There are no better words with which I could begin this reflection with than Jesus’ words, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me” (Jn 14:1). In this generation, we have never been “troubled” like this before. We remember September 11, 2019. It changed the world. We remember the economic disaster of 2008. We were troubled then. But this feels different. The sense of the unknown, the uncertainty, the insecurity – our generation has never seen anything like this before. “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” Jesus says. What do these words mean in these times in times of a pandemic?

Here are my three points for us today.

1. “Master, we do not know the way!” How often humanity has acted like we know the way. And look where it has led us. One of the most helpful things to do during these times is to say, “We do not know!” “Master, we do not know where you are going? How can we know the way?” (Jn 14:5). To admit that we “do not know” is very liberating. It sets us free to look deeper, to search more diligently, to listen more eagerly, to conduct ourselves more intentionally. We hear Jesus’ frustration with the disciples because they were not looking deep enough or far enough. “Have I been with you so long, Philip and you still do not know me?” (Jn 14:9). I confess, I am troubled. I am troubled by the pandemic. But I am also troubled that perhaps, as the human race, we are ignoring the lessons from a virus that has now infected 4 million people, and caused more than 280,000 deaths, 80,000 in our nation. My prayer, my fervent prayer today is that we may have the faith, the humility, and the courage to say, “we do not know the way!”
2. “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life!” As the disciples confess that they do not know the way, Jesus responds, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). What/Who is the way? What/Who is the truth? What/Who is the life? Love is the way, Love in the truth, Love is the life – for God is love. Today’s gospel reading is taken from Chapter 14 of John. Along with Chapters 13 and 15, this section is called the “Last Supper discourse.” The discourse begins with Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. Interspersed within these three chapters are these words of Jesus. In them I find, “the way, the truth, and the life.” Jesus says:

* “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34-35).
* “If you love me, you will keep my commandments (Jn 14:15).
* “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (Jn 14:23).
* “As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love” (Jn 15:9).
* “This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:12-13).
* “This I command you: love one another” (Jn 15:17).

Jesus led us out of sin and darkness, death, destruction through love. Today, as badly as we need a vaccine, I believe, we need to find a way to love one another out of this pandemic. To love as Jesus loved, to care for as Jesus cared, to think of selflessly about humanity as Jesus thought about humanity, is at this moment, “the way, the truth, and the life.” When Jesus says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” is he saying to us, “Love is the way, and the Truth and the Life?” Could we love our way out of this pandemic?

1. “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” Let me read an excerpt from a card a received this this week. “Back in the 80’s I as a single mom with four children living paycheck to paycheck, often not knowing where my next dollar was going to come from. Along with that, my son had a major breakdown and was hospitalized with a diagnosis of Schizophrenia. I suppose I am sharing this with you because I have so much compassion for all who are now in financial need, and feeling lonely, afraid, and often hopeless. I have been there. After paying my bills,” she continues, “I have $200 left from my stimulus check. Please use it where there is the most need.” Today is Mother’s Day. This single mother took care of her children. Today, as she lives through another crisis, her motherly heart continues to care. I believe that it is through mothers that God most closely says to us, “Do not let your hearts be troubled!”

The God who is love, will very soon be on this altar in flesh and blood. Let us follow him for he is “the way, and the truth, and the life!? Let not our hearts be troubled.

* Fr. Satish Joseph

Let me make some important announcements

* The Archdiocese of Cincinnati has announced that public liturgies will begin on Memorial Day, Monday, May 25th. Each parish is being asked to offer at least one public liturgy each day. At this point, I have not decided, whether at IC and St. Helen we will begin Masses on that day, or the weekend of May 30/31 which was the original published date. More info on that will come next weekend.
* Those within the archdiocese of Cincinnati are also being dispensed from the obligation of attending Sunday Masses if they are at risk or fearful for family members. They are invited to participate through live-stream Masses. We will continue to offer live-stream Masses daily and on Sunday’s as we have done, until further notice. We will do this from the main altar of the Church.
* If you want to come to a public liturgy but do not want to be part of the larger attendance on Sunday, you may attend a weekday Mass and fulfil the Sunday obligation.
* In all of this, pastors are to regulate the number of people in church, ensure social distancing and other guidelines as recommended by civil authorities.
* I have four pages of guidelines from the archdiocese. I have called for a separate staff meeting for St. Helen and Immaculate Conception parishes this week. We will work out the best way to implement these guidelines. Because of the difference in space, the size, and the entrance to our buildings, each community will have to design whatever practices are best for them. I will ensure that both these communities adopt the safest options. That will be my top-most priority. The safest may not be the most convenient for all. So, please, be kind. Let us love our way out of this pandemic.
* As we draw guidelines for our parishes at the staff meetings, we will communicate these guidelines and expectations very clearly to you. We will expect everybody to comply. If you cannot comply, you have the option to watch the live-streamed Mass.