

YOU WERE ASKING . . . by Msgr. Pat Stilla

Q. What are some of the lessons that we should learn from this pandemic experience?

A. Each person will learn different things from their own experience with this current situation and so I certainly don't know what we should learn from it. What I can share with you however, are my own thoughts about things that we may learn from it and things that I am learning from it as a priest. Here are just three of them.

1. The Importance of Community in Faith

We may have grown tired of the much used cliché, "*We're all in this together*". The phrase is over-

used but its message rings true. Of course we know that in its secular interpretation, it is meant to refer to the global cooperation of nations uniting their efforts to vanquish this common foe. However,



in the religious realm I have gleaned something different from it, one that I have known 'intellectually' for a long time but never 'experientially'. I now better appreciate the pivotal importance of our Parish Communities of Faith where

laypersons, ministers, Faith leaders and clergy all work together as a team to achieve a common goal, in worship of God and in service to each other. It was no accident that God always called together a



'People' and not just individual believers. Jesus did the same and, as His Church, we are the 'People of God' and not just solitary Christians.

2. Taking things for granted until they're gone!

Years ago, a close friend of mine broke his ankle playing soccer. At first, the novelty of wearing a cast around his leg and having to go to school on crutches was refreshingly exciting for him. However, after week three the novelty began to fade

and the frustration of not being able to play soccer for the rest of the season or to be able to walk as he did before, suddenly set in. It was then that he said, "I had never fully appreciated my health and even my ability to be able to walk until it was



taken away from me". In the midst of this pandemic, I recalled these few wise words. Like my boyhood friend, most of us

take things for granted and only cherish them once they are taken away! All the regular gatherings for Mass, sporting events, school classes, family celebrations and all sorts of social activities which we may have taken for granted or



which we may have even deliberately ignored in the past, are activities that we now cherish and better appreciate.

3. Interacting with others

Before the lockdown began, I used to see large groups of teens gathered together at bus stops but not talking to each other. Instead each was facing down at their phones, texting! At times, I

was tempted to assume that they were texting each other in the same group, preferring to do that, than to actually talk or interact with them. Now, with social distancing in place, I'm sure many of them long for a time when they can socialize in person and not through their phones! After all, we are social persons and this pandemic experience has taught me how crucial social interaction is to my emotional wellbeing.