

We're not acting anymore; we're being put to the test; we're living it!

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Here in our parish we were just getting started on our Passion Pageant.

It's 10 years ago since Fr. Paddy Sheridan had done it and we had decided to put it on again.

A great man in our community, Nathy Gilligan had taken on the organising task and he had put in a huge effort just getting everything and everyone together. He had Ger Lynskey directing it and so many people had volunteered for different roles and different other jobs like getting costumes and props etc.... They were just ready to start

When Corona stuck her head in and shouted stop.....

So this Lent we won't be practicing and this Good Friday we won't be acting it out.....

Instead, by the sounds of it from our Government and Scientists, we're actually going to be living it out....

You see **we've been condemned**, not by Pontius Pilate but by a Corona virus

We've been handed our cross..... it's not much different to Jesus' cross..... a cross of fear, doubt, isolation, illness, of pain, mental pain, physical pain, spiritual pain, of suffering and bereavement and loss.

I've no doubt but that **there will be times when we will fall**, I'm sure at least 3 times, but please God, we will get up again and carry on, no matter how hard it will be; and by the sounds of it; it will be hard....

Again, if we are to believe what is being told to us by the experts, **there are going to be sorrowful moments like when Jesus meets his mother Mary**; we too will worry for our parents and grandparents and for all our vulnerable people.

We're very lucky to have people in our community like Veronica, people who wipe the face of Jesus like our Community Nurse Olive and our Doctor Willie and all our wonderful home helps that we have in our community and all the other wonderful people who look in on their neighbours. People also who go to work in our hospitals and medical centres and other places and people who give so generously of themselves to others, while often sacrificing family time and maybe even putting their own health at risk....

And then there are **those people like Simon of Cyrene** the people who are already ringing me up asking 'How can we help'.... We're here and we want to help.... And like the soldiers did, we have to find out now what the best way is for people to help Jesus carry his cross; what is the best way to help those who will be carrying crosses of fear, doubt, self-

isolation, vulnerability, illness, pain, suffering and maybe even bereavement and loss. **There are other Simons too** who will keep the emergency services going, serve in our shops, mind our children, keep the economy going and so on, often also at risk to their own health.

Then **we're also going to need people like the women of Jerusalem**; people who will be there to support, comfort, maybe pick up the phone and listen to and maybe even cry with those who are carrying their crosses and above all to pray for everybody. We are all going to need the strength of prayer to carry us through.

Remember when Jesus was stripped of his dignity and nailed to the cross.... We'll need to be there for those who will feel naked and hurt, naked maybe because they feel ashamed that they picked up the virus; hurt, maybe because people nail them to a cross by blaming them for passing it on, even if they didn't intend or mean to. There is sure to be a lot of anger around as people come to terms with the changes in their lives. We will need to be there for those people and at those times also.....

There will be good thieves and bad thieves around also. Good thieves who maybe realise the error of their ways and ask for forgiveness and bad thieves who even in the midst of a pandemic and the biggest crisis to hit our world in years, in the midst of great illness, isolation and death will still only be able to think of themselves as they stack the toilet rolls and the pasta in their cupboards and may even look for selfish gain out of a desperate situation.

Then if we're to believe the experts there will be death. There already has been. Great darkness, sadness, gloom, maybe even despair.

Who will take them down from the cross? Who will bury them? Will we be able to have a funeral? Will we be even be allowed to hold each other or will we be in too much danger of picking the virus up ourselves. So many questions, so much confusion, so few answers....

And yet only one answer is important and that is **the message of Easter.**

For years we've been celebrating it in our churches..... maybe we didn't understand the full meaning of it.

Light will overcome the darkness!

Hope will overcome despair!

Life will overcome death!

Community will bring us all together and bring us all through it!

The love of our God, Our Father; the sacrifice of our brother Jesus; the living breath of the spirit within us will bring us all through....

Just like the generations before us came through famine, plagues, pillage, penal laws, wars;
so will we.....

We won't know the strength of our community until we are put to the test;

Irish people have never been wanting when it comes to generosity/sacrifice/
loyalty/care/toughness/ & love

It's in our DNA.... It's in our bones.....

It comes down through the generations of the Patrick's and the Brigid's, right down to
today.....

This Holy Week, this Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday we won't be
acting it out in a pageant..... No! instead.....

We will be living it.

It's ironic that we may not even be in our churches to celebrate this Holy Week and Easter,
like in penal times, but for different reasons; but it won't change our spirit.

Let's ask God for the courage and strength today; for generosity and love to be a truly
Christ like, Christian Community in action this Lent and Easter time.

**We're not acting the pageant this year; we're being put to the test; we're living the
gospel of Christ!**

Fr. Michael Murphy. Round fort.