



SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT

in the time of the pandemic



**Texts by the Most Rev. Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal**

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of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Montreal



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COVER PHOTO:

The 13 statues that line Montreal's Cathedral-Basilica of Mary, Queen of the World façade's roofline. They represent the patron saints of parishes who were benefactors for Mary, Queen of the World. Each statue, carved of wood and clad with copper, is 9-feet tall and the work of Joseph Olindo-Gratton, a native of the province of Quebec.

Photo credit © Richard Maltais

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has altered the normal course of life and has affected people's spirits in a significant way.

It is good to recall that God's grace has also been given to us during this time of uncertainty to bless our circumstances.

This free eBook is intended as a gift to you, providing spiritual readings to help you seek the Lord amid the uncertainty, to help you grow in your interior life, and to learn to discern and experience God's close presence and tenderness through the pain, suffering, isolation and fear; for Christ not only encounters us in our joys and triumphs, but accompanies us through our trials and sorrows.

This eBook is a compilation of Archbishop's Lépine texts written during the "confinement" period and are categorized under three sections in this book: Thoughts for the Day, Homilies and Pastoral letters.

Thoughts for the Day

The first section contains 81 Thoughts for the

Day, originating from video messages delivered daily by the Archbishop during the confinement period between mid-March and July. The variety of topics covered here reminds us that God is calling us to serve Him in, and from, the ordinary, material and secular areas of human daily life. He waits for us every day, at home, at school, in the office, wherever we may be.

Homilies

The second section is comprised of 32 homilies delivered mainly in French over the course of the same time period. These English versions include partial translations of the French along with the original English segments which were only slightly edited for print. These homilies contain many powerful points, ideal for meditation and daily living. The English versions reflect the Archbishop's desire to address us in both languages, not only through translation but also in his own words.

Pastoral letters

Finally, the third section consists of 10 Pastoral Letters written and published to sustain and encourage the entire faithful and ecclesial community during this trying time.

This eBook, prepared and publicly distributed by the Communications Department of the Archdiocese of Montreal, may be updated with future homilies and other content authored by Archbishop Lépine after its publication. The bilingual (French and English) eBook publication is available on our diocesan website both in digital and PDF formats, and can be downloaded free of charge.

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I want to thank God most of all, for without God, I would not have been able to do any of this.

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Erika Jacinto

Press Officer of the Archbishop and Director
Communications and Media Relations
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THE MOST REV. CHRISTIAN LÉPINE



The Most Rev. Christian Lépine

Archbishop of Montreal

Birth: September 18, 1951

Priesthood: September 7, 1983

Episcopate: September 10, 2011

Archbishop of Montreal: March 20, 2012

Archbishop Lépine has had many years of experience as a pastor and teacher.

Ordained a priest in 1983, at Saint-André-Apôtre Parish, he began his priestly ministry at Saint-Joseph-de-Mont-Royal before departing for Rome to study philosophy at the Gregorian University from 1986 to 1989.

Upon his return to Montreal, he was appointed parish assistant at Notre-Dame-des-Neiges and pastor of Saint-Joseph-de-Mont-Royal. He ministered there until 1996, when he became the director of Jean-Claude Cardinal Turcotte's secretariat.

In 1998, he was called to Rome, where he worked for the Secretary of State and then for the Congregation for Divine Worship. In 2000, he returned to Montreal and was appointed director of the Grand Séminaire de Montréal, a mandate that he fulfilled up until 2006. From 2006 to 2012, he was pastor of Purification de la Bienheureuse-Vierge-Marie and Notre-Dame-des-Champs parishes. Throughout his various activities, Most Rev. Lépine taught philosophy and theology for some twenty years at the Grand Séminaire de Montréal.

Ordained a bishop on September 10, 2011 by Jean-Claude Cardinal Turcotte, he was appointed Episcopal Vicar to Family and Youth as well as Director of the Pastoral Liturgy Service. Finally, on March 20, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him archbishop of Montreal.



THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY



Texts originating from video messages delivered daily by the Archbishop during the confinement period between mid-March and July reminding us that God is calling us to serve Him in, and from, the ordinary, material and secular areas of human daily life.

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Thought for the Day # 1 – Monday, March 16, 2020

“Overcoming loneliness”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You are not alone!

In this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, there are many challenges to respond to. One is to break loneliness and isolation and overcome it. We are at risk for these when we want to face the situation we are in, and we seek to protect ourselves from this illness by keeping our distance or reducing our contact with others.

Take advantage of all the modern means of communication to renew our contacts and reconnect with others. Perhaps ties with people we know well and that we assume are not alone. But if you think they may be alone, call them! I would even say, call someone every day! Call someone while thinking of all those who are at risk of feeling isolated or being alone.

If you are alone, call someone. Perhaps you are telling yourself “Oh I’ll go through this by myself! I have everything I need in my fridge, I’ll make it through this pandemic!” I urge you to call someone. The heart has real needs. Call someone, stay in touch. You are not alone!



Thought for the Day # 2 – Tuesday, March 17, 2020

“Lorica of Saint Patrick: prayer for divine protection”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us pray together the prayer of Saint Patrick.

Christ, protect me!

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.

I arise today
Through the strength of Christ’s birth with His baptism,
Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,

I arise today, through
God’s strength to pilot me,
God’s might to uphold me,

Christ to shield me today
Against poison, against burning,

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,

Christ, protect me.



Thought for the Day # 3 – Wednesday March 18, 2020

“The Family”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Have you ever lived through an adversity, for example an accident? But a year later, you said to yourself “In the end it has been a good thing, because it brought me to spend more time with my family and it brought us closer to each other.”

Could we not view this time of trial we are living with COVID-19, as a moment from which we could draw out some good? For sure, one benefit would be to renew and transform the time we spend together as a family. We talk a lot about quality time. However, at a certain moment, it also takes a certain quantity. It takes time.

So, I invite you to think about being in your family, to think about being together as more than each on his own screen, but to take time to interact, to rediscover the art of conversation. To discover that yes, we can waste time together, sit side by side without saying anything. We can share a light chat or share what is deep in our soul. In this way, this time of trial become one that feeds the growth of communion and community in the family.



Thought for the Day # 4 – Thursday March 19, 2020

“Trusting in God”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Trusting in God.

This feast of Saint Joseph is a privileged moment to think of Saint Joseph, to pray to Saint Joseph, and I would even say, to contemplate Saint Joseph.

The Bible tells us that Joseph was a just and righteous man. A righteous man is an upright and moral man. The most beautiful compliment in the Bible is when it is said of someone that he is a righteous, an upright and moral man, a man of prayer, a man for whom God comes first, a man of service, a man who gives of himself, a faithful man.

But all this would not have been possible for Joseph had he not put his trust in God. When Mary became pregnant, he decided to trust in God when the angel invited him to welcome her into his home. He trusted God, he welcomed Mary, he becomes the adoptive father of Jesus. At the time of the birth of Jesus, when the Magi arrived, Herod was a threat, and the angel asked Joseph to go to Egypt, in order to protect the family, Mary and Jesus. Well! He got up and went.

He trusted in God. He headed towards the unknown, it was the great unknown! What was going to happen? He could imagine all kinds of scenarios but he knew that God was with him. Trust in God.



Thought for the Day # 5 – Friday, March 20, 2020

“Solidarity”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Solidarity. A beautiful word. A great word. A word that we are particularly called to live in this time of pandemic.

Solidarity, because we’re not all at the same level. There are some of us in fragile health. There are others who have never been ill in their lives, who are in great shape, full of reserves of energy. Yet every one of us is called to pull together with one another.

This solidarity, this working together, makes us sensitive, makes us care for people who are fragile. We put ourselves close to fragile people by adopting the same preventive conditions as they are living under. We are united in our physical distancing from each other. Therefore we show solidarity in the physical distancing from one another.

But, maybe to encourage one another in the way we work together, let us view this solidarity, not merely as a movement to isolate ourselves from each other, but more as a unified effort to keep our distances for the sake of prevention. We can show solidarity by slowing down our activities, by staying mainly at home. Yet we also are living solidarity when we seek new ways to enter into relationships, through the various means of communication, so that we may be in physical distancing without being isolated. Physical distancing and communication to show solidarity.



Thought for the Day # 6 – Saturday March 21, 2020

“The Bible”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Bible.

I would like to ask you if you take the time every day to open up the Bible?

We are used to a busy life, but suddenly, everything is at a standstill! We are used to going wherever we wish, suddenly we are home, confined to our home.

But the Bible is always there. Always available to us.

This is what I propose to you, that you choose a time each day to open the Bible and read it quietly. Fifteen minutes! Thirty minutes, not more! And you will see that it will give you strength for the day! The strength we need for this day with all the uncertainty we are living because of the pandemic, in order to have strength for ourselves, but also to have enough to give strength to others. We need to share these strengths with each other.



Thought for the Day # 7 – Sunday March 22, 2020

“Jesus Knocks at the Door of Your Heart”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart.

On this Sunday when, (even though private Masses continue to be held), not only are public masses cancelled or suspended, but even the church doors are closed and locked.

There are among you those who have attended mass every Sunday, who have received communion every Sunday for decades and decades, and now for the past two Sundays, there has been no public masses. This is a real suffering.

But behind this suffering, there is also the opportunity to rediscover the presence of Jesus Christ, because God never never stops knocking at the door of our hearts. This Sunday when the doors of the churches are shut is a special day to open the door of our hearts to God who enters into us, to God who loves us, to God who has the power to make Himself present in us in the depth of our soul, of our heart, of our spirit.



Thought for the Day # 8 – Monday March 23, 2020

“Blessing the City”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Blessing the city.

In this time of pandemic, may God turn His Face towards us, all of us. May God turn his face towards the sick, towards the families of the sick, those on the front line, physicians, nurses, hospital staff, all the people affected by loss of employment with the slowing down of the economy at all its levels. Those who have jobs, but who are trying to figure out how they will come out of this situation, those who had jobs but now face a real unknown, a total unknown.

May God turn His Face towards all of you, towards each one among you in the city.

May He make his loving kindness to shine upon you.

May He enlighten you and bring peace to your heart.

May He strengthen your soul.

May He increase your hope.

- ✠ In the name of the Father,
- ✠ and of the Son,
- ✠ and of the Holy Spirit.



Thought for the Day # 9 – Tuesday March 29, 2020

“Discover the Angelus”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This day before the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary is an opportunity to discover the Angelus. This beautiful prayer, when the Angel appears and announces to Mary that she will be the mother of the Saviour is so beautiful that I have personally made use of it every day at noon. Around noontime, I pray the Angelus. There’s also the rosary that I pray every day—but also the Angelus at noon, to really be sure that my whole day is entrusted to the protection of Mary, and certainly in these circumstances, we want to put our day under the protection to Mary.

So I will pray the Angelus with you, it’s very easy to find it on the internet, *The Angelus Prayer* in English.

☩ The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,

☩ *And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.*

Hail Mary, full of grace,

The Lord is with thee,
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus,
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death.

☩ Behold the handmaid of the Lord,

☩ *Be it done unto me according to Your Word.*

Hail Mary...

(cont’d)



∿ And the Word was made flesh,

℞ *And dwelt among us.*

Hail Mary...

∿ Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,

℞ *hat we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech You, O Lord, Your Grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, your Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His passion and cross be brought to the glory of His resurrection, the same Christ our Lord.

℞ Amen.



Thought for the Day # 10 – Wednesday March 25, 2020

“Mary, Mother of God”

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

On this beautiful Feast of Mary, in these difficult circumstances, we are called to contemplate in Mary the one in whom heaven and earth meet. Mary is all about openness to God, total availability to God, and in prayer, she receives the call of the Angel who communicates to her the vocation to which she is called! She is the daughter of the Father who becomes the Mother of God. As daughter of the Father, her soul is nourished by prayer and abides by the will of God. And as mother of God, she says ‘Yes’ to receive the Son in her womb to become the Mother of the Lord. By becoming the Mother of the Lord, she becomes Mother to all of us. Being a mother is truly her vocation. At the same time, her first vocation was to be the daughter of the Father, and to live in prayer and obedience to God.

May she inspire us in these days, because the will of God is not only when all is well, but it’s also when there are trials. The Lord does not abandon us, He is with us. Let us count on Mary to protect our prayer, to protect our outlook to God and to life so that she may animate our heart with this beauty, this beauty that is trusting in God.



Thought for the Day # 11 – Thursday March 26, 2020

“The Need for Patience”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last night, for about an hour, I connected with some families and some single people through ‘Zoom.’ It was a very enriching and I would say very comforting experience. One thing that came out of our interactions was the need for us to have patience. Patience in the family, patience in the silence, patience in the waiting. We need patience.

So, under the theme of patience, I will simply share with you this expression, this form, this way of speaking about patience. Patience is not about enduring! One could think that, perhaps, however, patience is not about enduring.

Patience is to bear, to carry the weight of something. To carry on one’s shoulders, to bear in one’s heart, and lift up in one’s prayer. Lift up in one’s love. To lift up and to offer. To offer to God the situation we are in. To offer to Jesus, crucified and risen, the situation we are in. To bear it and to offer it.

So may patience dwell in you, may patience shine through you, patience for each other and patience through trials. Carry it in your heart and your prayer and offer it to Jesus Christ crucified and risen.



Thought for the Day # 12 – Friday March 27, 2020

“God Wants to Grant Us His Mercy”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

God is bountiful in mercy.

How does one receive the mercy of God when we have no access to a priest who will minister the sacrament of reconciliation?

The Church itself has foreseen a way when it is not possible for us to ask for the help of a priest. We simply confess our sins to the Lord, to acknowledge our faults before the Lord, with sincere remorse, with profound desire not to repeat it, and with the firm resolve to go, when it becomes possible, to see the priest for the sacrament of reconciliation.

So “God, I ask your forgiveness for my thoughts, for my deeds, for my words, that may possibly have been evil, I profoundly ask for your forgiveness. I bitterly and sincerely regret the wrong I may have done.”

And God loves a contrite heart, God blesses the contrite heart.

Therefore, I assure you, I reassure you, with this disposition of the heart and this resolve, God grants you his forgiveness here and now. He does not wait for the sacrament of reconciliation. God’s forgiveness is granted here and now because God wants our happiness, our salvation, our peace, He wants to fill us with his mercy.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.



Thought for the Day # 13 – Saturday March 28, 2020

“The Lord Is My Shepherd”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is our shepherd.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

Your rod and your staff comfort me. (*Ps 23*)

The valley of the shadow of death is a situation when we are under the impression that no one can help us, when we are cornered against a wall, when we are feeling lonely and isolated. It may seem that no one can reach us, when we are all alone in our pain, alone with our distress, our frailty, our helplessness. But nevertheless! Jesus has the power to reach us, no matter how fragile we are, even when we are in that valley of the shadow of death. Wherever we are! Jesus is with us. “I will fear no evil, for You are with me.”

This time that we are living through with various degrees of alarm and anxiety, various degrees of pain, is a time to rediscover the presence of Jesus in our life. Think of living solidarity with one another. Put Jesus who never abandons us at the heart of our life and our faith. “You are with me.”



Thought for the Day # 14 – Sunday March 29, 2020

“Renew Our Thirst for The Eucharist”

This Sunday at noon, bells were ringing throughout Québec, and from the rooftop of the Cathedral, I was able to bless the city with the Blessed Sacrament.

It was an important occasion, as sadly churches remain closed and masses are suspended, communion is suspended, this is certainly a painful situation. It is true that we can encounter God in other ways, we can encounter Jesus Christ in different ways. But for the moment, let us look at the question of sadness, the loss of the good we are missing. The sadness of not being able to go to Mass, the sadness of not being able to enter a church, the sadness of not being able to receive communion and be in communion in these times we are living. A form of fasting from the Eucharist has been imposed upon us by the pandemic that has struck us here and indeed all of humanity. Perhaps we could learn something together, to draw lessons in order to deepen our thirst for the Eucharist. It's a little bit like someone who goes away on a trip, after travelling for a few weeks, the husband calls his wife and says, “Being away from you makes me realise that I can't live without you.” Or the wife who, for whatever reason, is away on a trip as well, calls her children and tells them “Dear children, you are missing me. I'm away from you and you miss me.” So, seeing as, in our current circumstances, we are living a kind of fasting from the Eucharist, together we could ask the Holy Spirit to deepen our thirst for the Eucharist, to renew our faith in Jesus Christ, true God, true man, truly present in the consecrated body, “ This is my body, given up for you ”, so that our faith may grow, so that our appreciation for the Eucharist may deepen. So that our thirst for Jesus Christ may grow.



Thought for the Day # 15 – Monday March 30, 2020

“What Gives you Hope?”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are beginning our second week in confinement due to the global pandemic that is striking us, everyone, all of humanity. This is the second week in which the same question arises every day – how am I going to get up this morning, do we have the strength to get up in the morning, do we have the strength to live and to love every day?

So today, what is it that gave you the strength to get up this morning?

We can look at an example from the Second World War from the concentration camps, from a book written for youth by Viktor Frankl, a Jew who was in the concentration camps and survived.

The question that he pondered was “How is it that I have survived while men who are stronger than me have perished? Perished in hunger, perished in suffering, perished in misery. How is it that I have survived?” And while looking back at his experience, he realised that what made him survive was that he always had a reason to get up in the morning. His wife. This desire, this hope, this profound sense that it was quite probable that yes, he would be reunited with his wife one day. He was a man of faith, he had a great regard for God, great hope in God, but this great confidence was also expressed through little beliefs, through this very human hopeful expectation of a man who desired to see his wife again, that his desire would come true. A man who hoped to see his wife again and who was kept alive by his love for his wife. In the end, it was this love for his wife that made him survive. Protected by this belief that his desire would come true, his hope who is God, protected by God. But in daily life, it was also this sense of probable outcome due to this great love for his wife that made him survive.

What gives you hope?

Find the little hopes, find those little desires you believe in as you ask God for the great hope to guide you on your path.



Thought for the Day # 16 – Tuesday March 31, 2020

“Being a Witness of Hope?”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We need witnesses of hope. Perhaps, in our current situation, we could find some witnesses of hope; people who have lived in a prison cell for years but have been able to come out with their physical, spiritual and human integrity.

In these circumstances, we can think of Nelson Mandela who spent twenty-five years in a cell. At the age of 45, he was imprisoned. He stayed twenty-five years before being released. He came out not just in one piece, with human integrity of body and soul, but also with a desire of reconciliation and a journey of reconciliation. One could ask, how can one be incarcerated for twenty-five years and come out, so to speak, whole?

Mister Mandela himself called upon the philosophy by which he lived, which came from his culture and his people. This philosophy through the eyes of universal brotherhood. Because of this outlook of universal fraternity, he never turned to hatred towards those who had put him in prison, to resentment, to anger. He always remained at peace. At peace with a universal gaze on all, as brothers. At the same time, he had a message of reconciliation, a thought of reconciliation, an aspiration to reconciliation.

This man’s life can inspire us in these times of ours, as difficult as our situation may be. What is the vision that dwells in me? Is it a vision which is greater than my own situation? For example, a vision of universal fraternity, an outlook of universal solidarity that puts us in tune with the suffering of others, in tune with compassion towards all the people affected by the crisis, while making a resolution, a desire to express through prayer and actions, a solidarity with everyone.



Thought for the Day # 17 – Wednesday April 1st, 2020

“You’re Not Useless!”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You are not useless!

There may be among you, among us, during this confinement, some who are alone in their home or their apartment, or even with others, who are feeling useless. We see the challenges to overcome, the work to do. We want to help, we want to do something, yet we cannot do anything. How are we going to get through the suffering and danger of this pandemic while also overcoming this feeling of uselessness that may come over us?

There is a Christian, Cardinal Văn Thuận, who has also overcome isolation. He was in prison for thirteen years of which nine years were in a cell in solitary confinement. Afterwards, he gave testimony about what he had found most difficult as being the feeling of being useless. He wanted to help, he wanted to help the Church, he wanted to help others, he wanted to help society but he could not do anything. He was isolated, alone in his cell, with this feeling of helplessness and uselessness which weighed so very heavily on him.

This is where he began to gaze at Jesus Christ crucified. He looked at Jesus in so many facets, but he came to pause at Jesus on the cross. There, as he was contemplating Jesus on the cross, he saw that Jesus was also helpless and even at the same time was carrying our own incapacities! This was Jesus, who was not giving a sermon on a mountain, he was not healing the sick, but who was on the cross, helpless. Yet it was on the cross that Jesus accomplished the most for all of humanity, for each and every one of us.

So, he began to offer up his uselessness or rather his feeling, his impression of uselessness, he began offering it up to Jesus on the cross, to Jesus crucified. And this opened his heart to hope. He became a man of hope. He became able, blessed if you like, with the gift of hope throughout the time he was still in the darkness of isolation. He grew in hope.



Thought for the Day # 18 – Thursday April 2, 2020

“Fear Not, I am with You”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Facing the unknown! We are facing the unknown. We like to forecast, to plan, to see what is coming, to see the future unfold. But at this moment we are living, we really have no idea how things will play out. We can envision what will come out of it, but we do not know how. We can see a moment which is not too far away, but we do not know when it is.

The future is still unknown. How can we live today, with serenity and peace, while the future is still so uncertain?

As we look towards the future, yes, there is much that we do not know about the future, yes, a lot is uncertain, but there is still one thing for sure. Jesus Christ, who is with us today, will also be with us tomorrow. So, the question becomes, how to lean on and count on Jesus Christ? Today, as we move forward, we know that in each day, in every moment, Jesus Christ is with us. Just as God sent Moses on a mission and Moses asked himself all sorts of questions, God told him “Fear not, I am with you”. And so it was for all the missions throughout the Bible. All those sent on a mission, went with some trepidation, some anxiety, because the mission held the unknown, but they still went, God told them “Fear not, I am with you.”

It is the same today, God is telling you “Fear not, I am with you.”

Jesus Christ is saying to you “Fear not, I am with you.”



Thought for the Day # 19 – Friday April 3, 2020

“Inner Freedom”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Inner freedom.

A few years ago, when I was pastor of a parish, a homeless person knocked at the door. From then on, he would return every month to visit and we would chat for a few minutes. At one point, he told me how difficult it was for him to enter the institutions that welcome the homeless, such as La Maison du Père or others, because I would frequently encourage him to get help from these services. He would tell me that it was difficult for him because, there were so many rules in these homes that he had the impression that his freedom would be curtailed.

These days, I have been thinking about him, as we are faced with the pandemic, and we find ourselves with many new rules to follow in our society. The rule of physical distancing, now called social distancing, and the rules which restrict travel. We could see these as a burden, and to some extent, they are. But at the same time, it is also as if an interior freedom is still there, there in the attitude that I choose to adopt towards these rules.

It is true that there is an external constraint which is the result of the disease itself, of the threat of the pandemic. At the same time, what is my attitude, what is the attitude that I can choose and that will help me get through all this? Somehow, the attitude, the deepest motivation of the human heart, is love. I must connect this to love.

We can follow the measures of physical distancing in order to prevent contagion, but we can do this out of love for others, out of respect for others and for ourselves. We can adopt this attitude where we give affection to our daily actions, when we to follow these measures themselves, take them and live them, not only as a burden that is imposed upon us by the pandemic and the social measures, but also as a choice. Truly a choice of respect, a choice of appreciation for others.

And of course, entrusting to God this whole ordeal that we’re going through, now on the eve of Holy Week, let us entrust to Jesus Christ crucified all this suffering, so that our hearts do not stop growing in the respect and love of others.



Thought for the Day # 20 – Saturday April 4, 2020

“Small Gestures”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Small gestures.

When you want to show your love for your close ones, your husband, your wife, your children, your parents, you imagine, you look for grand gestures. For example, during the school break, many go skiing as a family in the Laurentians or the Eastern Townships. Others go to Cuba or to Disney World. We look for a grand gesture because it has the power to bring the family together. We love these times!

However, when we are not capable of making these, such as now during the pandemic, why not rediscover the small things? Why not rediscover the power of little gestures to touch the heart?

A small gesture may sometimes seem mundane, insignificant. In a hyperactive life it could even pass unnoticed! But in these days now, where life seems ‘stopped’, why not rediscover them? In a family, among friends, even with social distancing, why not have a look? And from among these small acts of love, these little gestures, once we have discovered them anew, why not choose those we could continue to practise afterwards?

If during this time, we rediscover the small gestures that we used to make or practise but have let go, or if we discover new ones, after we have come through this ordeal, we could tell ourselves that even though it has been a difficult moment, it was also an opportunity to rediscover the little acts and gestures of love in daily life.



Thought for the Day # 21 – Sunday April 5, 2020

“Sunday, The Lord’s Day”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Lord’s Day. Sunday.

One day, a mother said to me, “I try to gather all my children around the table with my husband to share a Sunday meal, and I have to reserve from six weeks to two months in advance to be able to get everyone around the table!”

These days, we have the pandemic itself, which in a way, is gathering us, bringing us together. Perhaps we could learn, through this ‘downtime’ that is imposed upon us, to rediscover Sunday. Sunday as the Lord’s Day but also the Lord’s Day in the family, because the Lord’s Day is a reminder that we come from God, but also that the family comes from God. And that the family is called to grow in unity, in communion.

How can Sunday become a day of replenishment, of strength? Instead of being busy 24 hours a day/seven days a week, in the rat race, each one busy running errands from one place to another, finding it difficult to meet up. Why not make the best of the time we have been given, that has been imposed on us, to learn to rediscover Sunday, so that we may continue afterwards to experience it as a day where we get together?

It is true that society must help to make that possible. When everyone works outside the home on Sunday, it’s not easy! But there are people in society who are starting to ask questions about Sunday, whether of the government or through the media, to find out whether Sunday can be a day when the family can get together, be together, can discover each other and can rest together, with God.



Thought for the Day # 22 – Monday April 6, 2020

“Impatience”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the past few weeks, perhaps we have all been tested by waves of impatience that swept over us. Perhaps they came through our thoughts, perhaps they just welled up and escaped us, through words or gestures of impatience.

When we look back at these times, if we look at our expressions of impatience, there are probably words that we regret. There may have been gestures that we also probably regret, perhaps many, perhaps bitterly. We regret having said those words, made those gestures of impatience.

Perhaps we could look at them as a way to help each other to be patient. To feel a wave of impatience is understandable. We know it could happen. But we do not want to let impatience overwhelm us and win. Rather it means we should engage in the battle that arises in our soul as soon as we feel it coming on, to resist being swept away by impatient thoughts, and so prevent words and gestures that show impatience.

To nourish our minds, each time we have an impatient thought, we can focus on the fact that we are all brothers and sisters in humanity. We can think that we are all implicated, the whole of humanity. It is not one culture more than another, not one language more than another, nor one continent more than another. We are all involved and in equal fashion.

When we think of all those who work in essential services, let's not forget that, indeed they do have work, they are busy and continue to serve society, they are not, so to speak, forced into isolation or confinement, but we must not forget that they are running risks. They run more risks by having to travel, by having to meet people, even if they have protective equipment.

So when we are feeling impatient, let us remember that we are all part of the same humanity. And remember those who are in essential services, incurring more risks than we are. We have an opportunity to truly ask God for the grace of patience with one another.



Thought for the Day # 23 – Tuesday April 7, 2020

“World Day of Health 2020”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This is the World Day of Health, and so it is timely to stop, to think and pray for all those who are in the hospitals, literally on the front, on the front lines of the battle against the pandemic of COVID-19.

We can think of those who are at the front. For those of us who are not at the front it does not mean that we have nothing to do! No! There is much to do because all those who are at the front pull at our heartstrings. Because they touch our hearts, we can support them, even if all we can do is pray. So every morning when you wake up, I invite you to say the ‘Our Father’ for their intention, for the intention of all the health workers who devote themselves to help the sick while risking falling ill themselves.

This is a time for solidarity, an active solidarity where with our heart, where with our intention, we think of all those on the front lines and we pray for them. We want to support them. To have faith in prayer is to believe that by praying we are supporting them. Even if we are far away, God, who is close to each one of us, makes use of our prayer, wants our prayer in order to support all those who are at the front.

Therefore let’s take time to pray, let’s take time to support all those who are fighting at the front against the disease. Let’s pray every day for health workers.



Thought for the Day # 24 – Wednesday April 8, 2020

“Always on the Mission”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are at the eve of the Easter Triduum, the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I would like to address particularly all of the people of God in Montreal, all the faithful of the Catholic Church, the families, the baptised, the confirmed, (the baptised but not yet confirmed), all the people who are committed in the parish, all the volunteers, all those who devote themselves, all the pastoral personnel, the pastoral staff, the children’s pastoral services, deacons, priests, bishops, everybody, all the people of God.

And I want us to say, together, to each other, indeed we are on pause, we have been put on pause by the pandemic, we are on pause because we are practising social distancing, but we are still on the mission! We are in this separation, but we carry on the mission. The mission starts by praying! The mission is carried through with actions, but it always starts with prayer.

And so, I invite you to open the Bible every day, to read quietly a passage from the Bible, to be in silence in front of the Lord. And the Holy Spirit, who sends us on the mission, the Holy Spirit who is the mission that Jesus Christ gives us, the Holy Spirit who can provide images, ideas new to us, who is imagination, will keep us on the mission. Not to level off, but to grow in the mission. Not to wait for something else to happen, but to be in the mission here, today and now.

How can each and every one of us be together in the mission here and now, by the grace of Jesus Christ, and with the gift of the Holy Spirit?



Thought for the Day # 25 – Thursday April 9, 2020

“The Essentials of Life”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

What is essential for you? What are the essentials of life? Perhaps we could all take advantage of this pandemic to review our life, re-examine our existence, ask ourselves: what do I count on in my life? What is there that is most solid in my life? What are the priorities in my life? What do I see as indispensable in my life?

This is a reflection that we can do on our own but also one that we can have with others! By telephone, through social media, or just within your family in confinement, together in your couple, or between parents and children. Discuss what is vital, what is essential in your own experience, but also what is really your perception of the essentials, what are truly the essentials of life.

