

January 8, 2021

Dear Parishioners:

It seems incredible, but we have made it 2021! And despite the gloomy start to the year, it is a new year and a year full of possibility!

One of my resolutions is to read more books this year, at least a book a month outside of 'work' stuff, which leaves it pretty open, for sure! (To be honest, that is the lowest goal, which I hope to surpass quickly!)

The first book on the list is 'He Leadeth Me' by Fr. Walter Cizek, SJ, which I will also be referencing in my homily for this weekend. Fr. Cizek was ordained to the priesthood in 1937 with the express intent of entering into Soviet Russia to serve as an underground missionary to Catholics in the country, which he was able to do from 1939 on. More of his incredible story will be told over the weekend, but the points I would like to bring up today are his reflections on isolation and solitude taken from this spiritual memoir of his.

From the time he entered Russia in 1939 until he returned home in 1963, he had little to no contact with the outside world. Yet, in these times where he was alone, in these times when he was cut off from everyone who loved him, he was able to find great solace in the reassuring presence of God. This solitude drove him to the Lord for everything.

Of course, as I read his reflections on this solitude, I immediately thought of so many over the past year who have experienced a similar sense of solitude and isolation as he; and how Fr. Cizek can be an example for us, today, of turning to the Lord in these times of isolation and quiet.

As he concluded his reflections on the nature of his work in Russia over those 20 some years, he remarked: 'Perhaps, in God's providence, there might result from all this suffering something new and precious in the mystical body (the Church): zealous Christians, with a new ideal of dedication to offer the Church existing in the world as a human institution. In God's providence, this Church under persecution – these suffering Christians – constantly enriched the Church upon earth, the mystical body of Christ.'

Even though we have entered a new year, there continues to be great suffering among our people and our friends. When we are able to unite our sufferings to Christ, in the spirit of Fr. Cizek and of St. Paul, we are able to transform that suffering into something that gives life and joy to the heart. Fr. Cizek was able to do so in a fantastic way, which I will reflect on this weekend in my homily, and it is my hope that his example is able to help us all to continue to offer our struggles during this time to build up our souls, our families, our parish and our Church.

God Bless,  
Fr. Kyle