



“At A Distance”  
Easter Sunday 2020  
“Finding the Pony”

Good Morning Saints and Welcome.

We have been waiting 40 very long and challenging days and nights to say once more, “Alleluia, alleluia! The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!” And it feels very good to say it, to know it and believe it. Blessed Ones, this Lent and Holy Week have challenged us like no other has in a very, very long time. Remember when we prayed comfortably on Ash Wednesday for “just a little time” for introspection, some internal contemplation, a bit of casual reflection perhaps. A bit of respite from our very busy, turbulent and sometimes overwhelming life chaos. Nothing serious, but just enough down time to pay respect to the liturgical season upon us.

Never in our wildest imaginations did we expect our prayers for “just a little time” to be answered in such a way. Also, in my wildest imaginings could I have envisioned me standing before you on Facebook Live! I have had many callings in my 70 years, husband and father, engineer and scientist, priest and penitent, teacher and student but never ever did I imagine myself as a “televangelist.” I can’t remember the very astute wisdom keeper who first said, “We plan and Creator laughs.” Well, that certainly seems to be the case recently.

Mona and I were driving the other day and she asked me a very interesting and quite profound question. She said, “Babe what’s one positive thing that you are going to take away from all this?” The “all this” being, I assumed, the 40 days and counting of lockdown. The social distance, the isolation, the disruption of normalcy, both the specter and reality of serious illness and death. Lost jobs, lost lives. Trying desperately to control the uncontrollable. That sort of “all this.”

The question really gave me pause, and I said to Mona, “Let me think on that just a bit,” as I had no handy answer at-the-ready. A second question much like Mona’s came via e-mail from a much-loved friend and colleague from my mining days with Barrick Gold in the Dominican Republic. His name is Jimmy Aybar. Jimmy and I worked together for many years and like us, the Dominican Republic is locked down, curfews in effect, streets and shops empty. His question, much like Mona’s, was,

“Where is the Pony in all this, Jefe?” But first to understand Jimmy’s question, some context and backstory is necessary.

My family and my congregation here at All Saints, and my team in Pueblo Viejo, DR., have long tired of my story about “finding the pony,” but to make my point a truncated re-telling is unfortunately necessary. So here we go... It is Christmas Day and a wise elder Grandfather takes his young grandson out to the barn, to see one final Christmas gift after a morning of gifting. The grandson opens the barn door to be assaulted by the overwhelming smell of horse manure. Manure everywhere, top to bottom, not a crack or crevice left unfilled. The Grandson begins to jump up and down with great joy. “Thank you, thank you, Grandfather,” the child repeats over and over. “Why are you so happy Grandson,” says the surprised Grandfather. “You have a barn full of horse poop.” And the child replies, “Grandfather, there’s got to be a pony in there somewhere!”

So, of course, the message is always, where is the good that we can find in any bad situation. We have choices, we can continue to wallow in the horse poop, we can simply shut the barn door, or we dig and find the learning that awaits us in any situation. “Find the Pony,” some positive take-away, however small, that lurks deep in the mess. I have told this “pony” story hundreds of times, in different languages in different venues, with different teams. But it always continues to make sense. A very wise elder and wisdom keeper once told me, “Joe, the only good thing we get from a bad situation is the learning that we can take away and use again.”

The only good thing that comes from a bad situation is the learning that we can take away and use again. So, both Mona and Jimmy A were asking me the same question, just hours apart. “Where is the Pony in all this?” And I think that I now have my answer. The pony is right here before us this morning in the examples that Jesus continually gave us during this Holy Week... the culmination of which... His Resurrection... and in our “resurrection” as well.

When we remember Jesus’ legacy and teachings often his “gentleness of Spirit,” His kindness and his peaceful creation of sacred space is placed in the forefront. However, we also need to remember another side of Jesus that he modeled so powerfully for us during Holy Week. Jesus showed his mental and moral tenacity; his mental and physical strength; His resiliency; calm temperament in the face of unimaginable stress; and his ability to accept the situation for what it is and adapt accordingly. The model of strong leadership: know the plan; analyze the plan; execute the plan; adapt the plan; execute the plan... and so on. And above all never losing hope.

We also have another model of behavior demonstrated so dramatically in our Holy Week stories. The model of Jesus’ disciples when times got hard and scary; when they were tested. Most failed miserably. Some historians tell us that many disciples returned immediately to the safety and familiarity of Galilee. Retreating to comfortable old ways and old places. Others immediately sought

cover locally back in the Upper Room... doors locked, plans shattered, future in shambles. Peter, the rock, the cornerstone, face-to-face with his denials and failures of leadership.

So, on this beautiful Easter Morning, I invite you to take the "Mona Challenge" and to take "Jimmy A's" Challenge. Where will you "find the pony" this morning? What is your learning from these dark times that we are enduring? Where is the "pony" for me on this glorious Easter Morning? I believe it is in remembering the example that Jesus showed us this last week and so beautifully this morning. Staying strong, staying resilient, staying adaptable, staying creative, and above all staying hopeful. Resurrection will come. A new and beautiful day will emerge for us all when these "times of trial" that we are enduring now are behind us. Like the stone entombing Jesus is rolled back and He emerges glorious, new and whole.

So very soon our stone will be rolled back, and we will emerge back into the light of life in community, live back "in the world." We will step tentatively back into our new reality... stronger, smarter, more creative, alive and blessed; and in love with each other in new and wonderful ways that we have never imagined. Our physical, emotional and spiritual resurrection is upon us.

Alleluia, Alleluia the Lord is risen, the Lord is risen indeed. And for us we sing... Alleluia, Alleluia soon we too will be risen, we will be risen indeed. And today we rejoice and are glad in it.

Blessings Saints and Happy Easter.

Always,

*Father Joe*