Jesus Christ reveals that we are not made just for life in this world. Life in this world is important! By the way, that’s why He comes into this world, as He wants to love us. At the same time, we are in this life with an openness in our heart for eternal life. Essential to the Christian faith is the development of an affectionate relationship with Jesus Christ.

This Holy Thursday is a time to be able to say to Jesus Christ, “Lord Jesus, I may have all the nourishment, the food that exists, if I don’t have you, if you’re not in my life, if you’re not at the centre of my life, if you’re not the foundation of my life, I have nothing.”

Jesus Christ, you are essential to me!



Thought for the Day # 26 – Friday April 10, 2020

“Forgive Me Lord”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Good Friday, Jesus on the cross said these great words,” Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they’re doing”. We can see here a call to look back over our life.

What are the wrongs for which I have not asked for forgiveness? Are there instances where I have not forgiven? One or the other are ways to restore and heal our hearts. If we have hurt someone but we have never asked forgiveness, then the hurt is still with us. Perhaps it happened only once in our lives, probably more often, perhaps there was one time that was more significant or more serious than at another moment. Maybe take the time to go over it, take another look. Is it the times when I have not forgiven, or is it the times for which I have not asked for forgiveness? These two aspects can make our heart grow.

Ask for forgiveness. We can always turn to God. Sometimes we no longer have the chance to ask someone for forgiveness because we’re no longer in touch, but we remember the wound we have caused. Sometimes the people are still around, but we feel a bit uncomfortable, ill at ease. But when we turn to God and ask forgiveness, he give us the strength and humility to ask forgiveness of one another.

When it comes to forgiving, there are certain wounds that we are unable to forgive even if we wanted to. They are beyond us. Not only can we not bring ourselves to forgive but we don’t even feel the desire to forgive.

So ask God “Lord, I can’t forgive. Put in my heart the desire to forgive, give me strength to forgive.” And the Lord answers. The Lord gives the strength to forgive. He forgives and he gives the strength to forgive.



Thought for the Day # 27 – Saturday April 11, 2020

“Holy Saturday”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today is Holy Saturday, this is the day of silence. The silence of God. Perhaps we could simply open ourselves to God in silence. Take two minutes to place ourselves before God in silence. Compare this to when we sit in the sun and we feel warmed up by the sun, we don't need to do anything to be warmed up! We only have to place ourselves in the sun. That's the only thing that's required! We are being asked to do the same.

When we place ourselves in front of God, he comes to warm our heart. Let's take two minutes on this Holy Saturday to be in silence before God, to place ourselves, place our heart in front of God, our soul, our spirit, without saying a word! Simply be there in front of him in silence! And he will warm our hearts, he will enlighten us, he will bring us peace, and comfort us. He sees our heart and comes deep into it.

So together, each in our isolation, let's take time to be in silence in front of God and to place ourselves in his light, in his gentleness.



Thought for the Day # 28 – Sunday April 12, 2020

“Christ is Risen”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Christ is risen! Christ is risen! Christ is alive!

On this Easter Sunday, we celebrate the most beautiful of news, the greatest of news, because it means that life has conquered death! Death will not have the last word. Hatred will not have the last word. Life does! Suffering will not have the last say but love and life will. Love of God, the life of God, but also the love that we practise in our life, the life that we live has a future in eternity.

Jesus Christ is risen! The resurrection is the body of Jesus Christ found and glorified. Jesus, the Word made flesh, came into the world and took on our human nature. He could've left our human nature on earth and returned beside his Father. But he wanted to bring our human nature into heaven forever! Human nature, now and forever. Our human nature is at the heart of the life of God because it lives in Jesus Christ, resurrected. He who was crucified is risen, there he is with his human nature, found and glorified, radiating all the love of God, all the life of God.

Jesus Christ is risen!



Thought for the Day # 29 – Monday April 13, 2020

“Jesus Christ is with You”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this Easter Monday, what questions do you have as we live together through this pandemic? You're going through it, but in a way we're going through it together, and at the same time we're also going through it alone. What questions do you have? What questions keep coming to mind?

Know that Jesus Christ is risen and we can speak to Him. We can ask Jesus Christ our questions. We can say to Jesus Christ: Lord, I don't even know what to ask you! It's really bad! I don't even know what to tell you, I don't even know what to ask you.

Bring your questions to Jesus Christ. Lord, how will I get by and come out of this? Lord, what can I do to help someone, someone in my family? Someone out there in society? What can I do to help? How will I manage? What can I do to help?

Jesus Christ has an answer for you. The risen Jesus Christ is with you. The risen Jesus Christ is with us every day. Every Day! Not once a year. Every day until the end of time.

The risen Jesus Christ is with you today.



Thought for the Day # 30 – Tuesday April 14, 2020

“Time to Revisit Our Experience”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is a month now that we have been in this health emergency. We have just come through Holy Week, each in our own way in our own home. Perhaps we could take this week to review calmly the experience we’re living. What has been difficult? It is good to take note, to be able to put it in words. To be able to tell someone.

But also, what is there that’s positive? What is the positive element in my experience? It is also good to be able to pause there. And in the end, is there something that I wish to see continue afterwards? Let’s take an example, let’s say in family life. Perhaps the slowing down of the pace of family life has allowed that; while previously we saw less of each other, now we see each other more. We would love to be able to maintain this closeness. How can we keep and continue to renew this intensity of family life in our lives now, without waiting for another pandemic?

It can also be in the experience of loneliness, perhaps I live all alone in my house, in my apartment, in my home. How have I dealt with being alone? Did I pray? Perhaps, possibly. Did I call someone? Did someone call me? How did I face my loneliness? Somehow, even when we live in a family, we all have a fundamental solitude as a human being. How do we face ourselves in this solitude? How, dare I say, do we embrace the weight of our loneliness to be able to overcome it? To be able to discover the presence of God and the networking in communication with other people because God always puts us in touch with others as well.

May this week be a time to revisit our experience so we may take good from it, so we may grow through it. It is a sort of rereading of our experience. So why not start to review it in front of the Lord himself, asking the Lord: ” Lord, enlighten me so that this experience may help me grow in my relationship with you and in my relationship with others.”



Thought for the Day # 31 – Wednesday, April 15, 2020

“Talk to Others”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In your effort to come to grips with the experiences you are living through — which include difficult moments and, perhaps, positive ones as well — have you talked to others about it? It could be to family members living with you at home, or for that matter, calling a family member who lives elsewhere or even a good friend.

Talk about what you have found difficult and also about any positive developments that occurred. Remember, as human beings, we’re made to be in relationship. We are all created to have a relationship with God, since God loves us all and beckons each one of us to enter into a relationship with Him. When God enters into a relationship with us, He also wants us to enter into a relationship with others. So, we can say that getting closer to God means bringing people together.

And when you pray, ask the Lord for insight: “Lord, enlighten me so that I may proceed along the path laid out by your will.» It becomes an opportunity to converse with others, to share what we are finding difficult or even positive. When someone encounters some difficulty, it often happens that we ourselves learn something or it’s an opportunity to offer sympathetic support, or quite simply we discover that we’re experiencing similar difficulties. Of course, this brings us closer together.

And if we do uncover something positive, the other person can enlighten us, perhaps point to an aspect which we had missed. For example, although all our lives have slowed down, we most likely had not thought of it as something positive until now. However, someone else might have found a positive side to it, and we can build upon this idea, perhaps expand it; it can strengthen us and comfort us, as well.

So, I do encourage you to take the time to share your thoughts with others, to believe that it’s really worthwhile to talk about the difficulties you are experiencing and the positive aspects you’re encountering, too.



Thought for the Day #32 – Thursday, April 16, 2020

“Mercy and Thanksgiving”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Mercy and thanksgiving. Think back over the past few weeks and ask yourself what have you found the most difficult, what have you discovered, and what have you come to appreciate? We reflect on the past so that we may learn in order to move ahead.

When we take note of a beautiful moment, become more aware of a beautiful experience that we have lived, we can see opportunities to give thanks to God. Lord, I give you thanks for the good things you’ve bestowed on me.

When we reflect on what has been the most difficult moments we’ve lived through, we have an opportunity to put all our trust in the mercy of God. In these difficult times, we need to forgive ourselves for how we have reacted. After forgiving ourselves, we need to trust everything to the mercy of God. This will set us free and it will let us move ahead. Our future may hold difficult times, maybe very difficult times, but entrusting them to God’s mercy will let us advance, strong in our belief in God’s providence.

So, let this period of review be the opportunity for you to place yourself more than ever in the hands of God, to give thanks to God for all the beautiful realities in your life. Once you’ve done this, take a moment to open your heart again, ever more fully and with generosity, thanks to the grace of God.

To sum up, you started with entrusting your past to God’s mercy, and went to confiding your future to His Providence. And know that He is with you today, sustaining you to live in His presence!



Thought for the Day #33 – Friday, April 17, 2020

“I Was Sick and You Visited Me”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“I was sick and you visited me.” Countless families are saddened these days because they cannot visit a family member who is ill- either a mother, father, uncle, aunt or another family member. It’s trying enough to be unable to visit a sick person, but some circumstances have made it worse, such as those of one of my colleagues. He was in the habit of visiting his sick mother regularly, and he has just learned that she is at the end of her life. Every day he waits to learn of the news of her death, without being allowed to visit her, to nurture her, to comfort her.

Let’s be sensitive to this kind of pain and sorrow. It could be yours or mine. We can confide all this to our Lord, whether or not we are directly affected by this ourselves. Let us have compassion for those who are living with this sorrow, unable to visit their family member, whether it be their mother or father, in a hospital, in a residence or elsewhere and sick, sick with COVID but not allowed any visitors because of the pandemic. Let us remember them in our prayers.

And let us keep in mind that God visits the sick, He can visit our hearts. Let us pray to God and ask Him to come into the hearts of sick persons, those who have contracted the virus and those who are nearing the end of their lives on earth. Let us pray to God with the knowledge and the confidence that He has the power to be close to all our hearts.



Thought for the Day #34 – Saturday, April 18, 2020

“Energy”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With all our strength! It takes a lot of energy to overcome the pandemic, to overcome our uncertainties about tomorrow or even today, whether these are economic or related to sickness and health. It takes physical energy. It takes spiritual energy.

And so, how do I replenish my energy? Where do I find it? What are the ways to do so humanly speaking? Perhaps through a circle of friends or a support group. And where can I go to find spiritual energy? Perhaps pray or read the Bible. So we must tap into these sources of energy, both on the human level through family and support groups, as well on the spiritual level through prayer, which offers us the strength of God, the life of God, the life of our risen Saviour.

But we should also ask ourselves: what is it that drains our energy? One thing that really drains our energy, drains us interiorly, is when we begin to look for someone to blame. This isn't unusual, as we are all looking for explanations and causes. But shouldn't we be focusing our energies to deal with the challenges related to fighting the virus, to restore health to the individual, to the family, to society? Isn't that our number one priority right now and don't we need all our energy to accomplish this?

And once we're all back to “normal”, or to the “new normal”, we'll look back and realize the question was not about finding someone to blame. Rather it is what could we have done better, how do we move ahead, what lessons can we draw from this experience regarding prevention, treatment and cure? What are the lessons to be learned?

Let's seek to be replenished, re-energized in the right place and steer clear of anything that can drain our energy from within. Stay far away from anger, hatred and resentment.



Thought for the Day #35 – Sunday, April 19, 2020

“Divine Mercy”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday is the celebration of Divine Mercy, the celebration of Merciful Jesus.

This beautiful, great and magnificent celebration began in the 1930’s when Jesus appeared to a religious sister. In the Dirty Thirties, the period between World War I and World War II, people were living through the Great Depression, with all its injustice and violence. He could have delivered a message of anger, but that’s not what He did. Instead, He revealed even more His heart, His love and His mercy. He told us how to discover ever more deeply His mercy, to give ourselves up to God’s mercy.

And when He showed us His heart, radiant with light pouring from it in red and white, those dazzling red rays were His blood, shed for all humanity. He was telling us again of His love for all of us. When we find ourselves in anguishing times and in the dark night of this pandemic, Jesus is there to tell us again and again of His love for us and His mercy towards us. He invites us to give ourselves up to His mercy.

We may be paralyzed by all that is going on now, we may not know what our next step is, but we can always share in His light! The light that tells us that God is with us, that we can confide in Him! That we do not walk alone. His light gives us the strength each day to take another step forward, to walk on the path of His mercy and to offer our lives, our family’s lives, and the lives of all humanity to His tender mercy.

Have a blessed celebration of Divine Mercy.



Thought for the Day #36 – Thursday, April 20, 2020

“We All Have a Family”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We all belong to a family! Whatever our family history might be, who is living or deceased, we are part of the fabric and weave of the relations of the family, in all its various circumstances. We stay bound to each other through the family.

Our parents may no longer be here with us on earth, but they are still our parents. In our family we may have brothers and sisters, who, even if they might live in a totally different country, are still our family members.

A family is a living community. It may be that this time of pandemic could become an occasion to stop and appreciate our family, as it is. Take the time to pray for each other, even if there may be a history of misunderstandings or rifts. Take the time to become aware that the family is the special setting for the vocation of love.

In this time when we are called to stop or at least slow down, perhaps we can dedicate ourselves to renew the meaning of our family and our family bonds. Through prayer, we can expand our horizon to reach those who are far away as well as those who live with us. Perhaps we are alone, but we can still renew our bonds with those far away. It could be that someone has lost all family members, is an only child who has lost parents, uncles, aunts and cousins, perhaps even long ago. This is still a time to pray, to rediscover that family, yet also to discover that we are part of the family of the children of God, a family which can trust in God through prayer.



Thought for the Day #37 – Tuesday, April 21, 2020

“It’s Good that You Exist”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The pandemic is forcing us, in our various homes, to be together, or perhaps, alone. But for this message let us think about “being together”. The pandemic requires us to be together as a couple, as a family, as brother and sister, as parents and children. At some point, we may get tired of being so close to each other, almost on top of each other. But at the same time, perhaps it has created an opportunity to rethink our approach towards “being together”.

Couldn’t this be an opportunity for each of us to take another look at what we believe in? Couldn’t it be an chance to say, “I believe in us as a couple”, “I believe in our family”, “I believe in the relationship I have as a parent with this child, or as a child with this parent”? Use this situation of time together as an opportunity to both broaden and deepen our faith in family, the relationships within our family, and our family ties. And wouldn’t it be a gift to come out of the ordeal of the pandemic as a closer family when our daily lives have been turned upside down?

And when we believe, when we believe in our couple, when we believe in our family, when we believe in the ties that unite us, isn’t it also time to say, to really say, not only in word and in deed, but to say to each other as a couple, as parents-children, children-parents, to say to each other from the heart, in all sincerity, “It is good that you exist.” “I believe in our relationship, it is good that you exist,” “I believe in our family, it is good that you exist”. “I’m glad you exist.”



Thought for the Day #38 - Wednesday, April 22, 2020

“The Virtue of Loneliness”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The virtue of loneliness.

Loneliness in isolation is a hardship which can be painful. We talk about physical distancing, but in fact, we can be in a crowded subway or bus and still feel alone, lonely and isolated. It can also happen in your family, in moments of perplexity, of misunderstandings, when you feel alone and cast aside. Of course, there is also the loneliness that can come to you when you have maybe lost your parents, lost your brothers and sisters, maybe you find yourself at home living alone.

But what can we learn through loneliness? How can we experience loneliness in a way that can strengthen our lives? And how can this time of solitude, somehow imposed on us in this confinement, become an opportunity for personal growth?

I would like to suggest two avenues.

First, become aware of the meaning of solitude and the pain of loneliness that can accompany it. God himself declared in Genesis, «It is not good for man to be alone.» So, loneliness is a reality, but at the same time it is a reality that we need to overcome, we need to transform, to open up.

Through the experience of loneliness, we might soon realize that the world is not enough. We could have everything in life, all the material goods, all the wealth, excellent health. But the world is not enough. We are made for more than this world. We are in this world, but we are made for more than this world. We have a thirst within us for the infinite, a thirst for the absolute. Our solitude is an opportunity to become aware of this thirst, the thirst that dwells in us, that is the thirst for God.

The second avenue is relationship. To be alone is to discover that we exist as pathways, links to each other, that we are beings of relationship, meaning there is always a human mission, how do I relate to others? How do I approach my relationship with others? The greatest, most beautiful, and most fundamental things to build in our lives are our relationships, in all contexts, work, leisure, and family life. But it is always a question of relationships with others, at the same time as it is a question of our relationship with God. We are made for more than the world in which we live. We are made for the Kingdom of God!



Thought for the Day # 39 - Thursday, April 23, 2020

“A Trick Question”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Dear Families,

One question, maybe it is a trick question, are you a domestic church? What is a domestic church? Alright, I will rephrase the question, are you a family where there is love? Are you a family where love is mutual? Are you a family where love grows? A family that shares, a family that is flourishing? This the first element of a domestic church! It is still interesting!

Now for the second question: are you a family that prays, a family where there is prayer? We are talking about personal prayer, yes, but also of a family where we pray together. This is another aspect of the dimension of family life. Are you a family that prays, is your family a house of prayer? Maybe to a small degree, or a large one, but is prayer present in your family life?

Question three: Are you a family that serves? Through work in the world, through service in the Church, through volunteering in various community organizations. Are you a family that acts as a cell of society, as a cell of the Church?

If you are a family where there is love, if you are a family that prays, if you are a family that serves in society, in the Church, you are a domestic church! Does this domestic church need to grow? Everything needs to grow; everything is called to grow. Is it perfect? Nothing is perfect! Grow with the desire, the desire to be a communion of persons, a communion which is rooted in prayer, and which is at the service of humanity, of the Church, of society. And in society and in the Church, if being a domestic church means to grow as a family, are you a domestic church?



Thought for the Day # 40 - Friday, April 24, 2020

“God is Present”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Do you ever forget that God is present? It is easy for a human being to forget. Sometimes we forget that God is here. And in times of hardship it is not always obvious that He is. Sometimes we think that God is not there, because we are enduring hardships. Sometimes we count on Him because we are suffering and so we call upon Him. But still, I invite you not to forget that God is present, all the time.

God is truly present in your life, in your home, where you live, in your family. God is here. And you can know this deep inside and pray. But since we are human beings who live with all the senses, we need to look and see.

One way to not forget that God is present is to have a prayer corner in your home. A prayer corner that can be very modest and simple! It can be an image of Jesus or Mary, it can be a statuette, a crucifix. It can be a candle, because perhaps at this moment “I can’t find my crucifix”, or perhaps “I don’t have one”. It could be a candle placed in a spot that we arrange in a special way that makes us think of the light of the Lord. It can also be a Bible that we put on the table and, even if we don’t open it, just seeing the Bible reminds us that God is here, we see a sign that God is present. We see that he is with us and that he is with us every day, that he is with us in our lives, he speaks to us in our hearts in all situations of joy, but also of sorrow, because sometimes we forget God in sorrow, sometimes we forget Him in joy too! Even though God is truly present.

So I invite you to give yourselves a way to never forget that God is present, by having in your home a visible sign of God’s presence.



Thought for the Day # 41 - Saturday, April 25, 2020

«God is Speaking to You»

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

God is speaking to us. Do you know that God speaks to us? Do you know that God is speaking to you? He speaks in our heart through the desires, the great desires, the beautiful desires that He puts in us. He speaks to us through life situations, through the poor. But He also speaks to us through His Word. The Word of God is truly the Word of God. Sacred Scripture is truly the Word of God. It is a Scripture that has a history. But through this history, it is God who is speaking.

You could think that it is God who has spoken through the Word of God, or the Bible, or the Sacred Scriptures. It is God, who still speaks today. It is God who speaks to us here today. When we open the Bible, when we look at it, when we read a short passage, a paragraph or a chapter, it is God who, through the Bible, through Sacred Scripture, through the inspired Word, it is God who is speaking to me and who is speaking to us.

So, take the time each day to read a passage from the Word of God. Put your Bible in a prayer corner, open it up, and, as a family, even if it is only a verse or two, gather around the Bible, and read a short passage.

I am thinking of this family, that had already started doing this a while back. Led by the parents with their children, they would read a short passage from the Bible. And at a certain point, after a few weeks, one day the parents forgot. And that day, their ten-year-old child said, “Aren’t we going to read the Bible together anymore? “. Yes, parents can start something, but children can help it grow.

Read the Word of God. Read it privately, read it together. Read the Bible as a family.



Thought for the Day # 42 - Sunday, April 26, 2020

“Say thank you, a thousand times thank you”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

What do they say?

Remember when we were children and our parents would ask, “what do we say? We say, ‘thank you!’” Couldn’t this time of confinement we are living through be an opportunity to rediscover the importance of ‘thank you’, of saying thank you?

Confinement makes us aware that there are many things in life that we take for granted. A little like someone who takes health for granted. But when we fall ill, we tell ourselves that health is important, it’s not something we take for granted.

In the same way, we can sometimes take for granted our daily lives, the love we have in our daily lives, the ties that we have with family. And one way to overcome this, so to speak, this instability we have of quickly taking for granted what is given to us, is to learn to say thank you and not to be shy to say thank you.

Do you say ‘thank you’ to each other in the family? Say it more than ever before, say thank you for each other’s just being there, for listening, for speaking, for sharing, for gestures of affection. Just say thank you.

To say ‘thank you’ is to say thank you to each other, it is to say ‘thank you’ in a broader sense in society, but it is also to say ‘thank you’ to God! To say thank you to God for his life, his presence, his fidelity, his mercy, his patience. To say thank you to God, for his beauty, the beauty of his work! To say thank you to God.

Let us learn this Sunday, let us ask for the grace to learn to give more room for thanks.

What do we say? Thank you!



Thought for the Day # 43 - Monday, April 27, 2020

“Do You See God?”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Do you see God? Normally we would say no! We do not see God! God is invisible! But the wind is invisible too. Even the coronavirus is invisible. And yet we know that the wind is there through its effects, we know that the coronavirus is there through its effects. So we can through the effects of a reality, see that reality.

Have you experienced, in the last few weeks, a lasting peace? A peace that stays with you. A peace in your soul, in your heart, in your mind, in your body. A peace that dwells in you and that stays with you, despite the uncertainties, despite the unknown, despite perhaps the danger of losing a job, perhaps despite the hardship of illness. Perhaps despite the threat of losing a loved one. Have you experienced a peace that remains? Not a peace that swings from one day to the next or a feeling that one day you are pessimistic, one day you are optimistic, but a peace that lasts? A peace in the soul that remains and that perhaps even astonishes us!

In the face of the unknown, of adversity, one wonders where this peace comes from. Of course it is a gift from the Lord! It is a fruit of the love of Jesus Christ in you, it is a fruit of the resurrection!

The peace that dwells. Jesus Christ gives us his peace.



Thought for the Day # 44 - Tuesday, April 28, 2020

“Despite the uncertainty, He is here”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When lock-down began a little over a month and a half ago, we all had reason to be uncertain about the future, reason to be concerned. And we have come through it.

We have come through it with pain because we may have lost loved ones. As a society, even if our own family has not been affected, we know that there are sick people who cannot be visited by their family, we know that there have been deaths, where parents have found it difficult to be present. In this sense, there has been a time of uncertainty, but somehow, we got through it with faith, with prayer, with patience, with forgiveness.

And now we are at the beginning of a gradual easing of the lockdown restrictions, a new opening, and a preparation for a return to a new “normal” which is also a source of uncertainty. How is this going to happen? A concern is, can it be done without threatening the health of children or elderly spouses, whatever the generation? There is a lot of uncertainty.

So for the time being, I invite you to take another look at what you are already doing, but also to reconsider the presence of Jesus Christ. We will try to predict it what will happen tomorrow and we should, we will try to take measures and we must do so. But we do not know what will really happen tomorrow. However, we do know that Jesus Christ will be there tomorrow. As he is with us today, he will be here tomorrow.

So the question becomes, how, with each step, can we open our heart to Jesus Christ to receive from him the strength to be patient, to forgive, the inner calm that allows us to move forward by discerning the decisions to make, by seeing the actions to take, and asking for the light that guides us?

So let us learn to depend each day, on the presence of Jesus Christ, who is with us until the end of time.



Thought for the Day # 45 - Wednesday, April 29, 2020

“With Mary”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we move forward on this journey of the pandemic, still with uncertainties and worries, but with the assurance that God is with us, may we have recourse of prayer to Mary. Here we are already on the eve of the month of May, which is recognized in the life of the Church as the month of Mary.

This is an opportunity to entrust ourselves more to prayer to Mary. And that is why on Friday, May 1st, all the bishops of the dioceses in Canada and the United States will consecrate their dioceses and the people to Mary, Mother of the Church. This consecration is done in each diocese by the bishop, but at the same time each family is called to do the same by the parents. And an individual can even make a personal consecration to Mary, Mother of the Church.

Therefore I invite you on Friday to consecrate yourselves as a family to Mary, Mother of the Church. If you live alone at home, to consecrate yourselves to Mary, Mother of the Church. If you are a parish priest, to consecrate your parish to Mary, Mother of the Church. As bishops, we are all going to consecrate our diocese to Mary, Mother of the Church.

If you want a few more resource to be able to live this time we are living, please look on the diocesan website. There, you will find ways, paths, and prayers, to live more in faith and at the same time in sensitivity, compassion, and solidarity.

I assure you of my prayers for you. I pray to Mary for you that she may protect your heart, because when the body is threatened, so is the heart. Let Mary protect your heart, let her protect the peace in your heart, and let her protect the love in your heart. And may she intercede before God as maternal mediator, so that we may be protected from the pandemic, so that this pandemic may come to an end.



Thought for the Day # 46 - Thursday, April 30, 2020

“With Joseph”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Saint Joseph, patron of workers.

May 1 is the Feast of St. Joseph, patron saint of workers. Let us take the opportunity to reflect on solidarity, to pray, to think about all working conditions, the reality that many have lost their jobs in this time of the pandemic. Some people know they will go back to work, others are experiencing uncertainty because of the instability of their employers' businesses.

Let us take the time to pray and show solidarity with each other, to pray to Saint Joseph for all those who are searching for employment. Pray to Saint Joseph for all job situations which are fragile, to pray to Saint Joseph for all people who have a secure job, to show solidarity with one another, to show solidarity with those who have lost their jobs indefinitely.

Saint Joseph is the patron of Canada and also patron of the Universal Church. Pray for the intercession of Saint Joseph for Canada, for the universal Church, for the resolution of the job crisis.

When Saint Joseph was named patron of the Universal Church, it was on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in the 19th century. And it may seem surprising, but Marie and Joseph are together. Praying to Saint Joseph means you are praying to the blessed Virgin and praying to Mary means praying to Joseph. We are praying for the intercession of the Holy Family as an expression of pure solidarity.

Pray and entrust your family to Saint Joseph for protection of work, and the protection of all workers, but let us also pray for all families and entrust them to St. Joseph.



Thought for the Day # 47 - Friday, May 1, 2020

“Our Limits”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are in the midst of experiencing our limitations; personal, family, church, state, and societal limitations. Where these become evident particularly and more painfully, is in our struggle to make ourselves present to the poorest, the most deprived, and the sick, even when they are from our own families.

Yet the question remains: how can we bring ourselves closer to the sick and to the poor? This is a painful and agonising question which would appear to have no solution during a pandemic that has made closeness almost impossible.

Perhaps this brings us back to the question of foundation, to the question of God. God has the power and capability, because He is God, to be close to every human being.

And so we are invited to entrust God with our helplessness and our fragility, and to resort to Mary’s prayer so that she may take care of humanity and the Church. This is why we are also invited to entrust our fragility to Saint Joseph, who protects humanity and the Church, the families of all places, of all regions, of all countries, and of all continents.

Let us call upon heaven to take care of the most fragile, and to protect the most fragile. Let us call upon heaven to be guided on our way, because, we will have to invent new paths of solidarity.



Thought for the Day # 48 - Saturday, May 2, 2020

“Dear Faithful, Dear Parents”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I invite you to consecrate yourselves to Mary, Mother of the Church. As parents, I invite you to consecrate your family to Mary, Mother of the Church. I invite you as individuals, who may live alone, to consecrate yourselves to Mary, Mother of the Church.

At a time where we are unable to take care of, not only others, but even ourselves, I invite you to consecrate yourselves to the care of Mary and the protection of Saint Joseph.

When we consecrate ourselves to Mary, we are surrendering ourselves to her and honoring her so that she can take care of us, our faith, the peace of our soul, and our relationship with Jesus Christ and our love for others.

At the same time, I invite you to entrust yourself to the protection of Saint Joseph. For example, concerning employment. Perhaps you have lost your job or perhaps you are looking for one. Entrust the whole sphere of work to Joseph’s protection.

By entrusting yourself to the protection of Saint Joseph, and by consecrating yourself to Mary, Mother of the Church, the lives of your family and of you personally, will be enriched as you become more open to God’s grace, as you become more ready to welcome God’s grace, and to let God act in you and through you.

It will bring you closer to God because what Joseph and Mary want for you and your family is that you become closer to Jesus Christ. That is what they hope. They provide you, and with pleasure, all the care and all the protection that you need to get closer to Jesus Christ.

I bless you, in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.



Thought for the Day # 49 - Sunday, May 3, 2020

“Do You Know Your Family?”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

During these times, what are you discovering about your family? I'd like to share with you some of the feedback I have received.

One has said, “Since we have been living together during the pandemic, I have realized that we did not live together before.” Let us reflect on that. Others have said: “Since we have been living together during the pandemic, without being able to leave each other, and since we have been eating together, without being hurried and having the time to converse with each other, there are things that I am discovering about my wife, about my husband, and about my children. We now know each other better.”

When reviewing your experience, what have you discovered about your family? How well do you know your family?

Looking ahead, to when we are out of the pandemic and in a new ‘normal’, what do you want to keep in your family life that you have been able to live, experience, and verify during the pandemic? What would you like to keep in the future, in a new normal?



Thought for the Day # 50 - Monday, May 4, 2020

“Personal Hygiene”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We would have liked the pandemic to be only a short-term phenomenon, but we increasingly understand that it is, at least, a medium-, if not long-term phenomenon. In this sense, we will continue to be faced with elements of uncertainty and concern. Talk of deconfinement may bring encouragement, but it may also bring fear, concern and uncertainty because it involves moving cautiously and it involves the unknown.

