, but until then I can't blame the God of my understanding. That God is the God who cries with us, shoulders our burdens, celebrates our victories and loves us in our brokenness. Yes, that's the God I am praying to during this pandemic. I am praying that all of us might allow the heart of God to touch our hearts so that we might love more deeply during this difficult moment..