

St. Landry Catholic Church

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Dear sisters and brothers of St. Landry Church

The high school part of Immaculata Minor Seminary had a tradition of an outdoor graduation ceremony similar to the Academies of the Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau. The year my class was graduating (yeah, I know, the year after Moses came down from the mountain with the ten commandments) the administration of the seminary decided the weather would be too threatening to have an outdoor graduation. I remembered we could not believe that we would be denied a longstanding tradition of our school. It sounds trivial, but we were really disappointed with this decision. Yours truly was volunteered to approach the rector and the principal and beg them to allow the ceremony to take place in the regular fashion. They relented and allowed an outdoor ceremony, and it never rained a drop that evening.

This memory surfaces now because I cannot even imagine what the classes of 2020 are going through. Your senior year taken from you. All those in high school, trade school, community college, junior college, university having to face the fact that you will not be able to finish the school year in the traditional way. How challenging it must be to not even know if you will have a traditional graduation. Parents and family members must be suffering as well. Everyone was looking forward to celebrating you and your successes.

I ask the community of the faithful to especially pray for you at this time. You need to know that we walk with you at this frustrating and difficult moment. The moment is an 'upper room' moment.

The disciples were paralyzed with fear and disappointment. The one they had put all their trust and hope in was dead. Their future as individuals and as a community was threatened. How could they survive without Jesus? How dangerous would it be for them to leave the security of the upper room? Were the political and religious leaders searching for them as well? Were they to be arrested and put to death because they had been followers of the Nazarene? What about the pain and hurt that they experienced because Jesus was no longer with them? Why had He abandoned them? Why had He not spoken up in self-defense or call upon His Father to make things right? Why did everything turn so sour? It was supposed to have been different somehow.

Then Jesus appears before them in the midst of their hurt, fear and disappointment. His first gift is peace. He wants to still their souls, to comfort their hearts. He seeks to assure them that He is always with them, even in the midst of their worry. When Jesus appeared and Thomas was not present, He came back once again. He could not leave Thomas reeling in mistrust because he refused to believe that Jesus would appear while he was gone. Jesus would never abandon His disciples. Jesus would never abandon Thomas.

On this Divine Mercy Sunday, let us allow God's grace to stretch our hearts to receive His mercy. This mercy transforms us, it makes us more like Him. His mercy reminds us that anytime we find ourselves in an upper room of fear or disappointment, worry or resentment, anger or sadness, He is standing in our midst bringing peace into our lives.

Class of 2020, we pray for you and for ourselves. Let us not let the many deaths we experience cast doubt into the wonders of life within us and around us. This moment is the Resurrection of Jesus, the author of new life. Peace be with all of you.

Yours in Him,

Msgr. Russell J. Harrington, Pastor