How can we maintain our sense of dignity as a person, as a human being, when we are going through this time of confinement, uncertainty, and perhaps grief in our family if someone is ill? How do we get through it with a sense of dignity? There are many facets. I would like to look at only one for now, that of daily personal hygiene.

Daily personal hygiene is a way of taking care of the body, that helps to maintain our sense of dignity as a person. It is a way to help us not let ourselves go and get discouraged. It is a way of maintaining our own dignity every day, and not every other day, and to maintain a good spirit, to keep looking ahead, with our eyes open to what may await us, even if what awaits us is not apparent.

I invite you to pray, to ask God for strength, fortitude to get up and practice personal hygiene, and to make this effort to surpass yourself.

God give your soul strength to practice personal hygiene, every day, in order to keep your sense of dignity.



Thought for the Day # 51 - Tuesday, May 5, 2020

“Mental Hygiene”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

What is your rhythm of life?

When we are in confinement as we are now, even if we are talking about deconfinement, at some point we may feel we have had enough. At some point we might feel stagnant, like we are not moving ahead, maybe a bit discouraged, and perhaps we begin to let go, to give up.

One of the things we might let slide is the schedule. If we do this, we might soon reach a point when we realize it is gone...we no longer know what time of day it is. We may not even know what day it is!

One aspect of mental hygiene, (there are many others), is to live according to a schedule, that says please follow me. A schedule as you know takes energy to get started and adhere to. Take a moment to stop and assess your own schedule, to realize how it can really help us to swim and keep our heads above water, and take a break and drift along to recover, so to speak, so we should have one. A schedule for sleep, one for meals, one for walking outside, for getting some fresh air, a schedule helps to maintain our sense of time.

We need a schedule to communicate. If we are home alone, we should call someone every day! It is important to talk to someone. If you are at home with someone, eat meals together. Let mealtime be a moment of being together. It even helps with the schedule! We realize that we haven't seen each other, but we look forward to meeting when we eat together at the next meal. Remember that our next meal we share will not only nourish our bodies, but also nourish our relationships.

In the rhythm of daily life, the schedule plays a part in our mental hygiene. Along with our times of sleep, or meals, or walks, we could add conversation with someone. Each day is important. We need a mental schedule that takes care of our mental hygiene every day.



Thought for the Day # 52 - Wednesday, May 6, 2020

“Spiritual hygiene”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Do you take the time to pray?

We are talking about personal hygiene, and that is important. We are talking about mental hygiene, and that also is important. But there is also spiritual hygiene, taking the time to pray.

Even if we have put it in our schedule, it is probably part of the experience of all of us as human beings that when the time comes to pray, all of a sudden there are a thousand things to do! Prayer somehow is the simplest thing but at the same time it is the most complicated because it is free time, it is a moment when we stop and leave everything to put ourselves in the presence of God. It is a spiritual struggle to put oneself in the presence of God. We are held back by many legitimate concerns in our lives and we easily forget the primacy of God. We forget how important it is to be rooted in God, to be in bond with God.

It is not always easy to get up in the morning. It might have been the case for today. Yet, no matter how much we talk about personal or mental hygiene, we still have to get up!

You might not want to get up or you might not have the strength to get up! Even when you are in bed and you are unable to get up, you still can pray. You might say: “Lord, lift me up!” “Lord, help me!” “And even if it is perhaps the last thing that you can do, pray. When we pray the Lord does not separate our prayer from other dimensions of our lives. The Lord gives us the strength to get up, gives us the strength to love, gives us the strength to take the means for bodily hygiene and mental hygiene. He really becomes like a source in our life, He becomes a source of our humanity.



Thought for the Day# 53 - Thursday, May 7, 2020

“Do You Have a Schedule?”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Do you have a schedule for your day? Even if you are confined at home, and have no specific work goal to meet, do you still have a schedule?

If you want to have bodily hygiene, mental hygiene, spiritual hygiene, you need a schedule. We live in space and in time. We need space, no matter how small, but we also need time: we live in time.

A schedule for getting up, a schedule for going to bed, a schedule for eating, for praying, etc., we need all of that, but -with some flexibility! It can be a flexible schedule, a minimalist schedule with room for adjustment.

I am thinking of the monasteries where, for centuries, the monks and nuns have lived a kind of confinement, for all practical purposes. What is one of the most important things in a monastery? The schedule! The schedule of the day, that everyone knows, which everyone follows as the way of life in community. However, since it is a matter of having both community life and personal life, some time is planned for people to be alone, to meditate, read, do what they want or take a walk. This is time to grow as an individual person. So, in the same day, there is a plan to live community life and personal life.

If we follow that example, we should be able to come up with an idea for our own schedule; we should have a sense of when to meet, when to be with everyone, and when to be by ourselves taking care of personal concerns.

Have a schedule regardless of how it is constructed. You may build it alone or with someone else. Even if you are alone you need a schedule. It will help you be concrete and practical and no longer wonder what time of the day it is. A schedule helps our mental health but also our spiritual health. It helps us to stretch out, to swim up, stay afloat and survive; more than survive! It will help to get through this crisis and even grow through it.

“Do you have a schedule?”



Thought for the Day # 54 - Friday, May 8, 2020

“The 7th Day”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Reading of the book of Genesis:

By the seventh day God had completed the work he had made. He rested on the seventh day from all the work he had done. And God blessed the seventh day; he sanctified it because on that day he rested from all the work of creation that he had made.

The seventh day is a day of rest. And perhaps by reading again this experience that we have been living for several weeks, we have rediscovered how important it is to stop. We were made to stop, we had no choice. We are still paused. We can't wait to start all over again. In the meantime we may have discovered the benefits of being able to stop, to take a break. Benefit for the person, benefit for the family, benefit for society, benefit for the planet.

As a mason spoke with me at one point and drew my attention to the fact that a stone breathes! We wouldn't think that a stone breathes! Yes, stones do breathe! The earth breathes! To breathe is to have a rhythm! There is a rhythm of work, but also a rhythm of rest. Rest is part of breathing.

In the sixties I was training in swimming. At that time it was discovered that rest is a big part of training. One has not only to train but one has also to exercise and to rest! Exercise without rest is less effective than exercise with rest. Therefore we have to learn again how to rest, relearn the rhythm of rest, relearn the 7th day! We have to relearn the day of rest in a weekly rhythm, from one day to another, from one Sunday to the other.



Thought for the Day # 55 - Saturday, May 9, 2020

“Happy Mother’s Day”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Tomorrow, Sunday, is Mother’s Day! How is it possible to celebrate Mother’s Day in the middle of a pandemic, when we are in full lockdown?

I invite you to continue to let your imagination work away. I am sure you are thinking of a lot of things! I have three suggestions to propose to you. Feel free to consider them as you wish.

The first is to say, “Happy Mother’s Day!” If you know a woman is a mother, even if you barely know her, wish her “Happy Mother’s Day.” If you have a friend who is a mother, call her and wish her a “Happy Mother’s Day!” Make sure that whatever the context in which you find yourselves, this beautiful vocation of being a mother is recognized not only within the family, but also in its dimension within the wider society.

The second possibility, a bit more adventurous, is to step out of your house at noon, on Sunday, out of your house, onto the balcony, onto the sidewalk, and say hello to others. Greet those you see outside by saying “Happy Mother’s Day!” When the church bells ring at noon, go out and say, “Happy Mother’s Day!” The bell will also spread this invocation of “Happy Mother’s Day!”

My third suggestion is to pray. Give thanks to God for the mother that He gave you. Give thanks to God. Make a prayer of thanksgiving. “Lord, I thank you for the gift of my mother.”



Thought for the Day # 56 - Sunday, May 10, 2020

“Family Day”

Reading from the book of Exodus. (Ex 20, 8–11)

“Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. For six days you will labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is a day of rest, the Sabbath, in honor of the Lord your God. You shall do no work, neither you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servant, nor your maidservant, nor your beasts, nor the emigrant who is in your city. For in six days the Lord made heaven, earth, and sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day, therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

Could not this time of pandemic be an opportunity for the family, each family, to rediscover how to have a day in the week where everyone can be together at the same time? Sunday is not only a day of rest, but it can also be the day of the family! We know that from the days the children are becoming teenagers and starting to have jobs, it can become difficult on Sundays to bring everyone together around the table. A mother of family once told me: “When I want everyone to be around the table on a Sunday evening, I have to invite a month in advance to make sure that people will get organized and be able to be there. It becomes a big event every time! It’s complicated every time.” There was suffering in the way she spoke.

Keeping this in mind, why not take advantage of this time for reflection which is given to us, to rediscover the importance of having a day in the week when the family can get together? That day is the seventh day, it is the day of rest, it is also the day of the family.



Thought for the day # 57 - Monday, May 11, 2020

“The Last Taboo”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Are you shy to say to someone, “I will pray for you”? Sometimes, when we are with friends, or at the funeral parlour, we hear: “I will think of you,” or I will keep you in mind.” It should not be awkward to say, “I’m going to pray for you”.

There is a sort of embarrassment to say the word God, to name God, to speak of prayer. Couldn’t we learn to overcome this awkwardness? This discomfort is in society, it is everywhere, it can be in our family and it can even be in our own lives! We may be embarrassed to admit the truth to our neighbor who asks us, “Where are you going this morning?” We may be embarrassed to tell him, “I’m going to Mass”. We may feel a little perplexed and wonder why.

I would like to invite you to check in your hearts, in your lives and ask if you feel any awkwardness in speaking about God. Do you feel any discomfort in talking about prayer? Do you feel any hesitation to say the name of God?

If we want to become aware whether we are troubled by this in our life, we understand that we also want to learn to overcome it. One can work through this awkward moment, not only by starting to say, “I will pray for you”, but by having the courage to say it and do it. Because we are bothered, we assume that people will be bothered if we talk about God, so we also need to trust in God. If you say to someone “I’m going to pray for you”, it is possible that it will comfort the person: God is always there to touch hearts. And when we say “God”, the Spirit of God works in hearts so that the name of God resounds there.

Let’s not be embarrassed to say “God,” to call God by his name!



Thought for the Day # 58 - Tuesday, May 12, 2020

“God is First”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are still in a pandemic, in confinement. Even if we are at the beginning of a re-opening, which is being carried out unevenly, cautiously, have you noticed how we human being have complexity, our own contradictions? We are facing this throughout this confinement.

On the one hand, we humans like to think that we are self- sufficient. We don't need others. Yet our lives are filled every day with moments when we experience the need for others! If we live in a house, we needed the various skills of others to build it! Even though we may have built it ourselves, we needed materials that were produced by others! Every day in order to eat, as we have to eat, we need those who work the land for our food, those who transport food. We need others to survive. That need manifests itself in a thousand ways every day!

Because we are in 'confinement' mode, we are rediscovering ourselves, we are rediscovering the members of our family, but at the same time after a few weeks, we are realizing that we also need others, that we need to meet, that we need to build projects together, that we need to be able to see and touch each other. In other word, we really need the others.

It is difficult for the human being to recognise that he needs others, a kind of paradox in fact, but at the same time there is something that is even more difficult to come to terms with,-that we need “the Other.” We need God. One of the fruits that we can hope for from this pandemic, from this ordeal that we are going through together, is the renewal within us of an awareness that we need God, that God is first, that God is the source of everything.



Thought for the Day # 59 - Wednesday, May 13, 2020

“Promote the Domestic Church”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

While we are all preoccupied with the reopening of the church doors, let me invite you to consider a thought with me. Something good could come from these church doors being shut, - to rediscover that each family is a domestic church. May each house, each dwelling, also be called to be a place of prayer — a living space where there is a corner for prayer and where there is a time for prayer.

Perhaps we could think more about our homes in their spiritual dimension, as places which provide space and time for prayer. Let’s realize that there is room for the spiritual aspect of our life at home. How are we living this dimension of prayer, have we an actual corner for prayer which makes the spiritual aspect visible? We need visible reality. We need to be able to look and see. We need visible signs of the invisible, and we need to spend some time with it.

One good thing that could come out of this pandemic, and this confinement, is the chance to see our personal prayer and our prayer at home in a new light and rediscover the family as a domestic church.

I entrust this to you as an intention of prayer that all together we may pray, so that through this trial we may grow in our personal and family prayer, in our homes as places of prayer, as domestic churches.



Thought for the Day # 60 - Thursday, May 14, 2020

“While Waiting”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Since March, the life of faith, the life of prayer, the sacramental life of the faithful, has been turned upside down. Right away, I think of a funeral, with its hardship of grieving. I am also thinking of weddings, wedding plans that are postponed. I also think of all those, young people, children or adults who were preparing for their First Communion, those who were preparing for Confirmation. I also think of all these people who were preparing for Baptism, from adult Baptisms to the sacraments of Christian Initiation. From Baptisms, to the Eucharist, to Confirmations, all these were postponed!

So many things are being carried over into the life of God’s people, in the life of faith, in the life of families, in the life of individuals!

As Archbishop and as people of God, I want to tell you that we carry you all in our prayers. We call on the Lord to take care of you, to be close to your hearts, to bring you His peace.

As long as the disease is a threat then we must wait for the next step, where we can reopen the doors of churches, gradually increase access through phases that are necessary to ensure safety and physical distancing.

We carry all of you in our prayers and we hope that we can meet again soon. Until then, I invite you to ask the Lord to keep you in His peace so as not to worry. We pray for the doors to open again so that God may calm our troubled hearts while we are in this trial, which keeps us both far from each other and far from sacramental and liturgical life.



Thought for the Day # 61 - Friday, May 15, 2020

“Order of Priorities”

Dear brothers and sisters,

We continue to be in state of containment, even when the possibility of relief is on the horizon. We have had the opportunity throughout that time to review our lives.

I have a question for you today: what is the order of priorities in your lives? What was it before this confinement? Through confinement or being forced by the lockdown into a kind of retirement, have you revised your order of priorities? What is first? In the different facets of life there is God, there are others, there is oneself, there is the family, there is society, there is the Church. How do you see your order of priorities?

If most of the time we put ourselves first, if what is first is “me, myself and I”, then it weakens “us” in times of trials, because we don’t really know how to give meaning to our lives. If life is going well, it seems to be to our advantage and maybe it seems satisfactory, if it ever is. But when put to the test, we find ourselves a little without a sense of meaning: why am I alive? Why should I go through this ordeal when things are not going well, when things are terrible? Why should I keep moving forward? How to move forward through the ordeal when we put ourselves as the first above all priorities?

How do you revise your order of priorities?

We will have a chance in the next Thought for the Day to reflect further on this.



Thought for the Day # 62 - Saturday, May 16, 2020

“You Are His Priority”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It could be that you are thinking, “I’m afraid to put God first. I am even afraid to pray for my needs because others are just as important as I am and we all need to live!

Then we can ask, what is most important to God? What is God’s priority? It is humanity! All of humanity, each and every one of us! It is to give us life, to communicate His life to us! It is to make us alive, to make us live!

Come on then! When we put God first in our life, we are winners! What comes first to God is us. It’s each and every one of us. It is humanity.

Let’s not be afraid! Let’s not be afraid to put God first in our lives. Let’s not be afraid to pray!



Thought for the Day # 63 - Sunday, May 17, 2020

“Family and Work”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

How does your personal and family life balance? How did they work together before the pandemic? You might want to put family first, but maybe work demands so much that it is not possible. We all want some form of work-life balance.

Looking back on your life, in this pandemic, with more time for family life, you might tell yourself: “Wow! I am experiencing something that I would not like to lose. I wish my family could really be a lasting priority in my life.” Unfortunately, the ‘normal’ will come back, even if it is a new ‘normal’. Work will get back its usual dimension, its usual hold on our life! How can we help each other as a society to prioritize, to really give to the family the importance it is due? Family is important and so is work! Juggling with both how can we maintain family as a priority?

One way, there are others of course, is to open our eyes to Sunday as family day. Have a day in the week when all family members can stop and be together. **FAMILY DAY!**

If we could nurture this family day with things we practice in our own family or maybe promote it around us and in society, the recognition of our need to belong to the family could grow. We would highlight the importance of the family in our personal lives, but also in society as a whole. Let’s not forget that family is the cell of society.



Thought for the Day # 64 - Monday, May 18, 2020

“To Serve” in the Church and in the World

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The family, as a cell of society and of the Church, is called to serve beyond itself. It is called to serve in the Church and in society.

Where do you see your family in this vision of the Church and society? How can we recognize again that we do exist not only as individual persons or as individual families but as part of society? Somehow the cells in a body are connected to one another, need one another. Likewise, the family as a cell, the cell of society, also needs the body of society, as well as the body of the Church.

While we are thinking about deconfinement, we might look again at our participation in social life and in the life of the Church, and what it means. We might do this because society is an important dimension of our lives. Human beings are social beings who are made to live in relationships. We might want to look at our role in the Church also, our commitment within the Church, because God is important in our personal, family and social lives. The fact that people who share the same faith can come together to form a community and grow in faith is important. To grow in communion with people is important. We might grow in our commitment to society because the Church is involved in society.

During this pandemic let us find a new motivation to get involved in society and in the Church.



Thought for the Day # 65 - Tuesday, May 19, 2020

“Rediscovering Prayer”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Looking back over the path we have trod, what have you learned about the importance and place of personal prayer and family prayer in your life?

We never stop learning. We have learned something during this pandemic. If we look back on our own experience, we should have been able to learn about prayer. What could you be able to learn about the time given to prayer either alone or with the family, and the importance of putting aside time to pray?

The question becomes how to continue afterwards, in the aftermath of deconfinement, in the wake of the opening of the church doors. How can we continue to pray personally and to pray as a family? To pray is always important and the two ways do not work against each other, they are complementary. Personal prayer is part of Christian life because we are children of God. Family prayer is part of Christian life because we, the family exists! The family exists as a community before God, as a full community before God, a cell of society, a cell of the Church. For that reason family prayer is very important.

How can we continue in a world of “new normal” and possibly of “normal”, how can we continue to give this importance to personal prayer, to family prayer?

I invite you to think about that and to imagine yourselves into the future. Ask yourselves how you and your families, together, will continue to give importance to family prayer.



Thought for the Day # 66 - Wednesday, May 20, 2020

“Deepening Love”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we revisit this past day we have lived, in this pandemic, each in our own corner, yet at the same time all of us together, a simple question about love comes to me: how has your understanding of love, your vision of love, been enriched?? How have you deepened your understanding of what it is to love- to love the other, love your husband, love your wife, love your children, love your parents? How does love replenish itself? To love the one next to me, to love my neighbor, to love those I do not see but whom I want to support in my family. With that in mind how is love enriched? I wonder.

Let us look at forgiveness. It is part of our lives because there are always opportunities to forgive. There is the forgiveness that we are called to offer, just as there is the forgiveness that we are called to receive. In both these senses, forgiveness is a part of love.

Another aspect of love is sharing. When we are together, we are called to share perhaps as we have never done before. When day after day we are always together, we end up sharing life. Sharing is another aspect of love.

Another facet is love is love as gift, as a freely offered gift. Often when we do something for others we hope for something in return and that’s normal, that is human. But at another moment we can love just because we want to give it. To love is to love because the other is first in our life. At any moment, we love because, quite simply, we want to love the other! We want to give of ourselves to the other, and we choose to love. And in this sense, love brings us back to deepen our freedom. There is a freedom that we always have. At any moment I am free, I have the power to choose to love. Has my freedom grown? Do I choose to love with more spontaneity, with more depth? Is “loving” really part of a choice that resonates throughout my whole existence?

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Through the experience of the free gift of love, through living forgiveness, through the experience of sharing, to choose to love the other for the other because quite simply, you just love him.

To love is to love! But it is also to receive love! It is to open oneself to love! Inversely, to close oneself to the love of the others is also to love less! So to love is also to be able to receive the love of the other.

How can we be more welcoming of love from others, from the person who lives with us, the people we hold dear? How can we receive the love they want to give us, the love they bear witness to, the love they shared with us? How can we open ourselves to this love from these cherished people who surround us?

To give ourselves freely, but also to receive, with an open heart, the love of the others, this kind of shared love leads to joy! The joy of being loved! The joy of loving, the joy of giving ourselves, the joy of receiving love. And the communion. The communion of persons, the growing exchange. Joy also grows, even if it is by asking us to go further. It will always have its moments of deception, its moments of sadness, perhaps there will be some wounds. But joy grows through these deceptions, through sadness, through certain setbacks in our love when we are tested and learn to overcome, because love is our ultimate vocation. We are called to love God, but also to love the other and to accomplish that through the grace of God.



Thought for the Day # 67 - Friday, May 22, 2020

“Invite Each Other”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

What have you got planned for the weekend?

We have just learned that we can get together with up to three family units, to a maximum of ten people. Isn't this the time to take advantage of it? Perhaps you are hesitating but go ahead and take advantage of it while respecting the rules of prevention.

If you are a single person, why not call two other single people and meet up? If you are a family, why not call another family? Remember: always three family units maximum, including a maximum of ten people. Why not take advantage of this weekend to meet up? If someone calls you and invites you to a get-together? Perhaps you will hesitate at first, because it has been two months since you have gone out! At some point we need to warm ourselves up! Why not plunge right in? If there are people you know, especially if there are people you know who are alone, why not call them and invite them to a family gathering? Start a trend, one family with another, one person with another. Let's invite each other to be together and share a moment family to family, person to person.

Take the time to share. You can start quietly, slowly. Perhaps with a couple of hours. You will decide yourselves as you go. That said, taking the time you need and then meeting one another is already a good start. Plan it well, as you cannot just go into the house if it becomes chilly or the mosquitoes arrive, foresee the consequences a bit.

Take the time to share what you've been through. There might be a question that could give life to your discussions: “What Word of God has helped you through the pandemic so far?” “What is the place that prayer has had in your life so far to get you through the pandemic?” Don't be shy to talk about the Word of God, to talk about prayer

Happy reunion!



Thought for the Day # 68 - Saturday, May 23, 2020

“Dignity of the Person”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Through this pandemic we have been travelling together on a journey, in our lives. Perhaps we have experienced much through this, and it is only fair to take time to reflect on it. We are preparing to enter more and more deconfinement; it may have already started in certain ways. It will take a bit more loosening up, easing up, and begin to open up in a cautious and progressive manner.

We are ending this intense time when every day we met through this Thought for the Day “Care of the Soul”. I will continue on Tuesday and Friday next week, to move step by step into a gradual deconfinement.

I would like to come back to those three points, namely today Friday, tomorrow Saturday, and then on Sunday.

The first point today is the question of the dignity of the person. How does the time of opening up, by revealing our own weaknesses, remind us of the dignity of the person, the dignity of every human being? How does the deconfinement remind us of our own dignity as a human being created in the image of God, but also the dignity of the other? How does it remind us of the dignity of the other, of the sick? Never think only about physical care. Always think of care of the person, care of the heart, care of the soul. We should always take a global approach to the person, when we talk about frailty, for example, when we are dealing with illness or accidents. Always think about the dignity of the person.

We were already doing this, but now we have to increase it, to grow further in our sense of the dignity of the person regardless of his fragility. Dignity should be given also to all the people in our family. Dignity of our parents, dignity of our children, dignity of our brothers, dignity of our sisters, dignity is of the most importance. Always think in terms of the dignity of the other. It should become more and more a reflex, an inner force, a force of the soul, a force of our vision. Treat others with dignity whether you agree with them or not, whether you get along well or not, whether you are in harmony

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or in times of misunderstanding or conflict. Never lose sight of the dignity of the other. This is one of the lessons that we can take away from this pandemic through the experience of our weaknesses. Never lose sight of the dignity of every human being.

**Always think of care of the person,
care of the heart, care of the soul. We should
always take a global approach to the person.
Always think about the dignity of the person.**





Thought for the Day #69 - Saturday, May 23, 2020

“Pure Family Value”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Saturday brings me to think of the family. One of the lessons we can take from this pandemic and reflect upon concerns the family. The family, whose members have spent more time together than normal, has been called to rediscover its own true worth, its value in itself. Its value is within itself. It has value as a fundamental cell of society, it is valid as a cell of the Church, but it also has worth just in itself. For members of a family, the human value which sustains you, the human value that nourishes you is the family; it's your family.

Let's take steps to protect what you have rediscovered as so important in your families, in your lives. Give yourselves time in this gradual re-opening, to give yourselves the time so you don't lose the gains you have made in this time of pandemic. You enjoyed spending time together. There were moments, yes, when it was more difficult, because we were not used to it and there were of course human weaknesses and some volatility in our relationships, even in our families; nevertheless you can see your families in a new light. This rediscovery can last beyond the re-opening and an eventual return to “normal”; although we don't know exactly when. But the family, your family, will always be there.

Another aspect of the family that has been studied is the family as a school of humanity. In the school system we speak of the school at home as home-schooling. But the family is already a school, a school of humanity. It is a school where a child grows up learning what it is to be a human being. As parents, we grow along with our children and together surpass ourselves, we learn first to love the others. When we put love for the other first, we learn to be generous, to have self-giving love. Family is the first place to learn this. It is with our husbands, our wives, our parents, our children that we are called to learn to love freely. How often are parents themselves astonished by the magnitude of their love for their children? How often are parents surprised by the greatness, this depth, of the self-giving, freely given love when they love their children and give themselves to them?

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The family has worth in and for itself. It is valued as the foundational cell of society. Society needs the family more than the family needs society. Not only is it the cell of society, it is also valued as the basic cell of the Church.

May this value of the family live in each one of us and also be born out in your families, in society and in the Church.

The family is already a school, a school of humanity. It is a school where a child grows up learning what it is to be a human being.

As parents, we grow along with our children and we learn to love the others.





Thought for the Day #70- Sunday, May 24, 2020

“Sunday: A Common Day of Rest”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday is the last message of the daily series of “Care of the Soul” Thoughts for the Day. They will continue on Tuesdays and Fridays. We looked at: The Dignity of the Person; The Pure Value of the Family; and God.

During the pandemic we talked about the dignity of the person, the value of the family the importance of God and the importance of prayer. This Sunday message fittingly addresses what this day brings to us. When we take Sunday as a day of rest, it gives us the means, it gives us a tool. It gives us time to replenish ourselves from one week to another. Sunday then gives us time to renew our thoughts on the value of every human being, the dignity, the pure value of the family, because the family takes the time to rest together. Sunday, then, speaks to us of the importance of God so we don’t forget God. We easily forget God, we know. By making Sunday a day of rest for God, the Lord’s Day, we are able to remember that we come from God and that we are on our way to God. We then remember that God is always with us in our lives, every day of our lives, and so Sunday becomes the peak and pinnacle of the week, the time when we rest, but at the same time the beginning of a week, the time when we replenish our strength to head into another week.

May this new awareness of Sunday, which we have been living, continue through this gradual re-opening until the new normal, until “normal” arrives. May we be able to follow through with what we have learned. May Sunday become a strength and a resource in our personal lives, in our family lives, in our social lives because the whole of society needs to take time to just take a breath and just breathe! At a certain time not only are people, individuals or families resting, but society is also taking a day off and Sunday then becomes a time when society takes a moment to catch its breath.

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The earth also needs time to rest. We have already spoken of fallow fields in agriculture, this tradition of letting a field which has been tilled for a few years rest for a year so that it can restore itself. The earth also needs to rebuild its strength.

To help us move forward let us be aware of the importance of Sunday. Let us keep in mind the dignity of the person, the pure value of the family and the priority, the primacy of God in our lives.

**When we take Sunday as a day of rest,
it gives time to replenish ourselves from one week
to another. Sunday gives us time to renew our
thoughts on the value of every human being and
on the dignity and pure value of the family.**





Thought for the Day # 71 - Tuesday, May 26, 2020

“Human Contact”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

How could deconfinement help us to broaden our sense of brotherhood?

Today, at the beginning of deconfinement, I had to go to the store. At the entrance of the store, there was a guard who controlled traffic. Usually, I would have passed right by without paying much attention, going directly to do my shopping, but we are still in unusual circumstances! So, I said to him, “How are you? Do you have any instructions to give me?” Then the conversation began. He gave me directions, explained the rules to me, and even guided me through the new regulations. These included being careful not to touch things, but to select the items visually and have a precise idea of what we want. And so finally, this encounter became an opportunity for dialogue and fellowship. Then we met again after my passage through the store, and we said goodbye.

When I returned to the street, I crossed paths with people walking, and everyone respected the two meters of physical distancing. Some had a mask, others didn't. So, we bowed our heads. We did not talk; we did not say anything in particular. But, in the city, it is not uncommon that when we cross paths with people on the street, we look straight ahead and generally we do not greet strangers.

Let us take advantage of the stages of this gradual re-opening and renew our fellowship and openness to one another. Acknowledge and recognize each other's existence, bowing our heads as our eyes meet because we can go through this ordeal of deconfinement better if we are together.



Thought for the Day # 72 - Saturday, May 30, 2020

“The Gift of the Fear of God”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

During these difficult times do you have worries and perhaps even fears? Fear of illness, fear of the COVID, fear of losing a job, fear of loneliness, fear of increasing family misunderstandings as we live closer together, making it challenging to renew the harmony in our way of life? Do fears haunt you?

There is a way to overcome fear, whatever it may be. Turn to God. And on this eve of Pentecost, to ask for the gift of the fear of God. Fear of God doesn't mean to be afraid of God. Fear of God is to be in awe, deeply impressed, before the greatness of God. The depth of his love, the magnificence of his power, the wonder of His being. Impressed with this, what should we do? We turn to Him, abandon ourselves to Him, put all our trust in Him, pray to Him and call upon Him.

So if we take the time to pray and ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of the fear of God on this eve of Pentecost, it will help us entrust our whole life to God, rely on Him, and to cast out the fears.

The fear of God casts away the worries of our lives! A sure and simple way to start this petition for the gift of The Fear of God and to take refuge in God's grace and experience the greatness of God is in adoration. Adoration is to recollect ourselves and meditate, to revere God who is infinitely great and all-powerful, infinitely loving.

There could be in our lives, everyday, a time for Adoration where we put ourselves before God, taking refuge in His infinite love, and remaining in unceasing awe of His magnificence.



Thought for the Day # 73 - Tuesday, June 2, 2020

“One Minute of Silence”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are all in distress since the murder of Mr. George Floyd a week ago, last Monday. And we are all in shock. What to think? What can we learn from this tragic event? How can we overcome the public murder of an innocent person?

Perhaps we could, firstly, ask ourselves the question: am I ready to change my outlook to be able to see in every human being a brother or a sister in humanity? Whoever the person, whatever their cultural or racial difference, whatever their temperament, whatever their origin, every human being is a brother or a sister in humanity.

Let us ask the Lord to make this outlook stay with us. Let us ask the Lord to give us the capacity to be able to see in every human being, a brother or a sister in humanity. And in the face of the death, the murder of Mr. George Floyd, let's observe a moment of silence.

After this Thought for the Day, I invite you to recollect yourself for a minute, take two minutes of silence for him, and lift him up to the Lord.

His brother has spoken out these days to encourage peaceful protests. His family is one who has faith in God and believes in peace, and so he has called for calm. And let us ask the Lord for peace of heart so that we can continue to see every human being as brothers or sisters in humanity.



Thought for the Day # 74 - Saturday, June 6, 2020

“Sunday, the Day We Meet”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Are you a little bit tired? After almost three months of confinement, with just a little bit of deconfinement here and there, we may well feel fatigued! We can communicate by phone, by Zoom, by various means of social media and platforms. Still, we eventually realize that the human being is made to encounter another, the human being is made for connection and contact with one another in a live community.

So, this Sunday, even if you are tired and you do not really feel like it, I invite, propose, suggest...urge you to go out and meet someone! Visit someone! Especially if you are alone at home, go see someone, always respecting the social distancing, wearing of masks, disinfecting, outdoors only etc. You are a few in your family? Reach out and visit with another family! Of course, always respect the same rules of deconfinement. Meet someone! Try it, and I can assure you that even if you find it is difficult because you are tired and weary, just try, and you will be happy you did! And it's for sure that after you've done it, you will be happy!

This Sunday, go out and meet someone!



Thought for the Day # 75 - Tuesday, June 9, 2020

“What Does it Mean to be Righteous?”

Reading of the Gospel according to Saint Luke. (Lk 20, 20-25)

²⁰ Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. ²¹ So the spies questioned him: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. ²² Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” ²³ He saw through their duplicity and said to them, ²⁴ “Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. ²⁵ He said to them, “Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

Spies who played the role of righteous men. A role. Am I playing the part of a righteous man or am I actually a righteous man? A powerful question.

What do righteous people do? Righteous people see the image of God in others. “To God what is God’s.” Where is the image of God? We find the image of God in every human being. Every human being belongs to God.



Thought for the Day #76 – Saturday, June 20, 2020

“A New Essential”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are all familiar with the concept of essential services. If you were asked what services should be considered essential, you might reply healthcare, (such as pharmacies and hospitals) and possibly the police for security purposes. However, often, we do not necessarily consider the spiritual. If we take another look back at our experience of this pandemic, perhaps one thing we have learned is the importance of the spiritual.

Let us think of the people who are all going through this pandemic simultaneously. In our own personal lives, we may have moments of inquiry into our lives. Where do we go to find the answers to the meaning of our lives? In the spiritual, in the search for meaning, the meaning of suffering and danger, the meaning of the unknown, the meaning of solitude, loneliness and isolation. Spirituality is the path that helps the soul find the strength to carry on moving forward.

For instance, we know that in every experience of losing a loved one, in the affliction and grieving, there is a need that manifests the spiritual, because we cannot go through grieving alone. We need to be accompanied. Who best to accompany us but God himself. Therefore, we could say that the experience of mourning opens us to the spiritual meaning, enabling us to rediscover this need and its essential importance.

Think of all the wedding plans that people had to postpone because of the pandemic. Marriage marks a milestone, a milestone moment in the lives of those aspiring to embark on the journey of creating a beautiful love story but they had to postpone their plans.

All this is understandable, - the need to postpone events, to have to stay in confinement, to have to adjust, -it is all understandable! At the same time, it makes obvious how much we need the spiritual, what an essential need it is, because the human being is also spirit. Body. Heart, but just as much spirit as well.

Now let us pray to the Lord, that, through this pandemic, we may all rediscover how truly essential is our spirit.



Thought for the Day #77 – Wednesday, June 17, 2020

“Knowing to Exit the Screen”

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Four months ago, it was not uncommon to spend an evening with other people at a restaurant. As we sat around ordering, waiting for the meal to arrive or perhaps even as we were starting to eat, many of us would inevitably end up with our cellphones in our hands. We thought we were actually meeting up with each other, yet we would sometimes find ourselves isolated from them as we were busy communicating with someone else on our cellphone. It is not easy to be truly together when everyone has a screen in hand!

With this pandemic, we have perhaps noticed some things we have taken for granted more specifically, the ability to spend quality, in-person time with others and the importance of human contact.

That being said, screens have been useful tools, enabling us to have video-conferences with friends and loved ones. This has helped us alleviate our sense of isolation and to see and talk to people, but we are aware that it is not enough. It cannot replace real human contact and meeting up in person.

Perhaps one day, during this time of re-opening, when we can calmly, quietly find the chance to communicate with others, to meet up with others, to greet each other, we will keep our cell phones in our pockets or purses and allow ourselves to be totally available to those in our presence.

Are we free to meet up with each other? Are we free of our devices? Are we freed from our screens?

If we were able to come out of this pandemic freed from our screens, so that when we are with people, we are fully present and available to them, this would be a beautiful fruit, a beautiful consequence, a way of drawing good from this experience which has been tragic and difficult for many, indeed, for all of us.



Thought for the Day #78 – Thursday, June 18, 2020

“Smiling Through the Mask”

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We are on the eve of a long-awaited moment. The joy of the reunion of the people of God as they return to church to receive the Eucharist and to pray! But also the joy of the pastors and the pastoral team united with the people of God. The people of God crave being together. As much as we were deprived of the Eucharist during the pandemic, priests were deprived of the people of God. Therefore, we are all together anticipating this moment with great joy.

Starting on June 22nd, as the first step, the church doors could be opened! That means, in each parish there is a team, already in place and working to prepare the church to open to welcome the people; preparation with signage for social distancing, hygienic product stations and steps to follow all protocols laid out by the government and health authorities.

When the pastoral committee has the required equipment and put all these measure into place, when sufficient volunteers have come forward, (it takes many volunteers to ensure the operation runs smoothly, switching and spelling each other to keep the doors open for the entire day), all is ready. The church committee will notify the archbishop who may then give permission to open the church and move forward.

Each parish operates at its own personal rhythm and is autonomous in that sense. Once the parish receives authorization, their name will be added to the Montreal diocese website to inform you if the parish is open or not and when you can begin to go to pray. If you want to go to your parish, you could call and offer to help as the need for volunteers is great and appreciated at this time. If you are available, kindly offer your assistance to facilitate the opening of the parish doors, to be a presence, a person to greet the parishioners, it is so important! People are also needed to help clean the pews, also important! This is going to take teams of many volunteers.

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Should generosity inspire you to offer your help, please sign up, and provide your name and availability. Become part of a team to help open up the churches in your neighbourhood.

As soon as we are all together, we will turn to prayer, it is the moment of hope, our moment of joy. It is also a moment to take measure of what we have considered and what is important, - that is, to put on your mask! Your mask, - even if we keep our two-meter distance, there is always a moment when we risk crossing it and no longer being sufficiently apart- the mask is important!

Maybe you have noticed that when wearing a mask, we are not too encumbered to smile. Maybe we have to decide to smile through our mask! Smile through the mask, because when we smile, our whole face is smiling, our eyes are smiling. This time of welcoming, when we return to our churches, our parishes, our missions, our communities...will be an important moment! I am inviting you to smile, your arms open wide, even if you cannot touch each other, even if you cannot see each other's faces. The affection of a smile with open arms can pass through the mask, through the clothing, across the distance to be a moment of joy and an encounter with hope.



Thought for the Day # 79 - Monday, June 22, 2020

“Personal Prayer in the Church”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, Monday, June 22nd, brings us to the 79th Thought for the Day. When we first started, we did a Thought for the Day every day. Then for a few weeks, we offered Thoughts for the Day twice a week. This week is going to be the last week for that plan. We will continue with one Thought for the Day per week, on the weekend, because we are now at a stage in the process of re-opening that allows churches to open and celebrate Mass. We will do this gradually and slowly, because each parish needs to form a team, to equip itself, so the process of re-opening goes smoothly and calmly.

Today, the Cathedral opened its doors and I went in the afternoon to spend two hours in the Church so I could pray and greet people while respecting and maintaining physical distance.

I could see people walk into the Church just to pray. What they wanted was to go into the church, recollect themselves, sit down, or kneel down and pray privately. There are some who came for the 5pm Mass but arrived an hour earlier. They arrived early because it has been a long time since they had prayed in a Church, and they wanted to prepare themselves before the Mass. They want to be able to put themselves in the spirit of prayer. Even though they had prayed before in other places, to pray in a church was important to them because there they were also in the Presence of Our Lord in the House of Prayer.

I invite all of us to rediscover the Church as a House of prayer not only for its communal prayer, its Eucharistic celebrations and liturgical events, but also for personal prayer.

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I invite you to go to church, to visit a church, to visit the Lord who is present in the church and to recollect yourself and meditate. It can be for five minutes, it can be for 15 minutes, it can be for an hour. The length of time spent in prayer is not important, what is important is getting up and going to church to meditate.

It could happen to you , as it has to me, that you see someone who is troubled, who is worried about an illness in the family, who prays at home but when confronted with this pain and suffering, would rather pray in a Church. Therefore, she comes and knocks at the door to ask for someone to open the church so she can go in, pray, and pull herself together.

I invite us to find the sense of personal prayer in the Church. It is okay to pray elsewhere as well, but it does strengthen the unity of our life of prayer. This is because the church is really a place dedicated to prayer. There is a Grace given to us when we pray in the church. Let us rediscover our personal prayer there and also give thanks to God for our communal prayer in the Church.



Thought for the Day # 80 - Monday, June 29, 2020

“Petition: Closure of Stores on Sundays”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

During this pandemic, we are discovering the virtue of taking the time to stop. We see the good it can have on the family and on the planet, for it allows the planet to stop and take a breath too. We also see the good that it can have on our spiritual life. It has allowed us to pray on our own, together with family or with people with whom we are confined.

Therefore, to stop to rest on Sunday, to make Sunday a common day of rest, would be a strength, and a benefit to society.

Do we want to make Sunday a common day of rest? If so, place this in your internet search: National Assembly, “Petition: Closure of Stores on Sundays.” This will identify the correct site and it will guide you to be able to fill out the petition.

There are, at this moment, about a thousand people who have already responded to the Petition. We have until August 29th this summer to sign the Petition.

Let us make Sunday a common day of rest.



Thought for the Day # 81- Wednesday, July 8, 2020

“Thankfulness and Rest”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is July 8th and the summer holidays have already begun! I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, thank you for your prayers, for having prayed while listening, while participating at Mass on television, for having prayed online, for having sought to pray in different ways when the churches were closed.

I would like to thank all the parish teams that made it possible to open our churches. It is because of many people who have come together in the diocese, in the parishes and in the churches that we were able to re-open. We were able to ensure safe circulation and cleaning, and a safe environment that decreased the risk of spreading the virus. I thank you all for your participation.

I thank all the people who have been able to attend Mass again in the churches when their health permitted and who knew when to stay home if they felt symptoms that resembled the flu.

We are at a time to be thankful for the wonderful work that God has instilled in our hearts, in society and in the Church.

At the beginning of this vacation period which has already started, perhaps we could say it is a vacation well deserved, even if our usual plans are disrupted and we don't know what to do. We could be haunted by a kind of boredom and fatigue because we have been dealing with this pandemic for four months without a break, while on a constant search to adjust our projects in a creative fashion. Our energy is drained or very difficult to replenish.

I want to bring your attention to one particular point. It is the question of blame.

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Moreover, I would invite you and encourage you not to be driven to blame. When we are in difficult periods of our lives, it is only human to blame something or someone. It is important not to get caught up in the idea of blame because we are all in this together, for the greatness of our planet. This pandemic is not the fault of the Chinese nor was it the fault of the Spanish for the Spanish flu since the flu did not even originate in Spain. The pandemic is not the cause of a particular people, race or culture. It is a biological reality which now affects all of humanity. We must work together to be able to face it.

This question of blame makes us forget that we are in this together. Human beings tend to put people in categories. In so doing, it makes us forget this. From the beginning, we thought a lot about the elderly and put them slightly apart in a separate category. We have gotten past that! We now focus on what is really important: the health and symptoms experienced by everyone and not just a particular group. We have therefore used measures that work and reassure everyone. We have learned to physically distance, to wear a mask, and wash our hands.

Lately, for example, we have also become a little impatient with certain behaviours of some youth. We must not forget that we were once young and thirsty for life ourselves! Young people have also struggled and suffered through this pandemic. These are difficult times for everyone, young and old. Let us not blame the young people. Let us love them and accompany them. And if they disregard the rules at times and are not cautious, let us be patient. Let us talk and communicate. Let us stay safe together. Sharing our concerns during the pandemic solidifies our need for each other and society. For society needs the dreams and energy of its youth.

Let us make an important personal resolution, “I shall not blame anyone.” I invite you to make a firm resolution, a necessary resolution to keep this conviction that we are all confronting the pandemic together.

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I would like to conclude by reminding us that there is always rest in the Lord. We can pray and ask the Lord for things. We can listen to the Lord and be attentive to His will. We can also rest in the Lord. In your daily prayer, in the rhythm of your week, continue to bring your weariness and fatigue and place them before the Lord. Offer your discouragement to the Lord.

We will see each other at the end of August. I thank you for journeying with me through these Thoughts for the Day. I have myself learned a lot through making these Thoughts for the Day! Today is the 81st, I believe! I want to leave you in peace for a few weeks, so we will see each other again at the end of the month of August. Yet we are still together, accompanying each other. Never forget that the Lord is with us, that He is at work in our hearts. He is also at work through us. The Lord wants to guide us through this ordeal to come out of it even stronger.

God Bless You,

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

HOMILIES



Collection of homilies delivered by the Archbishop during the confinement period between mid-March and July offering many powerful points, ideal for meditation and daily living.

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HOMILIES

1. Homily- Sunday, March 15, 2020

Third Sunday of Lent - Year A (Jn 4:5-42)

Jesus “strong.” Jesus “weak.”

Are we, you and I, living in uncertainty? Are we worried? Yes! We are definitely living in uncertainty because of the COVID-19 pandemic. What is this virus? What impact does it have – or will it have – on us, on our family, on society? We might also be worried about: Who or what can we trust? Who or what can we rely on? How are we going to pull through?

Does living in uncertainty necessarily mean that we must also feel worried at the same time? Is it possible to live in uncertainty while possessing inner calm?

Is it possible to experience both uncertainty and inner peace?

On the human level, we know what we must do. Follow the appropriate hygiene measures and the various social directives issued by the various levels of governments.

On the interpersonal level, there is the issue of isolation. When we talk about people at risk of contracting the virus due to age, frailty or illness, with it comes the risk of loneliness and feelings of isolation.

How can the sense of isolation be prevented? Perhaps by calling someone every day, calling a person who is known to be alone. It could be someone in your family, a friend, an acquaintance. Calling someone every day so that no one feels isolated; so that no one says, “I am alone.” You are not alone. Combat isolation.

Meet the Lord, pray, meditate. Jesus “weak” is with us in our weakness. He bears our weaknesses. [In today’s Gospel] Jesus is tired as he approaches the well and sits, entering into dialogue with the Samaritan woman. Jesus draws close to our weaknesses. In prayer, offer your weakness to Jesus. Jesus is weak insofar as he draws close to us in our weakness, bearing it.

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HOMILIES

But Jesus is also strong. He is strong in his divine life, in his love for us and the grace he gives us. Jesus “strong” has the power to calm our hearts.

Jesus, we offer our worries, anxieties and inner turmoil to you. We offer our weakness to you. Calm our hearts so that we can live together in solidarity, respond to people who are in isolation and to those who are afflicted with illness, so that we can live with compassion. Calm our hearts, so that we may also be instruments of your peace.





2. Homily - Sunday, March 22, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Laetare - Year A (Jn 9:1-41)

Lord, come to knock on the door of our hearts!

Is God essential to us?

It sometimes happens to us that we are faced with challenges as individuals. However, during this past week, we have all been hard hit by the same challenge, a pandemic with many repercussions. One of these alarming repercussions is that gatherings in churches, just as all other public gatherings, have been cancelled. The churches themselves, the doors of our churches are now closed for an indeterminate period of time. However, keeping our houses of prayer open is something essential.

During this pandemic, even what we would have considered to be essential is affected! Most of the time, even when we have to let go of the superfluous, the essentials are not affected. But in these times that seem so strange to us, even what is essential is affected.

Yet, in a manner of speaking, that what is the most essential of all the essentials remains always present! For each and every one of us! For God, you are essential. Now we could turn around the question and ask, is God really essential for us?

In our eyes, is God so essential that he is first of all the essentials? I have to repeat this: For God, you are essential, you come first. Many things are essential, of course, many things are important in life, but for God, human beings are the first of all the essentials. This brings back the question: Is God the first essential in our life?

In today's Gospel, we see a person born blind who is cured by Jesus. Several times in the Gospels, it happens that someone meets Jesus and asks: "Lord, can you heal me?" The Lord answers: "Do you believe?" To which he replies: "Yes, I believe." "Be healed," concludes Jesus, who thus brings about the desired healing.

But in today's passage, we see a different approach. It is not that the man born blind asks Jesus to heal him. The man doesn't really know Jesus. It is Jesus who approaches the man. It is Jesus who starts the conversation. It is Jesus who touches him and tells him: "Go, wash in the pool." In leaving, all that the man born blind knows is that Jesus cured him. At some point in the future, the man will learn that it was Jesus, God Himself who healed him.

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HOMILIES

God wants to be close to us.

As we pass through these uncertain times, we have the option to pray. We are called to prayer, we are invited to turn to God. But we are just as much invited to pray for those who do not believe in God, for those who are perhaps not yet at the point of praying to God themselves.

In his love, God wants to be close to the heart of everyone. He wants to answer the needs and be in the hearts of all who believe in him. But he also wants to answer the needs of those who have perhaps forgotten him in their life. Jesus has come into the world to save all humanity. God loves all humanity. God wants to be close to every human being. During this pandemic, we discover or rediscover that we are all brothers and sisters as human beings, even when we have different faiths. This is indeed the right time for us to come to see the essential in all the essentials, the opportunity to think of the love of God for both those who are far from him and for those who remained close.

While we pray, we are certainly invited to pray for ourselves without forgetting to pray for each other, to pray for all persons, and to pray for all of humanity. When we go into the depth of our heart, now when all of humanity is plunged into uncertainty, we ask ourselves, will the whole world become sick?

It is clear to us that the whole world will not get sick, but even just one person, one victim, is already one too many. It is already one victim whom we must draw close to us, for whom we must pray, and for whom it is demanded of us to show compassion.

Uncertainty, solitude: God comes knocking at the door of our hearts!

Lately, we feel a lot of uncertainty while we also experience a lot of solitude. We live in a time of isolation when we have to observe physical distancing, which can make people feel alone and isolated from the rest of the world. Many are alone at home. We must think of them as victims by collateral damage caused by this pandemic. Let us be ready to hold their hand, figuratively speaking, or lend an ear, to call them, make a phone call, as signs of life to establish a real connection.

Today, we also go through economic uncertainty. But whether it is about health or solitude or economic uncertainty, or even if we are not directly touched by the pandemic, let us take time to recognize that we are all visited by God who knocks on the door of our heart. We cannot

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open the doors of our churches, but we can open the door of our heart. We can open our heart because God is personally knocking to get in there. And when we open our heart to God, this is perhaps something very precious that can come from this predicament: The opportunity to learn how to open our heart to God. In the end, even when church doors will be open again or even if they had remained open all along, all of us must eventually learn how to open the door of our heart.

Ultimately, do we desire to open the door of our heart to God?

Do we really desire to open our heart to God? Above all, God really wants to be there. He wants to be close to every one of you, to every one of us.

Let us take the time for silence. If we are silent before God, if we find our focus, if we listen quietly to the Word of God, this time of prayer gives us the new strength that we need. Each day of the week, open your Bible, because God wants to come to us not only on Sundays but every day of the week.

Take the Bible in your hands, read it for a few moments every day, one minute, two minutes, five minutes, fifteen minutes, it does not matter! Read the Bible slowly and you will see the results. In the morning, open your Bible, read the Bible, integrate some time for it into your schedule. Take the time to read the Bible in order to discover how a sole Word of God has the power to nourish and accompany you throughout your day.

It is your daily bread. The daily bread is the bread that we eat, but the daily bread is also the Word of God that nourishes our heart, our soul, and our spirit.

We pass through this special time that helps us to return to what is the essential of the essential, that which gives us the joy of experiencing the presence of God who knocks on the door of our heart. The essential of the essential, this is also the possibility of strengthening solidarity between us, so that each victim who is afflicted by this disease may discover compassion and a helping hand. Let us help ensure that each individual who is suffering financially can benefit from the financial aid that government institutions are putting in place, so that all can overcome equally the economic uncertainty linked to the pandemic in which we find ourselves.

Let us take a moment of silence to stand before God and say with all sincerity: “Lord, Lord, come knock on the door of my heart.”





3. Homily - Sunday, March 29, 2020

Fifth Sunday of Lent - Year A (Jn 11:1-45)

What are your sufferings?

These difficult times bring suffering. What are your sufferings?

When a loved one dies, we suffer, and these days, people are suffering such a loss, plus they are grieving the loss of a loved one at a time when the opportunity to gather as a group to mourn or pray publicly is extremely restricted.

This in itself becomes a new source of suffering. It is as though someone, at the moment he or she departed from this world, did so unknown to anyone and completely unnoticed.

However, God is always near to us, even in death. Indeed, God is never closer to someone than at the moment of his/her death. And God is never closer to us than when we lose someone we love.

There are also other sources of suffering arising from the insecurity in which we now find ourselves. Suffering felt while awaiting test results: Are we infected or not? Suffering brought on by worrying about family members who could be affected by this virus. Suffering associated with economic insecurity: Will I lose my job? Maybe it already happened or is about to happen. Will I receive the help that I need to make it through this? And there are other forms of suffering that are part of daily life but now merge together as we live through this pandemic.

Is it possible to move forward, to deal with suffering and still have hope?

When we hear Jesus speak in today's reading from the Gospel of John, He says: "I am the resurrection and the life." He knows who He is: He is the Lord. He is the Lord who is life. He is the Lord who gives life, and He is the resurrection and the life. Yet, when Jesus reaches Lazarus's tomb, He suffers the loss of his friend. He weeps, experiencing the depths of our humanity. He does not leave our humanity behind, but He experiences every aspect of it, including the experience of suffering. He draws closer to us in our suffering.

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HOMILIES

From whatever you are suffering today, share it with the Lord. The Lord truly draws closer to us when we are beset by suffering. He willingly suffered and embraced suffering so as to accompany us in our fears and suffering. He could have ignored his own pain. He could have said that it does not matter. He could have said that the resurrection will make this just a passing matter. No, suffering is real; suffering is part of our heart and soul, our body and spirit. The suffering we're experiencing is real and it's affecting us. We are suffering now, in one way or another. And Jesus comes and holds us close throughout our suffering.

But at the same time, suffering does not have the final word. When beleaguered by suffering, it feels as if suffering will have the final word. When we live in uncertainty, we feel as if insecurity will have the final word. When we are confronted with death, we feel as if death will have the final word. But when we are suffering, vulnerable, confronted with sickness and death, does suffering, disease or death have the final word? Jesus Christ, through his power and his resurrection, came to demonstrate, proclaim and reveal that this is not so, because life itself will have the final word. Suffering is part of human life, but life, everlasting life is the final word, will have and has the final word. Love! Love between us, love shared within the family, love expressed as solidarity with others, this love will have the final word!

Suffering afflicts us in many different ways. Think of hockey, where there is almost always someone on the team who gets hurt! The important thing is that not everyone gets hurt at the same time. That is why hockey players must support each other. The injured person carries the burden of injury, and the person who is not injured must help to carry the team.

Now, this becomes the question: in these difficult times, when suffering seems so prevalent, how can we move forward in solidarity, both as a society and as families? Solidarity is always part of living, but the situation in which we are now living calls us to go further, even much further. Although we are in physical-distancing mode, more than ever, we need to be together in another way rather than "as it used to be," as people say today.

Life has not stopped! Physical distancing is indispensable, and now it is of the utmost importance. We must respect the confinement measures. Doing so is a form of social solidarity. Out of solidarity, we respect the physical distancing and other confinement and quarantine regulations that we are asked to follow. But life does not end with these measures! Life continues in a different way. How will we maintain personal relationships with one another? How will we continue to be united? Well, pick up the phone and call those you know. Call someone each day. Call at least one person every day. If you know someone who is alone or if you are alone yourself, make sure to reach out. If you are familiar with social media, use it; many are doing so. Listen to the radio! Radio is accessible 24/7; it's a very familiar means of

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communication that offers good company. At one time, only radio existed but it brought the whole community together. Television is another way to experience community solidarity. There are numerous other ways to connect socially. Through these means, we are reminded that we are thinking of one another, that we are praying for one another. Let us not forget one another.

This Sunday, at noon, the church bells will ring for 10 minutes all across Quebec in order to send a message of hope! This message of hope is aimed at the heart, since suffering possesses power to damage the heart. It is somewhat like the scientific laws regarding the expansion of a gas. We learned in school that gas couldn't be confined in only one side of the room. Wherever gas exists, it spreads throughout the whole room. When suffering invades our heart, it cannot be contained in only one side of one ventricle, no matter how hard we try to do so. Suffering spreads and tends to overwhelm the heart. For that reason, solidarity is so important. Let people know that they are not alone in their suffering. So if we grow in solidarity, if we find new ways to be united, we can say later that it was a struggle, there was suffering, but we grew stronger together. When this happens, then goodness will rise out of crisis, from this pandemic, from this menace that now weighs so heavily on all of humanity.

Jesus Christ himself invites us to be united in solidarity by the mere fact that He himself became one of us, in solidarity with each of us. We should never forget Jesus' powerful words when seeking ways to meet Jesus. Yes, we meet Him in prayer! Yes, we meet Him through the Bible! Yes, we meet Him through the sacraments, the Eucharist. But then, there is also the person who is suffering. This is a way to meet Jesus! This road leads to an encounter with Jesus.

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Each time that we lend a hand to someone who suffers deeply, we lend a hand to Jesus. Each time that we engage in a conversation with someone who is suffering, we converse with Jesus.

If you are longing for Jesus, suffering because there is no public celebration of Mass, if you long for his physical presence, if you long to receive Communion, beyond the spiritual communion always open to believers, then remember that when we are in a communion with someone who suffers, then we meet Jesus.

Therefore, during these difficult days, we are learning to form stronger bonds between us, so that solidarity will grow between us and that all of us will grow in solidarity.





4. Homily - Sunday, April 5, 2020

At The Procession With Palms - Gospel 35 Year A (Mt 26:14-27:66)

Feeling alone?

Are there times, or on some days, moments, when you or your loved ones feel all alone as a result of the strict restrictions imposed by public health authorities? When we especially consider those aged 70 and older, and those who are ill, this time of pandemic has called for an increased need for physical distancing.

At the same time, however, we can each become vulnerable to loneliness, and to an all-encompassing form of isolation, both a physical, as well as an emotional one.

During these times, we are called to turn to the Cross, to turn to Jesus on the Cross, Jesus crucified and alone: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”. There, we see Him, alone, separated from God, and from those for whom He came to give his life, from all of humanity. Deserted.

Yet, on this Cross, He bears all our loneliness. There, in his divine mystery and in a profound way, He unites in communion with each person enduring such loneliness. In a way, Jesus becomes much closer to us than we are to our own selves. There is no greater intimacy than that with Jesus, as He bears our loneliness on the Cross. And where does He turn to in his isolation? “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” With these words, He expresses a profound, sudden and mysterious sense of abandonment. While He may feel utterly isolated from humanity, He never ceases to know that his Father is near! He does not address John nor Mary at the foot of the Cross when he says “God has forsaken me!”. No, He speaks directly to God! He speaks to his Father! In addressing his Father directly, He reveals his trust in his Father’s presence, without which he would not have chosen to address Him directly.

Therefore, when Jesus says: “My God, my God”, “My Father, My Father, why have you forsaken me?”, He is praying, “I feel completely abandoned, I don’t even understand why, and yet I pray to you.” Jesus continues to pray. And as He does so, he also continues to pray for all of humanity, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And as He continues to pray for, and love, all of humanity, His trust in the Father persists: “Into your hands, I commend my spirit. Into your hands, I commend my life.”

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HOMILIES

This way of praying, modelled by Jesus Christ, can become our own. When we feel abandoned, let us pray to Jesus and turn to Him. Let us look upon and contemplate Him. Place a crucifix in your home, be it on a wall, your desk, or a table. Contemplate the crucified Christ who is praying to his Father. Look upon Jesus and pray! Begin praying, even if you feel as though no one is listening. “Lord, I pray to you! Lord, I pray to you! I pray to you because I am fading from myself; even if I am no longer moved to pray, I know that you will not abandon me.” Pray to Jesus in the same way He prayed to his Father, by offering up your sorrow and feelings of abandonment, “Why have you forsaken me?”. Pray to Him and offer up your pain from feeling deserted, alone, and neglected.

Remember others who are also struggling alone and pray for them. Pray that God’s mercy be poured out over all mankind, dwell like a balm in our hearts, and bring comfort and consolation. In the same way, while we find ourselves alone before Jesus, before his own solitude on the Cross, we can each lift up all of mankind in prayer during this pandemic, all those who suffer in their isolation. We can each continue to place our whole life in God’s hands, in the hands of Jesus Christ. May we come to know that Jesus Christ will never abandon us.

We are living in a time when, in ways that can be conflicting and unclear, we find ourselves experiencing increased levels of isolation. It is true that physical distancing must be practiced and is essential in helping prevent the spread of infection. At the same time, however, as we try to avoid spreading the virus, we also seek human connection and ways to bring people closer together, perhaps more than ever. This is perhaps one of the blessings that can emerge from the adversity we currently face. While we’ve been pushed to our limits, and forced to distance ourselves physically, we have worked, and continue to work, towards renewing our means of communication, to seek alternate ways of reaching out to others, i.e. small gestures that have the power to touch hearts, like a phone call, however brief, or a message through social media, using the internet, and always staying current and relevant in the way we connect with others, all while renewing our prayer life at the same time.

We can feel alone as we face the unknown, our hearts filled with uncertainty. Let us pray to the Lord. Let us call upon his Mercy for all mankind, for our families, for each one of us, and let us place our lives into the God’s hands, He who will never abandon us.





5. Homily - Wednesday, April 8, 2020

Chrism Mass (bilingual homily) (Mt 26:14-25)

The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me.

When Jesus speaks these words, he speaks of himself. But now that these words are transmitted through Holy Scripture, they apply to all the baptized, as all those who are baptized have become missionary disciples.

All of the Christians who have been baptized and who received the sacrament of confirmation, are missionary disciples. And as missionary disciples, this Word of God “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” is for each one of us.

These words apply to each and every one of us.

We are living in a pandemic when time feels as if it were suspended. *Frozen in time!* In this suspended time, we do everything to avoid gatherings in order to respect the physical distancing regulations to fight contagion. It is important that we do so.

But at the same time, from the viewpoint of mission, from the viewpoint of life itself, life somehow continues. But how does it continue? How can life continue when we are living with physical distancing? How does the mission continue when we are in a state of physical distancing?

This is a bit like the journey on which we have been together for several weeks now since the health emergency was declared.

At first, we stopped, thinking all would soon be as it was. We just wait a couple of weeks, until April 13 at the latest, and then all is normal again.

But little by little we realized that we were not going back soon to how it was. Therefore, we really have to think ‘mission.’ We have to continue to think ‘mission.’

We have to ask ourselves today, here and now, how can we continue to be on a mission? How can we be on a mission without physical gathering, without physical contact and respecting physical distancing? This is kind of what we are learning together. It is kind of what we are sharing with each other.

(cont'd)



HOMILIES

First of all, the idea is not to come with ready-made solutions or the perfect recipe. First of all, the idea is to rely on the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is always sent to guide us!

We are always filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is very imaginative! We can count on the Holy Spirit to inspire us in prayers, in actions, in finding the right words, in being in mission, growing in mission, and continuing the mission.

This leads to the challenge we are facing together. We need each other. But we also need the Holy Spirit to support us on our way.

This means that what we need first each day is prayer, and we must rediscover how to pray. As we know, prayer is the foundation of the mission and also is a mission itself! Perhaps the only thing that I can do is to pray, and I am already in mission! This is what Saint Thérèse of Lisieux taught us. Prayer is the lever that lifts the world.

Therefore, praying is already being on a mission. At the same, the Holy Spirit enlightens us in prayer. The Holy Spirit inspires when we say a few words or act subtly, or when we act boldly and speak at length. The Holy Spirit inspires our generosity and our concerns. He inspires us in prayer so that we can even learn to hold the entire world and all humanity in our prayers.

Therefore, how can we be on a mission? How can we support each other? How can we be in mission together? How can we be in mission to testify to Jesus Christ? In mission to testify that no matter how isolated we are, God is close to every human being, each and every one of us.

How can we testify to Jesus Christ in our life, how can we testify that Jesus Christ has the power to give us peace, how can we testify no matter how afraid we are of the illness that might afflict us, no matter how worried we are about our economic future?

Yes, this is the testimony that we are to give. Jesus Christ has the power to calm our spirits, Jesus Christ has the power to carry us, Jesus Christ has the power to guide us. We can entrust our presence and our future to him. We can entrust ourselves entirely to God.

In this time, we are called to pray. Praying is already being on a mission. We are called to invoke the Holy Spirit, we are called to open the Bible every day, read the Bible every day, pray with the Bible every day. And through the prayer of the Bible, we put ourselves before God in prayer. The Holy Spirit guides us, the Holy Spirit inspires our gestures, words, thoughts of prayers. The Holy Spirit is always on a mission. The Holy Spirit is not on a pause! He is always on a mission.

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HOMILIES

In the mission of the Lord, the mission has become a person: Jesus Christ, and it is Jesus Christ himself who gives us his Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the mission is not on pause! It is always at work, always in motion. How can we, in this time, how can we be here and now on a mission? It is because here and now, the Holy Spirit is with us.

Therefore, I invite you to pray daily while thinking of the Lord's call. What is the Lord's will? What is his call? Come together in your pastoral teams. Pray together as a family.

Often, prayer is personal, and we pray individually. Indeed, such personal prayer always remains important. But at the same time, we have to learn how to pray together: in our parishes, our missions, in our religious organizations, in our communities, or with our family.

We need to learn to pray together. We need to learn to take the time to pray together. At the same time, we need to discover that we are all on a mission and that we are on a mission together.

Perhaps we can take advantage of the lockdown time forced upon us to reflect on the fact that it is not just the individual who is on a mission.

It is the people of God who are on a mission. The whole Church, as the body of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit, is in mission. Perhaps we can take advantage of this time to enter more fully into the sense of mission.

It can seem like a paradox but perhaps, when we were the most paralyzed, we finally discover better our sense of mission. This is not just for a moment, there is no magic solution, it does not happen in an instant.

It is a journey, it is a process. However, if we embark on this road together, under the guidance of God, being in mission as the Spirit of the Lord is with the people of God, then the Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

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**As apparently, we are frozen in time,
not moving, maybe it can be the time to
renew our sense of mission, and renew the sense
that we are all together on a mission.**



We may be frozen in time, but the mission is not frozen. Jesus Christ is always at work, the Holy Spirit is always moving to inspire the souls, our souls, our spirit is always at work. And so, we are called to pray every day, which is already to be on a mission. But to pray every day to ask the Lord, not only for us as individuals, to be on the mission, to follow the will of God, to be an instrument of his peace and of his love. But also, we are called to learn to do it together. And as apparently, we are frozen, really frozen, not moving, maybe it can be the time to renew our sense of mission, and renew the sense, not only a personal mission, but we are all together on a mission because the spirit of the Lord is upon us.

Therefore, pray with confidence that the Lord keeps us in mission. The mission is great and remains great. There are people who are suffering, who are in pain, people who are looking for the purpose of life, who live in solitude, and who are worried.

But we can support each other and testify that Jesus Christ is present to each human soul, to each person. No matter what their personal, family, or social situation is, Jesus Christ never ceases to give his life for each and everyone of us.





6. Homily - Thursday, April 9, 2020

Holy Thursday (Jn 13:1-15)

Do You Know the Eleventh Commandment?

You will recognize this passage, but perhaps you did not know that this is the Eleventh Commandment given to us by God: “Do this in memory of me.” These are the words spoken by Jesus. “Do this in memory of me. This is my body, which will be given up for you. This is my blood which will be poured out for you. Do this in memory of me. Take, eat. Take it and drink of it. Do this in memory of me.”

Whom addresses Jesus? He addresses the Apostles as the pillars of the church but also as the representatives of the whole Church. His words institute them as priests, but he also addresses the whole church.

By speaking to the whole church, the whole people of God become a priestly people. The apostles are instituted as priests, they are made priests, and the whole church becomes a priestly people.

“Do this in memory of me” is the commandment for both priests and to the whole church to celebrate the Eucharist. Mass is a divine commandment. It is a commandment that comes from Jesus Christ, who is God, who is the Son of God made man.

Praying the Mass, celebrating Mass, and participating in the Eucharist is to respond to God’s call and commandment. Does Jesus say: “I am making you an offer, a suggestion, if you want it, when you want it.” No! “Do this. Do this in memory of me.” The Eucharist, the Mass, is God’s commandment, it is Jesus Christ’s commandment.

When Jesus Christ makes this commandment, is it for his sake? No! It is not for himself! It is for us! It is us who need him. We need Jesus Christ. We need his love. We need his grace. We need the love that is in him. He who loves us to the end, he is always present. “This is my body given,” this is the love that goes to the end that is made present in the Eucharist.

It is the love that gives all and asks for nothing in return that is made present in the Eucharist. It is us who need the Eucharist as the Eucharist becomes nourishment. The table of the Word of God becomes nourishment. The table of the Eucharist becomes nourishment. We are nourished by God himself so that love grows within us and love blossoms within us.

(cont’d)



HOMILIES

We need the Eucharist. Without Jesus Christ, love cannot begin to blossom in us. It is Jesus Christ who comes to nourish love in us. In some way, the Eucharist is participating in the love of Jesus Christ who loves us to the end. It is to learn with Jesus Christ, by Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, and to walk with him, to imitate Jesus Christ and to love to the end.

And now we see the close connection between the institution of the Eucharist and the washing of the disciple's feet. In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we read of the institution of the Eucharist. But in the Gospel of John, we do not read about the institution of the Eucharist. There is a chapter, Chapter Six, which is about the Eucharist. But in the Gospel of John, during the last supper, what we read is about the washing of the feet, it is about service.

By the grace of Jesus Christ, we learn to serve, to serve like Jesus. The Son of God came into the world not to be served but to serve and to give his life.

Therefore, the question is not whether to serve or to go to Mass. It is not that serving and loving one's neighbour is a substitute for going to Mass. Could we honestly say to someone: "Listen, don't eat every day, don't eat so that you have more time to love others, to have more time to help others."

No, you would end up too weak!

If we want to love each other with all our strength, this takes strength. To be strong, we need food. If the body needs nourishment, then the soul needs nourishment, and the heart also needs nourishment. Receiving the Eucharist, the Word of God and the Bread of Life, the bread of the Lord as nourishment, this is to receive the love of God as nourishment.

In the gift of the Eucharist, we receive not only the love by which God loves us, but the love through which we become capable to love. It makes us capable to love. It makes us capable to love and to serve.

During this pandemic, in this COVID-19 situation that is immobilising the whole world, striking our economy, striking our families, striking all activities, non-profit organisations, striking the Church, all different denominations, all different religions. We have all been stripped naked in the face of COVID-19.

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HOMILIES

From the point of view of our faith in Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ never ceases to come to us, to nourish us by his word and by his body. “This is my body, which will be given up for you. This is my blood which will be poured out for you.” Jesus never stops to nourish us.

Although the church doors are closed, the Church is not closed! The doors are closed but the Church is not closed! The church is closed in solidarity with those in danger, with the whole world, considering the danger of contagion. But life continues.

How will we love one another while physically distancing as we are? Well, we need to find new ways to love because we are always called upon to love. Our vocation to love does not end because we are on pause. The vocation to love continues.

How do we pray? This is a major question for a Christian, for a Catholic. How do we pray now, having the habit of going to church to pray?

We know that we can pray with our family and we could do it more often. We know that we can also read the Word of God and we could do it more often. Even while we do what the special circumstances invite us to do, what do we make of our relationship with the Eucharist?

In a paradoxical way, right now, while we are not fasting in preparation for the Eucharist but fasting from receiving Eucharist, we can ask the Holy Spirit for grace to enflame our hearts. The flame of desire to receive the Eucharist.

We can ask the Holy Spirit to let grow in the hearts of all the baptized, all priests, the whole people of God, all of us together, to let grow in them our faith in the Eucharist and our desire to receive the Eucharist.

Perhaps this is the occasion to review our lives. When we can go to Mass, we can take it for granted that the church doors will be open on Sundays or weekdays. When we take it for granted, how can we become aware of it?

Perhaps by reviewing our lives? Perhaps by becoming aware of our thirst for the Eucharist?

Perhaps we should ask for the grace that our thirst for the Eucharist be revived, because one takes for granted what is accessible every day. But now, this has stopped and the familiar is no longer there. How do we ask for the grace not to take God’s gift for granted, not to take the Eucharist for granted?

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HOMILIES

On the contrary, as we expand our ways of prayer, we as expand our ways of loving, let us rediscover that Jesus Christ is really the center of our life and of our faith. Let the Eucharist really be the center, the source and the summit of the Church and our life as was said by the Second Vatican Council.

Currently, priests have the privilege of having access to the Eucharist. They are called to celebrate Mass each day, but the faithful are away. The priests miss their contact with the people of God. This absence of the faithful from the Eucharist lets the hearts of priests grow, to grow as they thirst to be closer to the people of God. The Eucharist takes all its meaning from the presence of the people of God, because the Church is in the service of all humanity.

We can ask the Lord to increase our thirst for the real presence of the Eucharist with the help of a prayer that will increase this thirst. It is a prayer of spiritual communion in which we express our faith in Jesus Christ, present in the Eucharist. At the same time, this prayer asks that the Lord gives us an ever-increasing thirst for the Eucharist.

Therefore, at communion time, there will be a moment just before the priests take communion. At that time, we will recite a prayer of spiritual communion. I invite you to listen and to participate and to really make a spiritual communion. A spiritual communion does not replace the Eucharistic communion. Spiritual communion renews our faith in the Eucharist, our faith in Jesus Christ present in the Eucharist. It renews our thirst for Jesus Christ and encounter with Jesus Christ present in the Eucharist.





7. Homily - Friday, April 10, 2020

Good Friday (Jn 18:1-19:42)

They Look on the One Whom They Have Pierced

“They look on the one whom they have pierced.”

This is a prophetic message that we find in sacred scripture. Jesus himself will extend this by saying: “The Son of Man must be lifted up. Lifted up from the earth, the Son of Man will draw all people to himself.” Once lifted up from the earth, St. John wants us to be certain that we understand well what this is about.

When he is lifted up from the earth, this is to say when crucified. He speaks of the death that awaits him in Jerusalem.

Why does Jesus draw all people to himself from the cross? Because the love that lasts to the end, the infinite love of God, is poured out from the cross, through Jesus Christ crucified. This love is of an astonishing strength. Death has its power, but the love of God is more powerful. The love of Jesus Christ is more powerful. Suffering has its power, but the love of Jesus Christ is more powerful. Hatred has its power, but the love of Jesus Christ is more powerful. Divisions have their power, but the love of Jesus Christ is more powerful.

On this Holy Friday, let us take the time to contemplate the crucified Christ. Let us take the time to gaze on Jesus on the cross.

Let us contemplate his love. The love that no one could stop, not by any suffering, not by any kind of death, not by any kind of hatred. It could not be stopped, as he died while loving us. Jesus died while loving us. He died while forgiving. He died while praying: “Into your hands I commend my spirit.” He died while loving us to the end, he loved us to the end.

At times we find it difficult to love, we find it difficult to forgive, we are afraid of getting sick. Perhaps we are afraid of the sick during this pandemic, because COVID-19 causes so many fears and worries. When we are afraid, others might say that being courageous is not to have fears.

But before the cross, we share our fears with Jesus Christ: “Lord, I am afraid! I offer you my fears. Lord, I am sick! I offer you my sickness. Lord, I have sinned! I offer you my sins.”

(cont'd)



HOMILIES

Jesus carries all on the cross, he carries it with the power of his love, his mercy, his salvation. Let us contemplate the crucified Christ.

At the foot of the cross, we will have a universal prayer that we will pray for the life of the world, for all of humanity, and at the same time for all our those who have been affected by COVID-19 anywhere in the world.

Thereafter, we will reveal the cross and take a moment to venerate the cross, to bow before the cross, to adore the cross, to adore the crucified Jesus Christ.

We will do this in silence. We will do this slowly, aware of the seriousness of the passion of Jesus Christ, and also aware of the seriousness in the life of the human family that is threatened in this pandemic. Jesus is stronger than any pandemic.

Let us ask for his mercy, let us call for his salvation. Let us entrust all to him. Lord, into your hands we commend our lives.





HOMILIES

8. Homily - Saturday, April 11, 2020

Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter - Year A (Mt 28:1-10)

Let us learn to hope.

Have you ever experienced what the night is? The night of your room, the night of the city, the night of the forest? What do we do when we are in the night? What do we do when we want to walk in the night? We look for light because without a light, it is dangerous to go too far. It may even be better not to move. However, with a light, no matter how small, we can move forward, in the light of a flashlight, the light of the moon, the light of the starry sky, the light of a flame or a torch.

The light does not make the night disappear, but it allows us to walk through the night and arrive safely. It lets us go where we want to go. Making an analogy with the current time, we can say that in an astonishing and mysterious way, all of humanity finds itself in the darkness of the night. It is the night of the pandemic, it is the night of COVID-19, and we search for a light of any kind. We are looking for a light so that we can move forward.

We could talk more of the light of the human spirit which, thanks to science, seeks and finds solutions. We could also speak of the light of the human soul that seeks the path of solidarity.

But before it all is the light of God. The light of God enlightens us, a little bit like a flame. What does a flame do? A flame enlightens us. But a flame also warms us! It can be cold in the middle of the night. In this case, we are not only looking for light but also for warmth.

The light of God is a light that has the power to warm and to enlighten.

Tonight, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We celebrate the life that nothing could stop, we celebrate a death that nothing could stop. Certainly, death is powerful. Certainly, suffering is powerful, but the life of God is even more powerful. God's love is even more powerful.

Nothing could stop Jesus Christ from rising again. Nothing. Since nothing could prevent Jesus Christ from rising again, nothing can prevent Jesus Christ from coming to us, knocking on the door of our heart and offering us his warmth and his light.

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HOMILIES

Jesus Christ has the power to comfort us, no matter how lonely we are, no matter how isolated we are, no matter what economic uncertainty we face in our future. The light of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ resurrected who is light, has the power to warm our heart, no matter what sorrow we bear at the loss of a loved one. I repeat: the risen Jesus Christ has the power to comfort our heart, to give peace to our heart, to give strength to our heart.

He also has the power to enlighten us. How do we move forward? What can I do to get closer to my parents, my grandfather, or my grandmother who are alone? What can I do to be close to those who are sick? What can I do to keep up the fight if I am in a hospital working as a doctor, a nurse, or an auxiliary nurse? If I do not know whether I will survive because I am constantly exposed to this wretched virus? What can I do?

In addition to giving us inner peace, the light of Jesus Christ also has the power to enlighten us. It has the power to guide us in our actions and in our words. It guides us even when we do not know how long the night will last. This in itself, not knowing how long the night will last is part of the mystery of the night. When it is night and we know that the day is coming, all we do is simply wait until the sun rises.

Today, we have sunk into a strange night, towards the bottom. We do not know how long the night of this sickness will last, this night of the pandemic that now confronts us. In this special time, let us remember that the light of Christ has the power to guide us. It can support and accompany us, whatever night surrounds us, for however long the night might last. Jesus Christ is the light in the night that we need.

Even when a light in the night seems fragile, it still illuminates. Even when a light in the night seems very weak, it is enough to guide the next step. And the light of Jesus Christ is a powerful light. No darkness can prevent it. All it depends on is whether our heart is open, on whether our heart is open to him, on whether we choose to open our heart to him.

Through his warmth and his light, Jesus Christ enables us to recognize our vulnerability. It is not easy to face our weakness! Sometimes, when we let ourselves be taken up by our activism, when we are in the heat of the moment, we forget our weakness.

In the light of the night, the night of this pandemic, we are confronted with our weakness: our personal weakness, family weakness, and social weakness. We are frightened when confronted with our own vulnerabilities and weaknesses. But the light of Jesus Christ is also warmth. It is a light that enlightens, it is a divine light that gives warmth.

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HOMILIES

By its warmth, the light of Jesus Christ comes to help us see our weakness, it comes to help free us from the fear of seeing our weakness. For this light comes to tell us that Jesus Christ is with us, that the love of God leans towards us, that Jesus Christ is at our side, and that the divine love accompanies us and goes before us towards the fulfillment of eternal life.

With Jesus Christ, we are invited not to fear recognizing our weaknesses and limitations. Quite the opposite!

In confronting our weaknesses and limits, we recognize that we need each other. Just as we need God, we need each other. Sometimes, in the heat of the moment, we think we can do everything alone.

During this pandemic, we have at the very least learned that we can do nothing if we stay alone. We cannot confront it without the help of others. We need the help of God, but we also need the help of others. This help can come from family members, our society, our religious movements, and our organizations.

Alone, we can do nothing, and we need the help of others. Be not afraid of saying 'yes' to the weakness of not being sufficient in yourself. Be not afraid of saying 'yes' to the weakness of not being self-sufficient. The light of Jesus Christ allows us recognize our weakness, as he offers himself to our hearts and comes to open them.

Our weakness is now like a wound that transforms us, a happy wound in a manner of speaking. It is like a wound through which the light of Jesus Christ can enter into us. It is like a crack in a wall that lets in the light. This wound therefore becomes a crack in our heart that lets in the divine light.

In this night, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ that nothing could stop. In this night, when we celebrate the light of Jesus Christ that no other light can overcome, no darkness can overcome, let us open our hearts to his light. Let him tell us of his love, let him tell us of his compassion, let him tell us of his presence, let him tell us of his salvation, let him tell us of his life. Let him tell us that the life of God is stronger than all nights, that the life of God is stronger than all deaths. Let us be guided by Jesus Christ on a path of prayer, a path of solidarity with each other, and on a path of hope.

Together, let us learn to hope.





9. Homily - Sunday, April 12, 2020

Easter Sunday - The Resurrection of the Lord - Year A (Jn 20, 1-9)

Jesus Christ is risen! The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed!

The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed!

If we can say this again today, it is because 2,000 years ago, the risen Jesus showed himself to men and women. He did not show himself to all of them, but to his apostles and to certain disciples, and only to them. But after their experience of the risen Jesus, they spent the rest of their life to proclaim his resurrection: The crucified one is resurrected! He is alive!

From generation to generation up to the present day, the witnesses announced and announced again that Jesus is risen! But only the disciples and the apostles of the first generation really saw him. The passing on of this wonderful news continues by personal testimony. It is the credibility of this testimony that lets us believe that Jesus crucified, a historical event in itself, is truly risen! The resurrection of Jesus is an event in history, but at the same time, it is an event that transcends history and goes beyond history.

There is also another way to see the risen Jesus. It is not to see the risen Jesus in person, but it is to see a sign of Jesus, it is to see a sign that Jesus is risen. For most of us, we can only see such a sign, as most of us cannot see the risen Jesus in this life. But we know that we will see him in heaven. But in this life, we can only see signs.

When Peter and John arrived at the tomb, they entered it. Peter entered first, he sees and there it stops. He sees that the tomb is empty, but that is all. But when John enters the tomb following Peter, we read in the Gospel that he saw and believed.

Did John the Apostle see the risen Jesus? No, but he saw a sign! A sign of his resurrection. What sign did he see? He saw the linen that had wrapped Jesus' body and the cloths that had wrapped his head, and they were still there. Someone might have taken off the linens and carried out the body, but it was not like this. They were still there! The lines were still there, in their place!

The linens were lying there. Why? Because the body of Christ is risen, his body passed through the lines by the power of the resurrection! This is a dazzling sign! Jesus is risen, and John saw a sign in these linens that were lying there and had stayed in their place. He recognized the sign that Jesus was resurrected. He believed that Jesus was resurrected.

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HOMILIES

A little later, together with the other apostles and some disciples, John will see the risen Jesus who shows himself before them. But at the moment in the empty tomb, just seeing the linens placed on the ground was enough for him. This simple sign was enough for him to understand that Jesus was resurrected, to believe that Jesus is risen.

At some point in our lives, we are living in the midst of the world and are called that we, too, become signs of the risen Jesus for those around us. We are called to experience in our life signs of the resurrection of Jesus.

What are the signs in our life that let us see that Jesus is risen? What are the signs that allow us to say: “I saw a sign and I believe. I believe that Jesus is risen.” These signs can become visible first in our own life.

In which moment can we recognize them? Consider your experience, reconsider your experience. Maybe you find there a specific moment in your life when you were hurt and you were not able to forgive. You then addressed Jesus and said: “Lord, I cannot forgive. I cannot even want to forgive. Help me! Help me so that I can forgive.”

In the presence of the Lord by your side, you found strength in your soul and the love and mercy that lets you forgive. The presence of the risen Jesus has a real impact in our life, it comes with real consequences because Jesus is at work! Jesus is at work in our heart, he is at work in our life.

Even when we open our heart to the risen Jesus, we will not be able to see all that Jesus does for us! It is good that we are not able to see it all, for if we saw everything that Jesus does for us, we could not handle it, as the love of God is infinite. If it were necessary, said Saint Theresa of Avila, that we felt in our body in this life all of God’s love, all of the life of the resurrected one, then we could not handle it. It would kill us!

But we will see him in heaven, when we will have all eternity for the experience, when we will be ready to see him face to face and when we will finally live by his side. But already in this life, we can already see the effects of God’s presence in our heart, in our life. For example, we can discover his presence in the events taking place around us.

Going through this pandemic that affects all of us together, seeing examples of solidarity each day, seeing persons who give generously, we see a sign that God is at work, that Jesus is present at the heart of the world. God is at work when he acts directly in events. God is at work when he acts directly in our hearts. God is at work when he works through us. God is at work when he acts through the generosity of people.

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HOMILIES

Someone can love very much, and even if it seems that he does not believe very much, the simple fact of this love is a sign that God is at work in his heart. Jesus Christ is risen! Our life is full of signs that show us how much Jesus Christ is truly present in our life: to calm us, to comfort us, and to guide us! We cannot open our heart to him without being transformed by Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, we can also be afraid of Jesus Christ! We can be afraid of the resurrection. Maybe, at the bottom of it all, we are afraid that Jesus will ask us to change our lives. He might ask us to improve certain things in our lives. He might ask us something of us or lead us on a path that we hadn't considered or were not yet ready to prioritize.

Perhaps, this could be a path towards vocation to the consecrated life. Perhaps, it is a path to a vocation to marriage, for we know that marriage is a vocation. To respond to the vocation of marriage, we have to decide that we seek married life. We know how demanding marriage is, we know that it requires giving one's life definitively, without ever taking back on our commitment.

The Lord can give us the grace that strengthens us, that encourages us to say 'yes,' no matter in which way we are called. A generous 'yes,' an honest 'yes,' and a confident 'yes,' be it to the sacrament of marriage or another way his love calls you.

But maybe we are struggling with the loss of a loved one. In this case, we feel alone, distressed, and our soul is said and feels as if we were dying. In such a time, we must pray frequently, we must continue to pray, and we must pray again. Right now, we cannot even have funeral services for our dead, but we can continue to pray for them and we continue to pray without ceasing for all intentions that we keep in our heart.

Perhaps you have experienced the peace that Jesus Christ gives us out of pure grace. For Jesus Christ has the power to offer us his peace. The first words that Jesus spoke when he appeared to his disciples and apostles after his resurrection were: "Peace be with you." Nothing can stand in the way of Jesus Christ giving us his peace. Not even death could prevent this. Nothing can prevent Jesus Christ from giving us his peace. Each time when you feel anxious or worried, ask Jesus Christ and say: "Lord, I feel anxious." Just share with him what troubles you and he will give you his peace.

Be not afraid to entrust it to the Lord. "I am worried about the future. I am worried about my family. I am worried about the health of my grandparents and my parents." The Lord will provide you his peace. He will give you his peace so that it will comfort you, he responds to our prayer by bringing peace to the hearts of those for whom you pray.

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HOMILIES

In the Gospel, we see people that go to meet Jesus and ask him, “Lord, heal me,” but we also see others who speak of someone who is sick to Jesus. Those who speak to Jesus about a person needing healing also find healing for this person, even though it was not this person him or herself who asked to be healed. Instead, someone else interceded, someone else asked Jesus to heal them. And Jesus healed them.

When we pray for ourselves, Jesus is certain to respond to our prayer, but he also responds to our prayer when we pray for others. The time in which we are gives us many occasions to pray and many intentions to pray for. Let us take the time to pray not only for ourselves but let us also take the time to pray for the whole world. Pray for all families. Pray for all of society. Pray for all people who live alone and those who are worried, and let us not forget to pray for all those who have been impoverished by the crisis of this pandemic.

We can entrust ourselves without fear to Jesus who gives us the strength of spirit that we need to move forward, to him who gives us the strength to live. It is the risen Jesus Christ who enters into our heart. We can entrust ourselves to him without reserve, we can truly count on him.

Do no hesitate to ask him for the strength to live and the strength to love. Let us also ask him to hold us in his trust. If, for one reason or another, we should have the impression that the night will not end, if we find ourselves facing the unknown, Jesus stays by our side and he tells us repeatedly that living and loving is worth any suffering.

Jesus Christ is risen! The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed!





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10. Homily - Sunday, April 19, 2020

Second Sunday of Easter (or Sunday of Divine Mercy) - Year A (Jn 20, 19-31)

Holy God! Holy Mighty One! Holy Immortal One! Have mercy on us.

We implore your divine mercy during this pandemic, which continues to engulf us. This feast of Divine Mercy is a special time, not only to pray for God's mercy but also to entrust all of humanity to Him.

This pandemic erupted as a battle, putting not only all of humanity to the test but our individual humanity, as well. We are facing an unfamiliar, bewildering battle whose game plan we have only begun to uncover. Usually, when we think of war, we picture young people going to the frontlines while their parents remain at home, worried about their children's fate. In the current pandemic, however, all generations are at risk and vulnerable, but seniors are most at risk. The highest percentage of deaths occurs among them. Seniors are on the frontline in this battle, while their children, confined at home, worry about them, suffer for them, and suffer with them. The inability to be with their parents during an illness and, in some cases, as a parent faces the end of their life, is totally distressing. The battle we face seems surrealistic, a totally new struggle in which all of us are engaged, affecting our whole being, and, at the same time, all people.

At this time, most probably everyone wishes they could be a doctor, a nurse, an orderly, a caregiver or an attendant to help those seniors who have been exposed to the virus and are at risk. And just as likely, among the sufferings we bear is the fear that our parents will fall ill or that we feel powerless in being able to act on our desire to help out. Whether our parents are sick, or perhaps deceased, or healthy but in confinement, we all feel deeply concerned as human beings stemming from the anguish we're experiencing. We are becoming more mindful — although already aware — indeed more mindful of the fact that we all share the same humanity. Even the grief suffered by another in seeing his or her parents sick, vulnerable or facing the end of life, is a suffering we ourselves feel, not only through compassionate understanding, but in the way we take on this suffering.

The Psalm of the Good Shepherd speaks about the shepherd who cares for his sheep and guides us through the valley of death. What is the valley of death? The valley of death is that space where no one can reach us anymore. It's the space where we are alone, alone with ourselves, alone in the face of death. But the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus, who bore all our

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sufferings, sins and downfalls on the cross and rose again, has the power, the power of presence, the power to be totally present to every human being entering the valley of death. And in that sense, we can find ourselves squarely on the frontline as a doctor, a nurse, orderly or caregiver. But we can also find ourselves on the frontline of prayer. Does prayer actually constitute a frontline? When we pray to God, we are engaging in battle. We are fighting for those now alone in the valley of death.

The times in which we are currently living, perhaps, is a time to see the full potential of human commitment in action as well as to realize that generally we also feel quite powerless. But at the same time, prayer broadens our horizon. Prayer makes it possible to entrust everything, to place everything in the merciful hands of Jesus. Prayer enables us to believe that, in suffering, Jesus Christ has the power to visit that sick person whom we cannot visit. Jesus Christ has the power to be present within the heart of our father, our mother, our grandfather, our grandmother who is sick and we are unable to be present. We feel far away, too far away. We do not see anyway to get physically closer; it seems impossible. Yet, Jesus Christ has this power. And certainly our prayer can encompass several dimensions. (These dimensions will be included in the Prayers of the Faithful that will be offered later.)

Our prayer, at first, may be for the sick themselves, for those facing the end of life, that they may know that God has not abandoned them. Not only does God not abandon them, but if they find themselves alone when approaching the valley of death, it is not because we have abandoned them; it is because we are powerless, having contributed all we could in fighting this disease on the frontline, in serving life, and in supporting those directly engaged in the battle. All members of society are duty-bound to support those who are directly fighting this battle. We can engage through our own battle-by-prayer approach, prayer that is all-encompassing, which includes prayers of support, for the sick and all those serving in the battle for life on the frontline, and for immediate and concrete care of all who are sick.

So, to pray is to offer prayers for the sick, for the concerned individuals, for those on the frontline caring for them, and for society in its numerous mobilization efforts to support the sick and those who care for them. It means praying for governments that throughout this ordeal, which affects everyone and in which we feel powerless, the battle will be fought and mobilization efforts will be carried out in a spirit of solidarity and social peace.

It is a spiritual battle involving the whole Church, those who believe in God, the need to entrust all mankind to God.

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It is a battle for humanity itself. Regardless of our differences, cultures, nationalities, beliefs, may we rediscover that we are all brothers and sisters in humanity, that we all share the same humanity.

And given the sense that we are being tested in battle, it is also a test of our humanity. It presents an opportunity for humanity. The test is an opportunity; the test is also a double-edged sword. It can lead us to withdraw into ourselves, to try to find a way out, for ourselves perhaps; or it can lead us to open up to others and not to go it alone. “I” will come out of this. But in trying to come out of it, to overcome it, it must be “we” who will come out of it. We’re going to get through this together. We might be facing a local battle, but it is also a global one. We are going to get through it. We are going to support each other. And we’re going to share our resources; we’re going to help one another. We’re going to pray, all of us together, no matter what our perspectives. We’re going to reflect; we’re going to take time to enjoy silence; we’re going to encounter ourselves at a deeper level.

Let us take this day to trust in God’s Mercy and to rely on Him. Our life revolves between God’s Mercy and God’s Providence. Our Merciful God fills us with his mercy, and at the same time, He remains ever-present. He is there to support us, to give us his life, to give us life, and to guide us along the path of life. He inspires within our hearts a resurgence of confidence, generosity, selflessness and humility.

We live in a time when the powers of this world and our own powers, our own abilities, are learning just how limited these powers really are. The scientific, financial and political sectors are all feeling the effects of these limitations and constraints. We are discovering the constraints on family life when we can no longer be as physically supportive as before, when we can no longer physically accompany a family member facing the end of life. We’re discovering our own limitations. The trials engendered by these limitations can be very discouraging. But it can also be a time of growth, a time when, by opening ourselves to God, we rediscover just how fully God is present, how He remains present at the door of our heart, and how we can offer absolutely everything to Him: every trial, every tribulation, including this COVID-19 crisis, and this sorrow in which we find ourselves. So let us take time to reflect upon and entrust to God our situation, the whole of humanity, our families, those struck by COVID-19, those in need of surgery and whose operations have been postponed, and also those dying from causes other than COVID-19.

Let us entrust all humanity to God, to Merciful Jesus. Holy God! Holy Mighty One! Holy Immortal One! Have mercy on us and on the whole world.





11. Homily - Wednesday, April 22, 2020

Mass “in time of pandemic” (Mk 4:35-31)

“Oh, Lord! Come and protect us from the storm! Come and give us peace!”

Is there a storm inside of yourself? Is it a storm of inner fears and uncertainties related to this pandemic?

When the apostles were in their boat with Jesus in the midst of a storm, a storm that surrounded them, there was also another storm that was inside of them! It was a terrifying storm of their fears.

And what was Jesus doing in this time? Jesus slept soundly. One can see here an expression of who Jesus really is. Even while the storm raged all around him, his soul remained at perfect inner peace and gives witness to an immeasurable peace. The external storm troubling the boats notwithstanding, Jesus remains calm. When he rises, he first calls the apostles to have faith, and then he commands the storm to stop and the exterior calm is restored.

His action was meant to help the apostles find their faith: the external calming of the storm revealed his power to calm their inner storms - the storms in our hearts, in our souls, and in our minds. The storms of restlessness that we now know so well.

Jesus Christ has the power to calm us in our innermost being, to calm us in the depths of our souls. He calms us interiorly in every storm exterior to ourselves: Today, this is the pandemic, and the many questions that it brings: We want to know how long it will last, how we will get out of it, when the scientists will find a solution, when will there be a vaccine or another way to protect us from COVID-19, not to mention the question of the dead and the suffering with which we must live.

We can also think of the economic storm that affects even the financial markets, the storm of humanity and the storm of families that touches us personally, and the storm of our entire way of life being upset by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In all of these storms that affect us deeply, Jesus tells us again that he has the power to calm us interiorly and to give us peace. Nothing can stop Jesus Christ from giving us peace, just as his death on the cross could not stop the resurrection. Nothing can stop him from giving us peace.

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**In all of these storms that affect us deeply,
Jesus tells us again that he has the power to
calm us interiorly and to give us peace. Nothing
can stop Jesus Christ from giving us peace.**



In this time of a storm caused by the pandemic, in this time of fears all around us and deep within us, let us turn to Jesus Christ.

Let us take time for truthful contemplation of our fears and say: “Lord! Lord! See how we are afraid! We are anxious, we are in a storm! Come and protect us from the storm! Come and give us peace!”





12. Homily - Sunday, April 26, 2020

Third Sunday of Easter - Year A (Lc 24, 13-35)

“Were not our hearts burning within us?”

“Were not our heart burning within us while we were on the road and he spoke to us and explained the Scriptures to us?”

Today we, too, are on a road. It is the road of our life’s journey, the road of human history, our personal history, and the history of our society. On all these roads, Jesus comes to meet us. Jesus comes to walk with us and talk to us. Do we take the time to listen? Do we let ourselves listen to God?

In general, when one approaches the theme of prayer, it is not unusual to hear the following question: “What is prayer really at the deepest level?” The answer given to this very legitimate question is that praying is to speak with God, to petition God, to praise God, and, again, to speak with God.

But we know in the depth of our hearts that to pray is not only talking to God, but also listening to God. God speaks to us. One could even say that the beginning of prayer is not to speak, but to listen!

Praying is opening our hearts to God who speaks to us. By becoming listeners to the Word of God in scripture, we learn to pray. By entering into the Word of God, we can respond to God who speaks to us through the scriptures.

In prayer, we can make requests to God. Jesus himself told us to pray in this way, “Ask and it will be given to you.” We can petition God, even with tenacity and perseverance. But at the same time, He invites us to listen to his Word, the Word of God.

What is the Bible? We know that the Bible, Holy Scripture, is the Word of God. The Bible is the Word of God! Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh, the incarnate Word of God and the Word of God in its fullness. Drawing from the source of the Word of God, from Holy Scripture, is a means that God gave us to speak to us directly.

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HOMILIES

Sometimes, when we read the Bible, we are looking for an answer to a specific question that is on our mind. Maybe we are looking for a specific passage that fits our situation, in this moment in life.

Perhaps we find it difficult to forgive and we look for scripture passages in which Jesus speaks of forgiveness or a Bible story that has forgiveness as its theme. Perhaps we long to be able to pray and we look for passages that speak of prayer.

But you can also simply open the Bible, not knowing what to look for, not knowing what to ask from God. You are not sure how to say what it is that you seek, but you can simply open the Bible and read! Even if you do not know on which page to start, just open the Bible somewhere and start reading.

As we read the Bible, Jesus answers, and he speaks to us. He speaks to us in the concrete situation that we are in. Even when we do not know where to begin, Jesus knows where we are. He knows where we find ourselves and he knows how to meet us there. He knows how to reach us, wherever we are.

Therefore, open the Bible and read it. Read it, even if only for the sake of having done so! Read it, just so that you can say, “I read the Bible!” Today, I want to add something else to the simple fact of reading the Bible, which is the importance of not merely reading the Bible but praying the Bible! But what is this? What does it mean to pray the Bible? How do we do this?

The answer is easy enough. To pray the Bible is to take the time to read it slowly, very slowly. You could say that reading in this way is to ruminate the Word of God. You read a page, maybe a paragraph. It is not about how much you read, but you how read. You read a short passage, and then you read it again. And then you read it another time, calmly.

Perhaps, the first time, nothing caught our attention, nothing was particularly interesting, no, “Ah, that’s just what I was looking for.”

But when we do not find it at the first attempt, then we calmly read it again. Again, and again we read it, slowly, gently. Suddenly, a word touches us in a special way and we read the passage again, twice, thrice, or maybe four times. Eventually, we continue with another passage.

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We make the experience that by reading the Bible very slowly in this way, passage after passage, our heart opens and is touched by God whose Word speaks to us. It is the Word that enlightens us, pacifies us, strengthens us. It is God who pacifies us, enlightens us and guides us through his Word. Reading the Bible is worth the effort.

In life, we sometimes know what we are looking for and we look for it. In this case, when opening the Bible, we go right away to what we are looking for.

But at other times in life, we are searching for something that we cannot easily put into words. Maybe it is the meaning in your life that you are looking for, but you do not know where to look for it. Today, getting through the ordeal of the pandemic is the big question, but we do not know exactly what this means for us.

Think, for example, of needing something for your home, without knowing exactly what it is. You do not know exactly how it might help you as you walk down the aisles of the store. Suddenly, you see something and think, “Ah, that’s what I was looking for!”

Perhaps you look for an interesting book, something that will capture your attention. You do not yet know the title, you do not yet know the author, but you browse through the books in the library or the bookstore or even the internet. Then comes the moment when you see the right title: “Ah, that’s what I was looking for!”

It is the same with the Word of God. Sometimes we know what we are looking for but at other times, we are groping, looking somewhat vaguely, usually not quite sure what exactly we are looking for. But God knows what we need. He knows what we need. At some point, you will come across a word and say, “Ah, this is what I was looking for! Thank you, Lord.”

We cannot open the Bible and read it slowly and ruminate over it and slowly reread it several times for a while without God giving us an answer, without God speaking to us. God speaks to us through his Word.

When reading the Bible, we are not reading as if we were reading a mere history book, a book about nothing more than historical events. We are not reading to find out what happened two or three thousand years ago.

When we read the Bible, be attentive to hearing God is speaking to us, reaching us today, in our time. God uses the Word of God, Holy Scripture, to meet us in our daily life. It certainly is a text written a long time ago, but it speaks to us today, in the situations in which we live right now.

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HOMILIES

Take the Psalms for example! The prayers of the Psalms speak of all the important emotions and situations in life that you can imagine! The Psalms speak of joy, sorrow, loneliness, community, trials, resurrection, reunion, overwhelming and incomprehensible suffering, joy gladdening the heart, prayer with God, being abandoned by God, finding God, finding others, being separated from others. All this, you will find in the Psalms!

Go to the Psalms and see for yourself. Open the Bible. Read the Bible.

“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the Scriptures to us?”





13. Homily - Friday, May 1, 2020

Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker and Consecration of the diocese (Mt 13:54-58)

God created humankind in his image.

“God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” We read this in the first chapter of the Bible, in the opening chapter of Sacred Scripture. A text from thousands of years ago, a very special text among the greatest writings in the history of humankind.

It is the affirmation of the dignity of every human being, each and every one of them. It is the profound acknowledgment of their dignity, no matter their health, their profession, or their age. The dignity of each one of them is affirmed by recognizing the human being as created in the image of God. This places our respect for the human dignity of each individual on a solid foundation. Today, we ask that by the grace of God we will become even stronger in recognizing this dignity in each member of every family, of every society, of every people all over the earth.

Especially during this pandemic, but really always in particularly difficult times throughout history, we must keep our sight fixed on the importance of the dignity of each human being. We must remember the dignity of those who are sick, who are exposed to the virus, suffering in many ways, all those who are now isolated and alone during this time of confinement.

We must not forget the dignity of workers, no matter their employment situation. We remember the dignity of those who have recently lost their job and of those who have been unemployed for some time. We remember that what gives dignity to each human being is not what they do. It is not dependent on the kind of work they do.

What gives dignity to a worker in the workplace is that it is a human person who works, no matter what work they do. We must never forget this. When someone has lost their job, it is a human person who has lost their job. Among workers, all workplace positions matter. The dignity of the worker does not depend on their place in the organizational chart. This equality of dignity is the equality of dignity of each human being.

In this time of pandemic, we turn not only to Joseph but also to Mary. In every crisis, in every health or humanitarian crisis, the Church reaches out to those afflicted. She does so through the work of lay people, priests and deacons, and men and women of the consecrated life. They respond in a thousand ways.

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If there are people who have leprosy, there is someone who will go to them to be close to them, even accepting the risk of falling ill to leprosy themselves.

In the times of the plague, there were people who helped, who took care of the sick, even if it meant suffering from the plague themselves.

We see this throughout the history of the Church. Together with Jesus Christ, crucified and resurrected, men and women have given themselves to service to be close to the most destitute, the poorest, the most suffering.

There is not the obvious response! Reaching out to others is not the obvious response to isolation, confinement, and physical distancing. It is not obvious that we have to take care of everyone, and it is not easy to reach out to everyone.

The Church might like to serve better in this time, but it is not always possible. She would like to be closest to the poorest, the most destitute, but this is not always possible. This makes this feast day on May 1 a special opportunity to turn to Mary and to Joseph.

We turn to Mary as the Mother of the Church so that she can provide for us, her children, and for all humankind. We ask her to take care of all humanity because we recognize, especially now, that circumstances make it difficult for members of the Church, all of us here, to take care of each other.

On this feast day of May 1, we also turn to St. Joseph in prayer, asking him to protect those whom we can no longer protect, as the limitations resulting from the confinement prevent us from helping them adequately.

In an acute crisis, what may be most difficult is experiencing a sense of loss of power. We would like to do something for those near to us, but circumstances stand in the way. We experience how much we are limited in coming to the help of people around us.

Let us remember that God has the power to reach everyone, no matter the depth of their despair. God has the power to touch every heart, no matter the anguish the heart is experiencing. Praying to Mary, praying to Joseph, joining ourselves to them in prayer becomes a privileged moment to place everyone under their protection and care.

During this Mass, for the first time, I will recite a prayer to ask for the protection of Joseph for us in a special prayer. And in the course of the celebration, I will consecrate us to Mary, the Mother of the Church.

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HOMILIES

Therefore, let us remember the vulnerable people among us whose needs exceed our ability to provide, let us take the time to pray so that we can reach them in prayer and provide care and protection in this way. Let us take the time for prayer and seek the protection of St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary for them and for us.

I will now recite the prayer for the intercession of St. Joseph so that he may come to our aid. Let us pray.

Saint Joseph,

We entrust ourselves to your protection,

Saint Joseph, you who are the Patron of the Universal Church, the Patron of Workers and the First Patron Saint of Canada.

Protect the Church so that she may continue to work bravely to proclaim the good news of Christ's resurrection to all people at all times.

Protect the faith of families and individuals who had prepared for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation so that they may overcome their disappointment and grow in their thirst for God.

Protect the hearts of all engaged couples whose plans for marriage were upset so that they will soon experience this transformation of their lives even more deeply.

Protect the hope of families and individuals who have lost a loved one whom they were unable to visit, unable to provide them with spiritual and human accompaniment, protect them in their grief and mourning.

Protect the sick who are separated from their families, may the risen Jesus touch their hearts and comfort them as he himself was comforted by the angel during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Protect all health care workers so that they might find in prayer the strength to serve the sick through long hours of work while at risk of contagion.

Protect the elderly who are particularly affected and vulnerable in the face of this pandemic so that they may know in their hearts that they are supported, rather than abandoned by their families, society, and the Church.

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HOMILIES

Protect the human dignity of those who have lost their jobs, whose economic well-being is in peril, and who are fearful in the face of tomorrow.

Protect those who govern and regulate the economic and social life so that they may seek the path of compassion, justice, and solidarity.

Protect the love in families so that family members may grow in mutual attentiveness, patience, reciprocity of giving, and prayerfully imitating the Holy Family.

Protect our Christian communities, our parishes, and our missions so that they may be committed to the mission, here and now, relying on the presence of the risen Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

May our personal and family prayer life, our reading of the Bible, our prayer online, and our spiritual communion increase. May the thirst for the Eucharist grow in us, the People of God, who are longing to participate again in the celebration of Mass.

Saint Joseph, you who are a just man, you who are a descendant of King David, you who are the husband of Mary and the adoptive father of Jesus, you who have been in this world as a faithful servant of God's Plan of Love, we entrust ourselves to your protection, we entrust families to you so that they may be domestic churches, we entrust to you the dignity of men and women in their vocation to work, we entrust our diocese to you so that it may be the home of the Holy Family and welcome Mary, the Mother of the Saviour.





14. Homily - Friday, May 1, 2020

Mass for vocations (bilingual homily) (Jn 6, 52-59)

How can we find the will of God?

Are you looking for the will of God? How would one even do this? How can we find the will of God in the experience of daily life, when we look for orientation in our lives?

In several places, the Bible reminds us that God has a plan for humanity. It is God's plan of love for humanity. God has a plan for creation. The salvation of humanity is also part of God's plan.

We are all called to participate in this divine plan, both in the plan for creation and in the plan for salvation. In some regards, we participate all in the same way, but in others, we have a unique calling. Each person is unique!

One of the first things that we read in the Bible, almost at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, is that all of us are created in the image of God. What a beautiful reality! What an inexpressible reality! What an astonishing reality that the Bible, for several thousand of years, tells us that the human being is created in the image of God.

What we see is the world around us. What we see are rocks, mountains, trees, animals, birds, and fishes.

Among all these, the human being is one being among many others in the world. But the Bible tells us that even as we share the world with all the other creatures, the human being is also more than all of these by being created in the image of God. This is a truly revolutionary change in the way we look at the world!

When I look at my neighbor, do I see someone who is created in the image of God? When I look at my deepest self, the foundation of my soul, spirit, heart, and body, do I see myself as created in the image of God? Do I recognize the dignity of the other, no matter who? No matter who they are! Do I recognize my own dignity as God's creation?

Not just any of God's creatures but created in the image of God! What a great gift! What a wonderful gift! What gift, what kind of gift! A gift not only for a little while, a few years, maybe even a few decades.

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HOMILIES

No, it is a gift forever! If today I am the image of God, I must always be the image of God. After all, what is an image? It is a reflection, it reflects the reality of which it is the image.

We have many vocations, as we are called by God in many ways, but the most fundamental of all vocations is to reflect the reality of God. To be the image of God in the world—what a vocation!

To be in the world as visible signs of the invisible God is a calling that goes beyond our being. How can we be this sign of the invisible God when what is visible is so important to us?

We can read a little further in the Book of Genesis: “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. A man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

Right from the beginning of the Bible, we are reminded not only of the dignity of the human being as created in the image of God, but also the importance of vocation. It is the vocation to the married life. In this vocation, we see the archetype of vocation as giving oneself to the other in a community of persons, the vocation to open up one’s life in love that is fruitful. Within it, there is the vocation that is God’s call to every human being, whether they are married or not. The heart of the vocation to the married life is the universal vocation to love. Love is the fundamental vocation of each human being, always one among many, called to love.

Now we have a way for being the image of God in the world: The reflection of the invisible God is the love that becomes visible. Love is visible! Love is manifest! Love communicates! Love expresses itself! Love shows itself and proves itself!

In a general sense, our call to love, through our vocation to love in married life as a couple or as a family, is a path on which we carry the image of God into the world.

The vocation to marriage is a vocation in its fullness. Life as a couple is a vocation in its fullness. Openness to life is a vocation in its fullness. In these vocations, we become visible signs of the invisible, signs of God in the world. And as these are vocations to love, these signs are visible signs of the love of God, a love that is invisible but becomes manifest throughout the work of his creation.

How do we know an artist who may have died centuries ago? We consider their works! We study their works! Michelangelo, Raphaël, and all the others. Rembrandt. And there, in their works, we try to feel and get close to the artist. The one who composed this work, who created this work. In this way, we learn something about the artist.

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HOMILIES

The vocation of creation as a whole is to proclaim as a visible sign the invisible God, to be a visible sign of the love of God, the God who is love! God is love!

In the book of Genesis, we read right at the start that the human being is created in the image of God, and then not much later, that the married couple is the image of God. This is because these images of God overlap. Each human being is in their own dignity the image of God, but the life of the couple is also the image of God. It is so as the image of the love of God for humanity, the love of Jesus Christ for his Church.

But as the same time, whether lived celibately in consecrated life or in one of the million ways in which individuals can be in the world to serve and to love, our individual life itself can become a visible sign of the God who is love. In our active life, our service, our gift, our self-giving gift, we become visible signs of the invisible: signs of the love of God and the existence of God who is love.

When we go deeper into the question, the question becomes how to live this vocation to love, realized in the vocation to marriage or realized in the gift of self, of service, of one's life. The call to love accompanies us, animates us, motivates us and, most importantly, gives meaning to our lives.

Giving meaning to our lives and making sense of our lives is looking for the way of my participation in God's creative work, looking for the way God calls me, my vocation, the way that I am to go.

Being created in the image of God, being created as a call to love, means quite simply being created, being created as gift and called to look for a way to give oneself, to make my life a gift for others.

I invite you to turn to the Lord in prayer.

In this pandemic, there are long moments of inactivity with not enough to do. Especially in such moments, the question of the meaning of life becomes more acute. Maybe we have just lost our job, and we try to make sense of our life. Maybe life in the family is not easy right now, with everybody together all the time, something unusual and maybe uncomfortable, and we try to make sense of our lives.

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HOMILIES

In such moments of confusion as we experience right now, let us remember that the answer to the question of the meaning of our lives is always found in being the image of God, being visible signs of God's love. And the path on which we are called to walk is the path of self-giving gift. Jesus Christ comes to us, to call us to give ourselves, thus giving meaning to our lives.



When we are looking for our vocation, what are we looking for? We are looking for how we will accomplish in our life our vocation to love. Our vocation to love is the basic foundation for everyone, for every human being.

To be a human being created in the image of God is to have a vocation to love. We are called to love that is self-giving, love that through self-giving reaches the communion of persons. A love that through self-giving and communion of persons reveals truth in this world and the eternal life.

So this vocation to love becomes a question for reflection on what is my vocation! On what path of self-giving am I called to walk? What is my path of self-giving, of communion, of fruitfulness? God has a plan for each one of you! God has a plan personally for you! God calls you personally on a path of self-giving, a path of communion of persons and fruitfulness.

A vocation to marriage is a vocation to love. A vocation to celibate life in the world and to serve, this is also a vocation to love. Vocation to work is a vocation to love! Work is service, service for the common good, service for the good of society. Service is work to create a better world! Thus, to work is to be called to serve, and therefore it is a vocation to love.

Consecrated life is when one is called to give personally to answer to the love of God through an exclusive gift of oneself to Jesus Christ; it is a vocation to love! Priesthood as a giving of oneself to Jesus Christ is to serve Christ in His Church: this, too, is a vocation to love and to serve!

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HOMILIES

Our human life staying in the hand of God becomes rich in meaning. Separated from God's hand, we forget that we are created as the image of God. We forget that our deepest vocation is the vocation to love! We forget who we are! We need Jesus Christ! We need to never forget who we are in our own dignity as a human being. We need Jesus Christ to believe in our vocation to love! Until the end Jesus Christ loved us, he loved us right until the Cross, and then He rose to new life! We are called to that kind of love, to give everything to express a total gift of oneself.

When we give ourselves totally in the context of family, in the work place, in society, in religious life, consecrated life, in the priesthood, then we walk this path of self-giving, we enrich our lives, we give meaning to our lives, and we serve. We serve the Church, we serve society, we serve humanity! We participate in the building of the Kingdom of God by participating in His work of Creation and His work of Salvation.

In this time of pandemic, it is like we are frozen in time, and many things are on pause; it is a time to reflect on our own life. Maybe some years ago, even some decades ago, you discovered your vocation, got married, or became a priest, or begun consecrated life. But it does not end there! Along the way, the desire to serve, to serve the love of God, to serve His Church, to serve humanity grew in you. It is an ongoing process! It is not something that you do one day and then it is over and done. You cannot say "I'm ok, I found my path, I can stop there, because I know the meaning of my life!" It really is a process without end! A process of always looking for what love am I called to today, here, and now!

So there is always the vocation inside the vocation! The vocation to be a husband, but what kind of husband? A wife, what kind of wife? A nun, what kind of nun? A priest, what kind of priest? There is always the vocation inside the vocation. It never stops. And as we move ahead, vocation becomes not so much something that we know about us, but something that we live. We live our vocation because we live every day in serving to the call of love. The call of Jesus Christ to love here and now!

Vocation is about tomorrow, but it is also about today. Let us turn to God and ask for the Holy Spirit to help us grow in our vocation to love, every day here and now.

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Prayer to Mary

O Mary,
You always shine on our path
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Healer of the Sick,
who, at the foot of the cross shared the pain of Jesus
kept strong your faith.

You, the Salvation of the Roman People,
you know what we need
and we know that you watch over us
so that we may, as in Cana of Galilee,
return to joy and celebration
after this moment of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the will of the Father
and to do what Jesus tells us to do,
He who took upon himself our suffering
to lead us, through the cross,
to the joy of the resurrection. Amen.

*Under Your protection we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God.
Listen to our pleas, we who are in a time of trial,
and deliver us from all danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.*





15. Homily - Sunday, May 3, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Easter - Year A (Jn 10, 1-10)

The Listeners Were Cut to the Heart.

The listeners were cut to the heart. Have you ever felt this way when hearing the word of God? Have you ever been cut to the heart upon hearing the name of Jesus Christ?

Peter spoke to the crowd and told them about Jesus. He told them that the crucified one has risen from the dead. And they were cut to the heart. Our heart can be touched in a fleeting way, but it can also be touched in a profound way, in a lasting way that encourages us, that pacifies us, that guides us. We can be cut to the heart in a way that transforms our life.

When God touches our heart, when we open our heart to God who comes knocking at the door of our heart, when Jesus Christ who gave his life for us on the cross and who rose from the dead comes looking for us, comes to meet us, He comes with the power to cut to the heart!

During these last few weeks that we have been living in confinement, almost like during a long retreat imposed on us, have we allowed God to touch our heart?

Strictly speaking there is only one good shepherd: Jesus Christ. He works through intermediaries, such as priests, but also through lay men and women, through those in consecrated life, religious men and women. But it is worth repeating that there is really only one good shepherd who is always at work. Whenever we meet a baptized person who bears witness to Christ, or a religious sister who consecrated her life, or a priest who speaks of God, the Good Shepherd is always present, and He cuts to the heart. This is because it is God who has the power to touch us in the depths of our soul.

Even if the word of God comes through one of the Lord's servants, when this word is pronounced it will touch the heart because God is at work in the heart. And it is God at work in the heart of the disciple who announces the Word of God to touch the heart of those who listen.

When Peter addresses the crowd by way of naming the name of Jesus and their hearts are touched, how is it possible? It is possible because God is at work in their hearts so that by hearing his word, they are deeply touched.

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HOMILIES

When we are touched in a passing way, it is probably a human word that has touched us. But when we are touched in a way that transforms our lives, when we are cut to the heart, then it is the word of God that has touched and enriched us.

In every moment when we speak with each other, even when physical distancing makes it difficult to meet another, to meet in society, in the Church, in the parish, in the community, in one's mission, the Good Shepherd is always present to care for each and every one of us.

In prayer, let us surrender ourselves to the Good Shepherd. In prayer, let us seek the Good Shepherd. In fact, God could have chosen to do everything without us, but in his infinite mystery, he chose to work through us.

Even though we feel limited in our actions, God is always with us and remains by our side. God desires more than ever to accompany us through the trial that this pandemic is for everyone of us. The Good Pastor wants to comfort us and support us in our personal life and in our family life.

When the de-confinement begins, when the economy, social life, and church life resume, let us not stop entrusting ourselves to the Good Shepherd to guide us with wisdom, generosity, and mutual care.

In the Gospel, Jesus himself invites us to pray without ceasing, telling us: "Ask and you shall receive." The Lord never leaves our prayer unanswered when we pray to him.

Perhaps the best way to explain this and give an example is how parents respond to children.

When children ask their parents for something, the parents always answer. But are the parents going to give the child everything he or she asks for? No! However, they will likely give something to their child.

When we ask God, sometimes we think that He has not answered us because he has not given us exactly what we asked for. But he did give us something. He gave us his presence. He gave us his peace, his grace. He always gives. He always answers our prayer.

Just as parents do not always answer their children in the way they want, God does not always answer our prayers in the way we would like. He answers in the way it is best. Just as parents who give the child what is needed, God always gives us what we need. The purpose of the prayer of petition is, in fact, not to inform God about what we need.

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HOMILIES

As St. Augustine said, the purpose of the prayer of petition is to open our hearts to what God wants to give us, because God knows our needs. God knows our thirst. God knows our pain. God knows our life! He wants to be present in our life, to enrich our life with His truth, His beauty, His goodness.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, maybe we should take the time to ask God to come to the aid of our faith. We can do so with this beautiful prayer from the Gospel: “Lord, I believe! Come to the help of my faith!” We believe, but we are called to believe ever more.

Let us believe that the Good Shepherd takes care of us, every one of us. People are separated from us, such as a sick relative in the hospital or a family member for whom you cannot care as well as you would like. At this time, it is impossible, it is not allowed!

Parish priests long to take care of the people entrusted to them, reach out to the sick and the poor. At this time, they find themselves with new constraints!

There are religious communities that provide social or educational work. They would like to take care of young people, of youth, but now the confinement means all this limitation!

This is a special time to entrust to God, to whom we turn in our prayer, all those we carry in our hearts. We pray to the Good Shepherd for ourselves and all those around us.

We entrust to him those we carry in our hearts, the members of our family, those who are with us at home, those who are far away, those who are elsewhere, those who are in hospital. Let us advance on the path of faith by giving ourselves to daily prayer, more confidently, more decisively, more decidedly, and better motivated. Let us not hesitate to entrust in him all those we carry in our hearts, the members of our family, the members of our parish, the members of the Church, the members of society, even the whole of humanity. With full confidence, we can entrust all of them to the Good Shepherd.



16. Homily - Sunday May 10, 2020

Fifth Sunday of Easter - Year A (bilingual homily) Jn 14, 1-12

Draw near to the Lord Jesus.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As you are confronted by the COVID-19 pandemic, do you feel overwhelmed? Is your heart heavy? This could be for different reasons.

On this Mother's Day, perhaps you remember your mother who died or who lives isolated at a residence, with you unable to see her in her final moments. Perhaps you wish to celebrate your mother who is far away, with no way to see her in person.

On the other hand, as we are in a period of confinement, maybe you are worried about what is going to happen next. With all what is on your mind right now, how can continue to live with the constraints linked to necessity of physical distancing, with all the precautionary measures to protect ourselves, yet continue to strive forward?

Saint Peter tells us: "Draw near to the Lord, draw near to the Lord Jesus."

As we live through this pandemic, the Lord does not leave us alone. He is by our side, he is with us. He wants to be close to us, and we can call on him. We can learn to ground ourselves ever more deeply in him.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. To approach Jesus is to approach the one who is the way, the truth and the life. Not in an abstract way, not a mere idea, but in the concreteness of our personal life, in our current situation such as in our family, but also in society and even all humanity.

Jesus draws near. He is the way. He is the way even now, when we do not know at what pace the present confinement measures can be brought to an end, without undue risk. At which speed should we deconfine? How do we do this? All we know for sure is that we need to be more patient than ever.

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HOMILIES

Jesus is the way, and when we approach him, he helps us on the way. But which path, exactly? By the path of prayer, we can open ourselves to the grace of God. No matter who we are or where we are, we are called to a way of service. We are always called to love, we are always called to a love that is concrete and shows itself in service to those around us. Even if tomorrow is unknown and we are afraid, today, we are called to pray and to love, here and now. Even if we are preoccupied with concerns that are legitimate, maybe incomprehensible but apparently unavoidable, we cannot allow these concerns to take over our life or distract us from prayer, service, and attentiveness to the presence of the other.

Service is a humanizing path. It is a path of humanity. Service is a way through which we can grow. Even when we do not know what tomorrow will bring, what gives meaning to what we are living today is prayer and service, service to others, whether in our families or in society as a whole, doing our best with the means at our disposal.

Jesus is the light. And light is important. In the night, when there is no light, what do we do? We do not move, we must stay put, we cannot take a single step.

But even a little bit of light helps us to move forward. A light in the night, no matter how small, even if much darkness remains, lets us begin the way. Jesus is the light that gets us on the way. Jesus is the light that tells us that it is worth living, it is worth loving, it is worth advancing, it is worth moving forward.

Jesus is the Light that enlightens us in our personal, family, social, and religious lives. Let us seek together the Light of the Lord to be guided by the Lord. Seek the Spirit who guides us on the path of the Lord, who is the light, who is the truth, who is the light.

Jesus is the life, he is also a life. He is the source of life. Lord Jesus is not just one life among others. He is The Life itself, with a capital T and a capital L. He is the life that gives life.

In different ways throughout the Gospels, he says: “I live by the Father. As I live by the Father, you live by me.”

Jesus invites us to live by him. He is the source of our life because he is the way, the truth and the life. It is he who guides us, he gives us life and protects us. He guards our soul, our heart, and our generosity.

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HOMILIES

It is not only our health that needs to be protected, but our heart as well! Our human, family and social relationships also need protection. In life, our heart lives by a soul open to God and calling us to prayer. We pray that our soul remains protected so that we will emerge stronger from the challenges of this pandemic.

Even as the Government slowly lifts the confinement measures, we will continue to be affected by the pandemic. In this situation, we are called to move forward, relying on Jesus Christ by living by Jesus Christ, always in a spirit of service to others.

Today is Mother's Day. Perhaps on this Mother's Day, when our hearts are filled with love for our mother, we are also experiencing the limits of our ability to reach out and hold her, to express our affection for her.

Maybe we could, together in prayer, turn to God and say to him: "Lord, I thank you for the gift of my mother." Again, take the time to stop and say: "Lord, I thank you for the gift of my mother."

Whether she has already died or is still with us in this world, we say: "Lord, I thank you for the gift of my mother."

Let us keep this thought safe in our heart, remembering her in silence, and giving expression to our thoughts of affection and understanding: "Lord, I thank you for the gift of my mother."



This Mother's Day is a time to thank God for our mother and to embrace our mother. Maybe it is a time to think about our family and all families. And through this pandemic, as families we are getting together in our own home, as "the nuclear family," as we say. As such all over the earth, what was at stake? I would say, what was left? What is left all over the earth? In each home, there is an individual and a family. And God. To God we can turn wherever we are, however lonely we are, however isolated we are. We can turn to him in whatever is the situation, whatever is the situation of our family, of society. Everyone on this earth, at any time, can turn to God.

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HOMILIES

And in this pandemic, maybe we rediscovered this. And as we are in confinement, maybe we rediscovered in a new way how important our family is in our life, but also for the whole of society. In society, many things are important. But family is the basic unit of society. No family, no society.

And in the Church, maybe we rediscovered the family. There is this classic expression, the family is a domestic church. Maybe in this time we think often in terms of this world that we live in. We think often of individuals, and we have many laws and many things and many people or institutions who take care of the individual. But somehow, the family, we don't always think about the family. And maybe one of the fruits of the pandemic, one of the good things that could come out of this pandemic, is the rediscovery of the family as a domestic church, for the whole Church, and as the basic unit of society.

In that sense, maybe the pandemic is an occasion to rediscover the sense of Sunday. The sense of Sunday as a day for the Lord, and Sunday as a day for the family! A day for the family. Sunday as a day for rest. Sunday as a day for the family. And maybe somehow, we don't know how, Sunday has become or is like a day like any other day. We live in a time frame where it is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Maybe we really need to reconsider Sunday. Maybe we need to reconsider that it is not just an option, it is necessary to rediscover the seventh day.

The day of rest. And then, make out of it a day for the family. A day when everyone of the family can be together. Everyone in the family is there. It cannot be only something a decision that a family takes on itself, without the others, because it only works when we do it together. Sunday can become a day of the family only if we do it together. Only if society cooperates, Sunday becomes a day for the family. We are between this Sunday, this day of the family, and the Father's Day that we will have in June, maybe between the two, we can consider Sunday as a day for the family. As a day when we think of what we believe, as a day for the Lord, as a day of the Lord. And even as we live in this world, this earth, we take it as a day for the earth, because the earth also needs to catch a breath. Happy Mother's Day!





17. Homily - Thursday, May 14, 2020

Mass to celebrate the dignity of human life (bilingual homily) Jn 15, 9-17

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

Jesus tells us: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

On this day of the March for Life, we also pray and celebrate the Eucharist for life, as we do each year.

This day is an opportunity to renew our commitment to the dignity of life from conception to natural death. At the same time, this day is an opportunity to renew our faith and entrust life to the one who is the origin of all life: Jesus Christ, who came to save our lives, and to God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the origin of life.

For many years, a large number of men and women have literally given their lives to the service of life. Through their actions, they bear witness to and promote the dignity of the weakest, the smallest and the most fragile, children in their mother’s womb and the sick and the elderly who are approaching the end of their life. In serving, they best promote the dignity of the life of each person. Those who consecrate their life to the dignity of each human being work at the same time to proclaim and promote the dignity of each human being and each person.

Today, we pray for those who devote themselves to the cause of life and the dignity of each human being, wherever they are on this planet, in this country, in our province or in our town. At the same time, in this current time of vulnerability, we can place ourselves with renewed faith into the hands of God.

Today, we celebrate the Apostle Saint Matthias, the twelfth apostle whom the other apostles had chosen to replace Judas. In choosing him, they combined faith in human actions with faith in God.

First, they identified two disciples who accompanied Jesus from the beginning until his death on the cross and who bore witness to his resurrection. We can think of this part of the participation of human action in the choosing of St. Matthias.

Then they casted lots to determine who of the two would be the new apostle, the twelfth apostle, and this part of the decision represents the presence of God in their choice!

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HOMILIES

In a similar way, in order to promote respect for life, we organize several activities. For example, with this March for Life, forums for reflection, workshops, or conferences, we take the opportunity to promote and defend the dignity of the life of each person. At the same time, we entrust all these activities to God to whom we desire to give what is his due.

The first defender of life is God. When Jesus Christ gave his life on the Cross, what did he want to affirm? He affirmed the dignity of the life of every human being. On the cross, Jesus Christ gave his life for every human being, in all places and at all times. In this way, he affirmed not only his love for every human being, but he affirmed equally the divine love for them and the mercy of God for each person. Furthermore, Jesus affirmed that the dignity of every human being is fundamental, as they are created in the image of God and are called to eternal life.

In this March for Life, we want to pray for and express our gratitude to all those who consecrated themselves to the defense of the dignity of the life of each person, of the Dignity of Life. We also pray that God be at work in the service of life and that God may touch hearts!

In the end, the proclamation of the Good News about life, the Gospel of Life, the proclamation of the Good News of the dignity of every human being, every human being no matter its weakness is the work of evangelization. It is inseparable from the work of evangelization. It is a work of evangelization in which we can proclaim who is the Lord of Life, while at the same time we also proclaim where we proclaim the dignity of life, the dignity of every life. Evangelizing in this way is a profoundly spiritual work.

By our prayer, by entrusting to God our intentions concerning life and this respect for life, we unite our works with the work of Jesus Christ, who is at work in our hearts. For this promotion of the dignity of life to be possible, it requires not only men and women of all ages to speak or testify in the service of life, but it also needs God who acts in the heart of each human being.

The work of evangelization is the work of God who keeps in us the spirit of conversion thanks to someone who proclaims for us the name of Jesus. But before all else, it is the Holy Spirit at work in our heart that makes us hold on to the name of Jesus.

Each time we gather in the name of Jesus, each time we desire to follow in his footsteps after hearing his name, it is the Holy Spirit at work in us. If it were only about the proclamation of the Word, then this Word would suffice. But at the same time, God wants to act in us so that he works through us in the proclamation of this Word.

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HOMILIES

When God invites us to proclaim the Word, the Good News of the dignity of life at any age, he is at the same time active in the hearts of all people so that the dignity of life resounds in them. Without this divine action in peoples' hearts, there would be no real transmission of the Gospel of Life from one to the other. God's action in our hearts is necessary to change them profoundly.

Praying for life is to ask the Lord to enlighten our hearts so that we will always be faithful servants of life. At the same time, we pray for all humanity and for everyone that this Good News of life is heard by all. By the intercession of the Holy Spirit, may the Good News of life resonate in the hearts of all men and women in our time.

We undertake this March for Life during a pandemic in which human life is at risk. One of the pandemic's aspects is to show us our fragility, our human vulnerability in the church and in society.

In the end, when this storm of COVID-19 passes, what will be left on this planet, what will we hold in our hands?

In a mysterious way, in a certain sense, individuals and their dignity are shaken in their foundation now that they or their families are required to stay at home. But God is always our protection. Only God has the power to be near any human being, across the greatness of the earth, the whole planet, and God is at work. God protects us. God enlightens us. God guides us. God gives us peace.

With the March for Life and the Eucharist taking place online, we might think that our actions are less important than in past years, as we are physically limited in our actions.

On the contrary, without having wanted it or having sought it and even if apparently limited in our capacity to organize and show our strength, we were forced to renew our awareness that it is God himself who saves, that it is God who is at work. The first evangelizer and the first to proclaim the Gospel of Life is Jesus Christ himself, with the Holy Spirit, who touches hearts and lets them hold on to the name of Jesus Christ and the name of life in the heart of each person.

Let us take the necessary time to make this time a time of prayer, a strong time of prayer. During this pandemic, Pope Francis invites the entire Catholic Church to offer this day as a day of prayer, of fasting, for works of charity, for the intention of the protection of all humanity and the fight against COVID-19.

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HOMILIES

May this day strengthen in us the desire to work without ceasing for the promotion of solidarity, in support of frontline workers in the pandemic who are putting their lives at risk. Let us be in equal solidarity with all families that are affected by the pandemic because one of the is sick or has died because of COVID-19.

Let us also remember that we can make this time of suffering remind us of the message of the March for Life and proclaim the primacy of life and the dignity of every human being, while at the same time being attentive to the needs of all humanity.

Let us take the time to fast today, as the church recommends, as fasting is like praying with your whole body. Fasting is like saying: “Lord, we could have it all, but if we do not have you, if we cannot feel your presence, then nothing matters. If we cannot contemplate your works, we miss what is essential, we miss your love and your presence.”

On this day of fasting, let us pray with our body. Let us entrust the cause of respect for life into the hands of God.

In spite of our limited means during the online March for Life, let us take the time for acts of charity of outreach to those who may be isolated at this time.

At the same time, let us equally take the time to entrust all of humanity and our society to the love of God, to his presence, to the love of Jesus Christ who gave his life on the Cross for each and every one of us.



One of the aspects that we are more and more conscience of is one we’ve already known. But it became more obvious, more and more obvious. It is that there’s a link between the value of life and the value of spiritual life. Without spiritual life it becomes very difficult to be open to the value of life.

And as we are rediscovering through this pandemic, the value of spiritual life is like at the bottom of the scale! And maybe we can pray that all of humanity, our societies, our countries, our families, that we rediscover the value of spiritual life, the importance of spiritual life, and I (would like) to say the primacy of spiritual life because we exist body and soul.

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HOMILIES

When someone says ‘I’, this ‘I’ takes its center in the soul, in the spirit, in the heart. It expresses itself body and soul. But takes its center is in the soul. So the rediscovery of the spiritual life is very important. It’s a necessity. It certainly can be something we try to rediscover for ourselves in our own personal life, for our families.

Especially one way to grow through this pandemic would be to grow in the rediscovery of the family as a domestic church. There’s a classic expression: a family that prays together, stays together. But the family is called to pray. The family is the work of God, comes from God. It is God who invented the family.

And certainly, the family is called to be, is a cell of society. No family, no society! Life comes from the family. And at the same time, no family, no Church! Life comes from the family. The first transmission of faith is within the family! It is the parents who present their child to the Church for baptism.

Rediscovering the value of spiritual life, the primacy of spiritual life, is a task that is ahead of us. But at the same time, we can work on it right now! We’ve been doing it for many years, for a long time! But this pandemic manifests to us that we need to renew our prayers and our efforts.

I will invoke for you a prayer that is based on Mother Genevieve Micheli and it puts together all those aspects of the value of life, the value of spiritual life:

“We are living at a time that is both disturbing and amazing; a time that is dangerous and where nothing preserves the soul. As members of faith communities, being aware of the true value of the spiritual life, we carry a great responsibility and we must live up to it. Together, we must help each other to create places of refuge for spiritual peace. We come together today, on the 14th of May 2020, on this day of prayer, fasting and charitable works in order to implore God to preserve the world, to help us to overcome this pandemic, to restore security, health and prosperity. Together we pray that once the pandemic is over, humanity may come to know the true value of spiritual life, to grant a larger place to brotherhood and to protect life and creation.”





18. Homily - Sunday, May 17, 2020

Sixth Sunday of Easter – Year A (bilingual homily)

What has God done in your soul?

What has God done in your soul since the start of the pandemic?

Because whether you recognize it or not, he has done something in it. God has been with you throughout and He remains with you.

In a mysterious way, this pandemic, from the perspective of the Christian liturgy, coincides with Lent and Easter—a time of conversion, of renewal of faith, of greater openness to Jesus Christ. This pandemic has seen difficult times and hardships, but it has also been a time of coming closer to Jesus Christ, a time during which we have learned to become more attached to Jesus Christ.

You may have received testimonials via Zoom, email, and telephone, from people who, throughout the pandemic, have become more rooted in their faith. Perhaps also from those for whom the life of prayer has become more deeply integrated into their daily lives. Fruits have been borne from this pandemic for all believers.

Now, by discovering or rediscovering that God is present in our life, by rediscovering the activity of Jesus Christ in us, how should we respond?

One answer is to want to love the Lord more. But another possible answer, too, a natural answer, is to want to make known the One who takes care of us. When we seek a doctor to take care of us, when we become afflicted with sickness, and a doctor has healed us, then, if we meet someone who has the same illness, we will tell them about this doctor who helped us so much.

Jesus Christ is just such a doctor: the doctor of souls. Discovering to what extent Jesus Christ takes care of our souls also fills us with the desire to make the name of Jesus Christ known, to bear witness to His salvation.

A verse from today's psalm, the Psalmist says: "I will tell the Lord the good that you have done in my soul."

Witness the good that God does in us, through us. And since we exist in body and soul, it testifies to the good He does in our personal life—our bodies, our souls, our flesh.

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HOMILIES

After Lent, we began the Easter season, somewhat as it was for the disciples during the time after Christ's death and Passion on the Cross. It was a joyful time when Jesus appeared to them to prepare them for Pentecost.

In a similar way, we are also on the way to Pentecost. Somewhat surprisingly, we could say that the Apostles also experienced confinement! Because after the Ascension, which we will celebrate next week, the Apostles, moreover, were in confinement. They were in confinement in the Upper Room.

And Mary was with them. They prayed with Mary while waiting for the Holy Spirit, for the gift of the Holy Spirit to begin a new phase of the mission, to which the whole Church is sent. (18.55) In this vein, perhaps, we could see how our prayer helps us evolve, transforms us.

Perhaps we could so prepare for this Pentecost that, coincidentally, almost everywhere in the world, coincides with the beginning or initial implementation of deconfinement.

Perhaps as followers, as missionary disciples, we could learn again, relearn to be deconfined! To come out of ourselves! Come out of our churches! To come out of the Church, to be in the world to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ, proclaim the salvation of Jesus Christ, proclaim the good that Jesus Christ does in our souls, our personal lives and our families when we open our hearts to Him.

I ask that on the eve of Pentecost you make a Novena to the Holy Spirit, to ask the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Father and of the Son, to come into us, so that He comes to us to renew His breath, our missionary spirit, our missionary zeal. To renew our fervour to make known the name of God, the name of Jesus Christ in the world, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Next Friday will be nine days before the feast of Pentecost. I therefore invite you during its preparation to make a Novena before Pentecost. An easy way is to pray the Rosary every day in May. Pope Francis himself, on the occasion of this pandemic, invites us to pray the Rosary each day in May to invoke the protection of Mary, Mother of the Church.

More specifically, we could make a Novena to the Holy Spirit to help make us witnesses to Jesus Christ in our family, our society, in the world in which we live. If you need assistance, there are resources for praying the Rosary in your parish and in your diocese. Seek and discover these tools daily throughout May for yourself but also for the cause of evangelization.

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HOMILIES

By praying for the cause of evangelization, as Pope Francis invites us to do, we experience anew the spirit of evangelization, a new proclamation of the Joy of the Gospel.

We can pray for each and every one of us, because in order to evangelize others, we first have to evangelize ourselves! We have to evangelize ourselves in order to be able to evangelize to others. This is the message that Paul VI left the church in his important apostolic exhortation about evangelization.

Before evangelizing the world, the Church must evangelize itself. For this reason, let us lift up our prayer to ask the Lord to guide us on a path of conversion, because the first step to evangelize is to ever increase our own conversion. Therefore, let us ask him to guide us on a path of personal, family, and spiritual conversion.

To convert is to open our heart to Jesus Christ, so that our whole soul dwells in His holiness, letting us be transformed by His holiness.

Let us benefit from this Novena to the Holy Spirit to ask for a new grounding in Jesus Christ, a new life of Jesus Christ in us, which would fill us with a missionary zeal and renew our capacity to bear witness to the name of Jesus.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, I invite you to pray for an intention that is particularly close to my heart, which is to pray with all fervor for the reopening of church doors. We know that the doors of the church were closed, but the Church is not closed. And even though the doors of churches are closed, the doors to our hearts are not closed. Pray that church doors will soon reopen and also that we learn again to keep them open all day long, if possible!

Even before the pandemic, the church doors were open but usually only during celebrations, but not throughout the whole day! Therefore, someone seeking closeness with God who came knocking at the door of a church would find it closed, unable to enter, having to return home to pray.

Perhaps we can, then, relearn not only to reopen the doors of churches, but also to keep them open throughout the day! We need to rediscover the meaning present in their being open all day! They had been open before the pandemic, but they could be open more often. The project of keeping our church doors open all day will be an integral part of our future.

Pope Francis has often talked about his sorrow at seeing church doors closed shut, not open to welcome those who were looking for comfort from God.

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HOMILIES

When someone comes to a church, it is probably someone who is already active in their faith, but maybe it is someone who is maybe far from it but nevertheless seeks to meet God, to pray, to talk with someone so that they may journey deeper in their faith.

During this Novena to the Holy Spirit, I invite you to pray the Rosary each day to become more committed to personal conversion. Pray to renew our courage to bear witness to the name of Jesus in a world that often does not want to hear from God, in a world that is so often closed in on itself, with God as the last taboo of which we cannot speak in the public square. But in a world where human beings are the same as always, as yesterday and as tomorrow, we are made for God, loved by God. We are His priority.

Have the courage, therefore, to name Jesus Christ in the public square, and believe in the Holy Spirit that touches us from the bottom of our hearts, that which is in our hearts. Let us pray for our own greater conversion, for an evangelical, missionary spirit. Let us pray that the doors of our churches be open all day!

From this perspective, we know that we have saints in heaven to whom to pray. In Canada, we have many to whom to pray, who care about and pray for us.

Why not invoke these Canadian saints in heaven so that they may help us, through their intercession, to give us the same breath of the service of evangelization that motivated them, that it may dwell also in us?

For this reason, we will pray together the Litany of the Saints, with specific attention to the names of Canadian saints. As you know, there are fourteen canonized Canadian saints, including ten Blessed and eleven Venerable ones. In this Litany of the Saints we will therefore invoke all the saints in heaven, especially the saints of Canada.



Somehow through this pandemic, we went through it together! As a humanity, brothers and sisters in humanity; as Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ; as Catholics, members of the Catholic Church, of the Body of Christ. We've taken the time to pray, maybe taken the time to say to God our sorrow, taken the time to reach out to others who might be alone or

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HOMILIES

And so maybe we can be thinking ahead and prepare ourselves for the feast of the Pentecost. A Novena are nine days of prayer starting this coming Friday, nine days of prayer to renew our openness to the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is the gift, the supreme gift of the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son give us the Holy Spirit who is life, who is unity, who unites us with Jesus Christ, who unites us between each other through Jesus Christ. Who unites us to the Father through the grace of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of unity, is a spirit of Mission, who gives us the courage, the strength to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ in the public square where we know it is not easy! I call this the last 'taboo'. On the public square, you cannot name Jesus Christ. You cannot say the name of God. It's the last taboo.

We learn. Maybe we need courage. The courage to say the name of God, to say the name of Jesus Christ. Not only in our personal life, in our own community, but also in the public square. And this doesn't come from itself.

The Apostles experienced the consequences of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. They met Jesus Christ personally as a group of disciples, but they were afraid, they were hiding in their homes. And Jesus Christ invited them to pray, waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit. And Mary was with them, praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And so, that's what we can do! We can take the time, more consciously, more intentionally, to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, to pray for the renewal of the gift of the Holy Spirit with a Novena, with Mary. Pray with Mary to be more open to the gift of the Holy Spirit. A spirit of mission that will bring us to be more forthright in naming Jesus Christ! More forthright in keeping the doors of our churches open all day long! Not only for the times of celebrations, which are very important! But it is not enough. It is not enough. We need to learn to be open all day long. All year long.





19. Homily - Thursday, May 21, 2020

Sixth Week of Easter Day (Jn 16, 16-20)

How can we pray in preparation for Pentecost?

Today, Thursday, is 40 days after Easter. This means that the universal Church celebrates the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus. But in some countries, including in Canada, the feast day is postponed to Sunday to make its celebration easier for the faithful. For this reason, our celebration of the Feast of the Ascension will be not today but on Sunday.

The event of the Ascension of Jesus stands between Easter and Pentecost. After Easter, after the death and resurrection of Christ, Jesus appears to his apostles and disciples to comfort them and strengthen them in faith. Yet while He comforts them in faith, Jesus' appearances to his apostles and disciples prepare them for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

After the Ascension, therefore, our gaze turns towards the celebration of Pentecost. When the Ascension is celebrated on its traditional day, then the feast is followed by a novena prayed in preparation for Pentecost. It is a novena to prepare for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the church's tradition throughout history invites us to make this a truly special time of prayer in preparation for Pentecost. How do we do so?

By doing what the apostles and disciples were doing on the day of Pentecost: They were in the Upper Room, the Cenacle. They persevered in prayer, and Mary was with them and they were with Mary. In the Upper Room were Mary, the apostles along with the male and female disciples. And in this prayer with Mary, they were preparing themselves to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Now I invite you, wherever you are, in your parishes, in your dioceses and in your religious movements and associations to think about preparing yourselves. Remember here, that the apostles were not preparing themselves individually for the gift of the Holy Spirit!

They were preparing themselves together with others, and with Mary, to receive the Holy Spirit. We, too we can gather as a family, as a few families, as a few people in a group or in an ecclesial movement. We, too, can gather to pray together, with Mary, to prepare ourselves to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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The apostles were not preparing themselves individually for the gift of the Holy Spirit! They were preparing themselves together with others, and with Mary.



A straightforward way to do so is to pray the Rosary daily. The novena begins tomorrow, Friday. Pray the Rosary from tomorrow until Saturday, the day before Pentecost. To pray the Rosary is to pray with Mary in the Upper Room with the intention of opening ourselves more to the gift of the Holy Spirit. We welcome the breath of the Holy Spirit that renews in us the sense of mission, the strength of mission, and the spirit of mission to witness to Jesus Christ in the world today.

Let us begin now to take this time, that is given to us, to pray a novena to the Holy Spirit, with Mary, in the Upper Room.





20. Homily - Sunday, May 24, 2020

Solemnity of the Ascension – Year A (bilingual homily) Mt 28, 16-20

Let us take the time to contemplate Jesus Christ in heaven.

During this pandemic through which we went together, while deconfinement now begins at different paces in different regions, we lived through special moments when our feelings went through various stages. It may have been moments of concern, of reflection, of work, and even of discouragement.

Have you had moments when you just stopped to think and contemplate? Moments when you contemplated beauty and that which is beautiful—perhaps a loved one, or a family album? Or, while on a walk (mindful of physical distancing of course), have you pondered the beauty of the sky, of the landscape, of nature's natural beauty? Did you take the time for contemplation?

Contemplating is also breathing! It is exhaling in the right way, while also being attentive to inhaling! Contemplation is a time for inspiration, through which we open ourselves to beauty. Beauty is very much present in the world, and we can contemplate beauty in the world.

On this Ascension Sunday, I invite you to take the time to contemplate the beauty of Jesus Christ. The beauty of Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, truly God, truly man, crucified and resurrected.

After Easter, after the resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to his disciples over 40 days until he finally ascended into heaven. There is a special beauty in the mystery of the Ascension.

The Son of God is eternal! He lives in all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But since he became incarnate in the world, he fully assumed our human nature, but not only for a limited time! He spent a limited time with us in his life on earth, the time to speak to us, to speak to us of the eternal life, the time to love us and to give his life for us, before returning to heaven to be with the Father.

Then, he returned to the Father, but taking with him our humanity that he had assumed while he was on earth, he took it with him to heaven! He took it with him to heaven, because he was not only resurrected, but he is alive in his body and his soul, alive as a divine person who has forever assumed our humanity and who exists body and soul for all eternity. Jesus is alive with a human heart, with a human body, but his body is also glorified, transfigured, and resurrected.

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HOMILIES

By his ascension into heaven, Jesus carries our humanity into heaven. In a mysterious way, our humanity, our human nature, finds itself within the life of God himself, within the eternal life of the Trinity.

From the incarnation of Christ to the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection until his ascension into heaven, all that Jesus Christ did, he did through his humanity, which is also our humanity that he had fully assumed! Before the incarnation, all that Jesus did he did as a divine person. After the Ascension, he acts as a divine person who has assumed our humanity. For this reason, our humanity is now at the heart of the life of God.

In this sense, to contemplate Jesus Christ is to contemplate just how far his love goes. It is to contemplate his love that wants to be so close to us that he has taken on our human nature. Maybe one could now say: “Yes, he took on our human nature, but after the Ascension, he is now far from us in heaven!”

But to the contrary, be assured that he is closer to us now than had he not ascended into heaven! Had there been no ascension, we would think that in order to see Jesus Christ, we would have to go somewhere on Earth. Maybe we needed to go to Jerusalem or somewhere else! We would have to go to a specific place to meet him.

But in disappearing before our eyes on the day of the Ascension, he tells us that we can meet him wherever we are. There is nowhere you cannot meet him. We can be in the deepest valley, literally or metaphorically. We can be in despair, experiencing darkness, the unknown, be in anguish. Yet, Jesus Christ is close to us, always by our side.

By his ascension, he makes himself close to every human being. No, God is not far away. We can distance ourselves from God for all kinds of reasons, but he never leaves us. We can walk away from the love of Jesus Christ, but he never walks away, and he never ceases to love us. Jesus is always by our side, always present.

To contemplate Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Ascension is to contemplate his presence in our heart and in our life. It is to contemplate Jesus Christ who knocks at the door of our heart to dwell in our soul, our spirit, our flesh.

At the same time, to contemplate Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Ascension is to contemplate this light that is always given to us. We may be in a dark valley, and with no light whatsoever, but in the distance, we see a light beckoning on the horizon, high above the mountains, showing us in which direction to walk.

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HOMILIES

In this pandemic filled with uncertainty and worries, we can turn our attention to Jesus Christ who is before us like a light that guides us without ceasing, a light that attracts us towards the path on which we are called to walk.

During this pandemic, we can walk towards Jesus Christ who is our light. We can open our heart to his presence and rediscover how much Jesus Christ is present in our life. We can rediscover our attachment to him, rediscover his presence.

The rediscovery, it is to renew our desire to walk with him, it is to rediscover our desire to be his disciple and walk by his side.

To contemplate Jesus Christ is to take the time for contemplation, it is to open our heart to the beauty of the love of God, to the greatness of the love of God, to the richness of the love of God.

God is our creator. Without him, nothing would exist except God who is eternal. Jesus Christ is also our Saviour. Risen and ascended into heaven, he comes to us no matter what our situation, no matter how far away we are, however great our suffering. He comes to us, to let us know of eternal life, to let us know of his life, his peace, his strength, his light.

Let us take the time to contemplate Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father.



The last words of someone who's leaving us are always important. What are the last words of Jesus Christ before the Ascension? He talks about the mission. But what a mission! To witness to Jesus Christ throughout the world, everywhere, through time and space. And not only to talk about the love of God, but also to talk about God's commandments! All of God's commandments! To talk about everything! Everything that He's taught us. To teach everything that he's taught us. How can you do that? By ourselves, it's humanly impossible! It's a divine mission! How can human beings fulfill a divine mission?

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HOMILIES

That's why that the first thing that he will say is wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit! Wait for the Holy Spirit! Without the Holy Spirit, the mission is impossible. Wait for the Holy Spirit! So, praying, to be gathered in prayer, praying personally and with others to be in prayer, to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, this is a priority for the mission. No Holy Spirit, no mission is possible. We need the Holy Spirit to be in the mission. So, the two go hand in hand. Waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit, praying with Mary for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and listening to the call for the Mission. To hold the two together. But even there, it's not an easy path! That's why he adds to it by saying: "I'll be with you 'til the end of time!" I will be with you, not once a year! No! Every day! Every day 'til the end of time!

So, today in this pandemic, Jesus Christ is with us. He's with us so that we'll live through him. But he's with us also giving us the Holy Spirit to be in a mission today. The mission never stops. The mission is here, right now, in this pandemic. How to fulfill the mission? Well, we need to pray so that the Holy Spirit will guide us and the fulfillment of the mission that God entrust us today, in this situation, in this world.

As we are preparing for the Pentecost, we're called to pray every day to prepare ourselves to the Pentecost. Praying to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. If the mission is important for us, we believe in the mission, we want to promote, made known the love of Jesus Christ, we want to make known the Mercy of God, but we need to pray the Holy Spirit.

So, let us pray to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And let us ask the Holy Spirit, to put in our heart a burning desire to witness the love of God, to witness to Jesus Christ today.





21. Homily - Saturday, May 30, 2020

Pentecost Sunday At the Vigil Mass – Year A (bilingual homily) Jn 7, 37-39

Recognizing the Primacy of God

Jesus stood up and cried out!

Jesus actually stood up and cried out, he cried out a message delivered in a powerful voice, a message that was important to give to us, a message for all humanity. When Jesus stands up and cries out, he speaks with strength. He addresses all humanity, each human being, everywhere and at all times.

What is his message? What is he saying to all humanity? “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and to those who come to me I will give rivers of living water.” Not a trickle of water! Not a creek, but rivers of living water. And Jesus adds: “I will give you the Holy Spirit.”

What are your desires? What do you long for in life? What are your needs? What are the desires of your heart? What are the longings of your soul? What do you yearn for? Do you yearn for something? What are you yearning for?

What do you thirst for? How do you thirst for God? We can speak of desires with a lower case “d.” Or of needs with a lower case “n.” Some people aspire with a lower case “a!”

But the question here is about a great desire, a desire with an upper case “D.” The great desire that goes through our entire being. The great thirst that we experience not only in our soul but in our flesh, that we know in body and soul. In this sense, what is your thirst? Which thirst needs quenching? What is your thirst?

We have lived with the pandemic for over two months, and it feels as if time has come to a standstill. Perhaps, we have discovered that we had been taking many things for granted, such as going to Mass, celebrating the Eucharist, or receiving Holy Communion.

There are so many other things that we have taken for granted, such as our employment or our health. Today, we find ourselves at a crossroads and an opportunity to look at our life and ask, what do we thirst for? What are our priorities? What is most important in our life?

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HOMILIES

As we are going through this pandemic, it's an occasion not to waste. There are two sides. It can put us down. It can also raise us up because it could be an occasion to rediscover something about life, about our life, about our family, about what we are really longing for. What do you want? What do we want, what do you want out of your life? Is there in your heart, in your soul, in your bones, in your flesh, a thirst so great that somehow, it hurts us to be thirsty? It's aching just to be thirsty because you cannot find peace, you cannot rest until you find an answer to that thirst! Do you have an aching yearning? If you do, it's a blessing. Because when we have an aching yearning, we are serious in looking for an answer. An answer to the meaning of our life. An answer to our quest for love. And we do not postpone to tomorrow, I'll do it tomorrow, like many things in life. Tomorrow I will look for a meaning to my life. No, not tomorrow! Today! I'm aching too much. I am looking for meaning to my life today.

When we feel a burning desire to search for meaning in our life, we are faced with discovering why we exist or for what purpose we are here. We are also faced with the longing of our heart, the longing for real love, an authentic love that transcends time, a love that endures through struggles, weaknesses and fragilities.

Thirst takes many forms, but one of them is certainly a thirst for an abiding life. We often speak of sustainable development, so we could say that it is a thirst for a sustainable life, an enduring life, as in a love that is everlasting! A love that is always greater! There is a thirst for a love that is true and authentic!

Listen to Jesus' cry: "Who is thirsty? Who is thirsty for life? Who is thirsty for love? Let them come to me, and I will quench their thirst."

"If you are aching, yearning for life, for love, come to me! I will answer your quest." But the gift of God is always a strange gift! Because the gift of God, is the gift of His love. This thirst, this is the first thirst to receive. To receive life, to receive eternal life. To receive love, to receive the love that comes from God! Infinite love! But at the same time, as God through the Holy Spirit gives us His love through Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected, He gives us His love. But at the same time, He brings with the gift of His love, another thirst.

We thirst for the love of God, we thirst to receive his life, a life that lasts, the eternal life, we thirst to receive the Holy Spirit. When we pray to God by naming of the Holy Spirit, we are praying equally in the name of the Father and of the Son.

What is then the correct name of the Holy Spirit? The name of the Holy Spirit is Love! The Holy Spirit is the love issued forth by the Father and the Son.

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HOMILIES

Therefore, Jesus can cry out: “Let him come to me, let her come to me, he who thirsts, she who thirsts, and I will give them rivers of living water, I will give them the Holy Spirit, I will give them Love!” We are made for Love.

Meanwhile, a thirst for love will lead us forward, much like a river, by the force of the current! We are swept by the river! But where will it bring us? To where will it lead?

In the first moment, God will respond to the deepest desires of our soul! That is the desire for love that is true, authentic, all encompassing and free! But where does it lead us?

As the Holy Spirit is given to us, He comes with His fire, His power, His Love, because He is Love! The Holy Spirit doesn't love us. He is Love given to us! He is the Love of God given to us! The Love of the Father and of the Son given to us. As He comes into our spirit, our heart, our soul, our flesh, our bones, as He comes within us like a river. You cannot be in the river and stay there! You're caught up in the river and you move with the river! When we receive the Holy Spirit, it's not about staying there and receiving the Love of God! It's about being moved by the Holy Spirit! Moved by His Love, moved by His breath. And move to where? Well He moves us! We cannot receive the Love of God without in the Holy Spirit, without being moved by the Holy Spirit.

While tomorrow, Sunday, the Church celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit, today we await this gift. In this Pentecost Vigil, we await the gift of the Holy Spirit, we wait to receive the Holy Spirit in us. Today, we want to have our thirst quenched, we are in a state of waiting for the Holy Spirit.

To be transparent, maybe we need to ask the question whether it is dangerous to receive the Holy Spirit! We need to ask, because we cannot deny that receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is certainly risky. Something will happen to our lives.

A new thirst will emerge in us, a thirst we did not have before! So far, we had a thirst to receive life and love! When we receive the Holy Spirit, a new thirst is created in us. What is this thirst? It is the thirst to give ourselves, to respond by giving ourselves! It is the thirst to love freely, totally without asking for anything, once and for all, with a thrust that brings forth all of our being! When we receive the Holy Spirit, our need to be loved becomes a need to love!

What gift! What a magnificent gift! What incredible gift!

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HOMILIES

During this pandemic, news concerning the danger of catching COVID-19, the risks linked to this virus, and the confinement and deconfinement are foremost on our minds. Know, however, that deep in our soul, God is at work. God is preparing us to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We cannot receive Him on our own, like other things.

God himself prepares us to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus prepared his apostles to receive the Holy Spirit. His public life, his passion, his death on the Cross, his resurrection, his appearing to his apostles and disciples, all of this was to prepare them to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In a mysterious way, the pandemic arrived during Lent! As we are experiencing its effects, we are called to convert, to come closer to Jesus Christ, to pray more, to do acts of mercy, to fast. During the pandemic, we might have been able to do these things with more commitment.

As we celebrate the Resurrection, we are called to renew our faith in Jesus Christ, in his life, in his presence in our lives, because Jesus Christ knocks without ceasing at the door of our heart.

The apostles and disciples were confined with Mary in the Upper Room, and they also knew confinement. Not only were they confined in the Upper Room, but they were troubled by fears!

Nevertheless, they prayed with Mary. They prayed with ardor, they prayed intensely in Mary's presence, in expectation of the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus Christ. We know how, after they received the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the apostles came out of confinement and left on their mission. And the mission took them on a new adventure.



As we go from confinement to deconfinement, perhaps making adjustments in our priorities, we can look to the apostles and disciples who remained with Mary, praying together, waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room. They, too, lived confinement, waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Do we wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit? Jesus

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HOMILIES

told them that they could not go out on mission unless they received the Holy Spirit because they would not have been able to accomplish their mission. It is that way, we might dream of it and perhaps want to swing into action right away, but we need to wait on the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, it would be impossible to fully witness to God's life and love, or to bear witness to the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Just like the apostles, we remain with Mary in prayer, waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit that will transform our lives. This vigil today is a time of waiting. Tomorrow will be the time to receive the gift. We need to be aware, however, that we cannot receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and not be transformed by it. We are indeed transformed by the Holy Spirit. This transformation will lead to another thirst. This is the thirst of loving, the thirst of giving ourselves over totally, freely, once and for all in a continual offering of ourselves. It is one thing to have a thirst to be loved, but somehow, when we receive the gift of love in life, from the Holy Spirit, we also receive the thirst to love. It is the thirst to respond to the love of God, by loving God and others.

Since we are at the Vigil for Pentecost, we can pray together that in receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, our heart will be renewed and we will have a new impetus, a new freedom, a new strength, a new peace to witness to Jesus Christ in the world. That is because, through the Church, through the people of God, through each baptized person, each missionary-disciple, Jesus Christ, through all of us, wants to cry out to the world; "Those who thirst, come to me. I will give you rivers of living water."

We have a choice in how we view this pandemic. We can focus on waiting for it to end, waiting for "normal" to return or for a "new normal" to emerge, or we can see it as a time to reflect on our own frailties, our own priorities and the meaning of our lives. We are being offered a unique opportunity to grow as we live through it. We can become better persons, better families, a better Church, a better society.

Think about how the pandemic has shaken things up. The powerful of this world have been somehow shaken by this pandemic. What remains when all is not destroyed but shaken? What is left? The person with their dignity, every human being on the face of the earth, the family as a nucleus of society and as a nucleus of the Church, and God. Through this pandemic, the only one able to reach out and touch everyone on the face of the earth is God. Nobody else can do that. The only one with the power to comfort, sustain, nourish, lighten burdens, and console every human being on the earth, is God. Nobody else can do that. No power of this world can do that.



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HOMILIES

As we slowly move from confinement to deconfinement, beyond our expectations of a new normal or a return to normal, perhaps we can renew our prayer for growth through this pandemic, to come out on the other side, changed for the better. A better person, a better family, a better Church. Also, as a Church, recognizing and being well acquainted with all of the challenges of evangelizing, this might be an opportunity to renew our faith that God is truly at work. God truly is at work. He was at work yesterday, today and will be at work tomorrow.

Perhaps in our difficulties with evangelization, what is missing is faith in the work of God! The faith that God is truly at work, at work in people's hearts! We are instruments of a God who is at work, and who has the power to work and touch hearts. In the end, only God has the power to touch each human being, each human heart. Somehow, there is no one who is closer to any one of us as God is. God is closer to us than we are to ourselves! May this pandemic be a time of new awareness of the importance of God and that God comes first.

Let us recognize the primacy of God.





22. Homily - Sunday, May 31, 2020

Pentecost Sunday – Year A (Jn 20, 19-23)

Are There Fears in Your Life?

Fears have a way of building walls around us!

As we speak, we are either still in confinement or just about to begin deconfinement. We are still experiencing being confined to our homes, walled in and living behind closed doors, not unlike the apostles who also lived a period of confinement behind impassible walls.

Fear, too, can lead to confinement: fear of the future, fear of sickness, fear of failure, fear of losing a job, fear of not finding a job, fear of rejection and fear of loneliness. We are subject to many fears.

When the apostles and disciples were locked up in the Upper Room, Jesus Christ had the power to show himself to them, ignoring physical constraints, passing through walls and beyond walls: Jesus is not stopped by walls.

He also has the power to overcome our fears and the walls that they build around us, these walls that we built up ourselves through which he passes to be closer to our heart. What is the first thing that Jesus does when he draws closer to our heart? What is the first thing that he did with the apostles? He said to them, “Peace be with you!” He said it twice! “Peace be with you!”

Just as this peace had the power to dispel the fears of the disciples, it has the power now to dispel our fears and give us peace. The peace of Jesus Christ has the power to free us from the prison of fears that can at times hold us captive. This does not mean that we are not allowed to be afraid. As the saying goes, “Courage is not the absence of fear, but courage is overcoming fear.” In overcoming the walls of our fears, Jesus Christ comes to give us peace.

In the current time, but really always in the history of humanity, we need the peace of Christ. Now more than ever, we need it as we are troubled by many fears. Fear is a reality in human life, such as the fear of not having enough love in our lives or not finding meaning in our life. Perhaps we are searching for some meaning that we can give to our lives or maybe we cannot find it because it keeps escaping us.

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HOMILIES

In evangelizing, we may also be fearful that nobody will want to hear about Jesus Christ, fear that faith has disappeared, fear that we now need to keep our faith and the name of Jesus Christ hidden behind the many walls behind which we are all too often hidden.

Be not afraid! Jesus brings his peace. He is peace personified! He is peace. He brings peace to our hearts.

In his wonderful pedagogy, he progresses stepwise. Had he begun by saying to the apostles, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you,” they would not have been able to accept this message, they would have been caught in their fears. Jesus had given them peace. Therefore, he could say to them, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

Strictly speaking, there is only one true mission. It is the mission that the Father gave to the Son. The Son is mission. He must accomplish the mission received from the Father. He is the fullness of mission, the faithful incarnation of the mission. He is the mission itself.

For us, too, there is only one mission. And what is it? It is the mission to go out to all the world to lead the world to God. It is the mission to go out to all the world, everywhere, at all times, and lead humanity to the Father Eternal. This is the mission: Going out from the love of the Father Eternal, in love, to bring back all humanity into the hands of the Father Eternal.

Jesus speaks to us also when he says, “As my Father has sent me, so I send you.” “I, too, send you out into the world to participate in my mission to lead humanity to the Father Eternal,” he says. “I send you.”

What is the first element in Jesus’ mission of leading humanity to the Eternal Father? What is the first element of Jesus’ mission? It is peace. Jesus is the peace that give us his peace. He is the peace that pacifies. He is the peace that sends us out in mission. And the heart of this mission is to be instruments of the peace of God.

Our world needs peace. We all seek peace in all kinds of ways. But real peace is found in Jesus Christ who is uniquely peace. This world offers many forms of peace, and they all have their merits, but they are only peace with a lower case “p,” in the sense of being easily threatened.

Some make the case that finding rest is a way to find peace, but clearly, we will grow tired again and our rest will again be disturbed. Others make the case that health is a way to peace, but then we suddenly get sick and perhaps develop a chronic condition. Then there are those who see in prosperity a path to peace, but we might lose all or most of what we have, and then our economic stability is shattered.

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HOMILIES

I say it again, the paths to peace in this world have their places, but they are peace with a lower case “p.”

What, then, is peace with an upper case “P”? This real peace, this peace that nothing and no one can stand against, this is the peace of Jesus Christ who gives us his Peace.

Even in the greatest struggles, Jesus has the power to give us his peace. When we are in the midst of a fire that devours all, Jesus has the power to give us his peace. When we are utterly humiliated, Jesus has always the power to give us his peace. When we are terribly sick, he has the power to give us his peace. In our worst defeats, Jesus has the power to give us his peace. This is because Jesus is peace with an upper case “P” and he gives us his peace.

Over and above giving us his peace, he gives us the extraordinary gift to send us into the world and bring with us the peace of God. He gives us this grand, this beautiful mission, the mission of bringing peace to the world.

Being the Church of Christ is to be a Church that brings peace to the world. Being a missionary disciples, the true sign of being a missionary disciple is to bring peace to the world. It is a peace that only Jesus Christ can give! Only Jesus Christ is the true peace that nothing can overcome. What a beautiful mission! What a great mission!

Let our fears not hold us back. Let us find the courage to overcome our fears! Let us draw on our strength to go beyond our fears, those fears that confront us in a thousand ways! These can be the fear of what others will say, the fear of rejection, the fear of not being heard, the fear of being ignored! Overcoming our fears is always worth the effort!

Often, we rationalize our fears by saying, “It does not matter, they will not listen to us,” and then we do not speak the name of Jesus Christ. Another one is, “Oh, they are elsewhere, they are busy,” and we do not speak the name of Jesus Christ. One of the most common reasons for identifying oneself as a Christian in our society is the following: “Ah, they have already made up their minds, they stay away from Church, they do not like the Church, they are against the Church, look how they critique the Church,” and then we do not speak the name of Jesus Christ.

Our fears easily become the justification for not speaking the name of Jesus Christ. Our fears become irrefutable reasons, but they are just reasons with a lower case “r.” Nevertheless, these reasons paralyse us and keep us from speaking publicly the name of Jesus Christ!

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HOMILIES

By themselves, the apostle would have never been able to leave the Upper Room and go out to speak of Jesus, to announce the name of Jesus. It would have been impossible.

What did Jesus do? He said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” But shortly thereafter, he told them: “You will receive the Holy Spirit.” He means, “You will receive the Holy Spirit because, by yourself, you are not capable to act and give witness to me.”

He means, “When you look at yourself and think you can’t say my name, you probably think that’s a problem.” “But for me,” he says, “it is not a problem because I give you the Holy Spirit!” “With the Holy Spirit, you have everything that you need to complete the mission that I entrust to you. You have all that you need to lead humanity to God. You have deep within you the instrument of God’s peace.”

Stop focusing on your limitations! Stop thinking that you are not strong enough, not smart enough, not intelligent enough, not rich enough or that you do not have enough money. These are only excuses.

“I give you the Holy Spirit that will give you the strength to witness the Love of God in the world. With the Holy Spirit, you will lack nothing. With the Holy Spirit, you will have no excuse, no excuse at all not to be in mission!”

Do you know Blaise Pascal, whose powerful expressions woke up people? “The drama of man is that he looks for excuses and often finds them.” If we look for excuses to not go on mission, we will indeed find them. No doubt about it. But Jesus has given us his spirit, he gave us the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit, there are no more excuses! With the Holy Spirit, we must stop making excuses to not speak publicly the name of Jesus Christ.

Filled by the Holy Spirit and with the peace of Christ, the apostles were able to overcome their fears, to leave them behind and move out from Jerusalem to proclaim the name of Jesus. Does this mean that now there were no more problems? Not at all! The problems continued and the apostles were challenged in many ways! Some were crucified, some were persecuted, but the Word of God continued its path around the world.

Thanks to the witness of the apostles and disciples, the Word of God spread to the ends of the world, and the Word of God accomplished miracles. Lives were transformed, families were comforted, and entire peoples converted to the love of Christ.

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HOMILIES

Through the action of the Word of God in them, by their faith in Jesus Christ, through prayer and Adoration, supported by the sacraments. Many men and women all across the world found new meaning in their lives, found a new strength to live and to love. What a very fruitful time!

Even with the Holy Spirit, problems continue! Of course, there will be new challenges that will not be made to just disappear with a wave of a magic wand!

But we will see how the Word of God is fruitful and outgoing. The mission will increase and peace will reign eternal.

Peace! This peace that all seek. Whose heart does not thirst for peace? We have that peace! With Jesus Christ by our side, with his presence among us, we have this peace in plenty. We have the peace that the world looks for. What are we waiting for to give to the world? What are we waiting for to bring this peace into the world?

Often, we imagine something and find reasons to be worried. Some worries are quite real. There is both hidden and explicit racism that rears its head and flares up. Indeed, there are reasons to worry, and we must not overlook them. But stronger than fear is peace, real peace, the peace that Christ gives.

At this feast of Pentecost, while still in this time of pandemic, let us ask the Holy Spirit to lead us out, not only from physical confinement, but also from the confinement of our fears.

Let us ask that the Holy Spirit moves us into the mission entrusted to us, the mission to proclaim Jesus Christ, to proclaim the peace of Jesus Christ. There is only one mission; it is to follow Jesus Christ who leads us to the Father Eternal!





23. Homily - Monday, June 1, 2020

Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church (Mc 12, 1-12)

Mary, Mother of the Church! Mary our Mother!

Mary is the Mother of the Church! Mary is our Mother! This is not a made-up title! Jesus himself used it when He was on the cross. “Woman, this is your Son. Son, this is your mother.”

“Woman, this is your Son.” These words were spoken to John and to a few others who were with Mary at the foot of the cross, but also extend to the entire Church. The words “this is your mother,” spoken by Jesus to the disciples and to us through the Gospel, present the entire Church to Mary. In a way, this expanded Mary’s mission.

We are first introduced to Mary as a daughter of Israel who is shaped by faith. She is the hope and charity of the people of Israel, the one who says “yes” to the Lord. In that sense, she was faithful to her first vocation, to be a child of God and a daughter of the Father.

Her mission grew as she continued to be a faithful child of God. She was called to become the mother of Jesus, true God and true man. Her life was a pilgrimage of faith. Then, at the foot of the cross, Jesus himself expanded her mission. She was the daughter of the Father, the mother of Jesus, and then, she became the mother of the Church. For this reason, we as a baptised people can truly pray to Mary as our Mother. We pray the Rosary often and with good reason, because we pray to Mary, our mother.

What does Mary, our mother do? As our mother, what does Mary do for us? Mary is the one who gives us Jesus. Her first desire is to give us Jesus!

If, on her part, Mary is a mother who gives life, our part is to receive Jesus who is our life. Mary also prays for us, she intercedes for us so that we may open our hearts to Jesus.

Mary is the one who best received Jesus! Saint Augustin said that before receiving Him in the flesh, she received Him in her heart.

Among all people across history, she is the one who best received Jesus. But at the same time, she is also the one who best gave Jesus to the world, by bringing Him into the world. She is the one who gives Jesus to all humanity and who brings Jesus into the world as the mother of Jesus. In being the mother of Jesus, and in being faithful to Jesus, she becomes our mother.

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Mary is the one who gives Jesus to all humanity and who brings Jesus into the world as the mother of Jesus.



In being the mother of Jesus, and in being faithful to Jesus, she becomes our mother.



Let us not stop praying to Mary because Mary leads us to Jesus. Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort used to say, “We can go to Jesus without Mary, but it is faster with Mary!” Let us not fear to pass by Mary to go to Jesus. That is her vocation, given to her by Jesus himself.

And let us pray to the Father. Through her “yes”, Jesus came into our lives. Through the prayer of Mary, let our heart be more open to Jesus. Through the prayer of Mary, let the Church be born and continue to grow. Through the prayer of Mary, let us grow as children of God.





24. Homily - Sunday, June 7, 2020

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity - Year A ((bilingual homily) John 3:16-18

Something unprecedented has come into our lives.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, almost three months ago, something unprecedented has come into our lives.

In the past, when we heard talk of death, we would be little concerned, as it would usually be the death of someone else. Even when we know that death can happen at any time, we somehow figure out a way that we are safe!

With the pandemic, this has changed. The question of death is now no longer limited to the death of others. Now it is personal, now it is the question of our own death. We no longer speak only of the death of others, such as the number of people who died of COVID-19 or from another illness. Talking about COVID-19 makes us consider death in general, but it also forces us to consider the possibility of our own death.

At all times, death was part of existence and dying was always a possibility to be considered, but somehow, we could keep it at a distance. Today, however, the reality of COVID-19 makes it impossible to keep death at a distance. We need to consider the possibility of death in a way that is more immediate, more felt, more concrete.

Furthermore, during this pandemic, the media talk without ceasing about questions related to COVID-19. This reminds us daily, in one way or another, that we must confront the possibility of death.

In this context, how are we to behave? When we find ourselves before death, before the possibility of my own death, now we ask ourselves, what will I become? How do I situate myself before death, when death is no longer something that I can keep at a distance, but seems closer, much closer, and more personal? More than ever, we are confronted with the question of death. And we cannot avoid it.

On one side are people who consider life like a journey. Life begins at a given moment, the moment of my birth, and it ends in death, and there is nothing more after my death. On the other side are others, believers, who say that life begins at birth, but it will not end with my death. These are the options, and we need to make a choice. And making this choice now leads right away to the question of faith.

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HOMILIES

Many questions now come to mind and make us think of the meaning of our own life. What makes it possible for me to view my death as a transition toward eternal life? Is death the end of my life? Is death the end of hope? Is death the end of my plans? Is death the end of everything for me? Is the death of a loved one the end of that relationship?

Does death have the final say on life and love, on my life and our life? Will death have the final word or is death just a transition?

How we answer these questions gives us an indication of the way we look at life, at the way we consider life, and this can depend on the outlook on life of each person.

Ultimately, if we think that death has the last word in life, we may find reasons to live only when things go well. When all goes well, we can find reasons to love! But when things go badly, for one reason or another, how do we continue to find reasons to continue to live? Why want we continue to live? Why would we want to continue to love when it seems impossible? When all goes well, we say yes to life! But if things go badly, or when we think that all is wrong in our life, why continue to struggle, why continue to live?

Most people consider the question of death as a reality with which we can deal at a later time. It is a question that we can think about tomorrow. Today, we are busy with life and we will think of death when we have the time to think about it. But COVID reminds us that we cannot postpone this question to some tomorrow. We cannot postpone this to the next day. Now is the time to think of our death. We must think of it.

Our first reaction might be to avoid death, to flee! We can do so in many ways. We can lose ourselves in computer games, spending hours on a screen, immersed in entertainment that seems to take us out of real life, so that we can put off reflecting on the meaning of life. But when the entertainment ends, we are where we started. We cannot forever put off the question of the meaning of our life, the meaning that we are to give to our life.

What is the meaning of my life if death is to have the final say on my life? Or, on the contrary, what is the meaning of my life if death is its transitions toward eternal life?

This brings us back to the question of faith. What does it mean to believe, today? What does it mean to say, “I believe”? What comes to mind? What does it mean to you when you say “I believe”? What do you believe in? Who do you believe in?

We could say that we believe in God. We believe that God exists. This is already a huge statement! To believe in God is to believe that life begins before us and continues after us, and it definitely means that it means believing in eternal life.

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HOMILIES

For us to exist, it is necessary that an eternal being exists. We are mortal beings that have a beginning and an end. Our history, the history of humanity, has a beginning and an end. The history of the universe had a beginning, some billions of years ago, and it will have an end, and God knows when. Everything has a beginning and everything has an end.

If everything has a beginning and an end however, we can say that there is nothingness, that nothing exists! For something to exist, there must be an eternal reality. If there is nothing at any given moment, then there is nothing afterwards, because nothing comes from nothingness! For something to exist, there must be an eternal being at work. For a reality with a beginning and an end to exist, an eternal reality is required.

Then we can say, “I believe in a God.” It means that I believe in a God, who is the eternal being. I believe in a God, who is eternal life. I believe in a God, source of all that exists. I believe that there is a God.

Now we can go a little further. We can say “I believe in God!” To state that we believe in God is to take it a step further. “I believe in God” is to say that I believe in God who exists. “I believe in God,” is to say that I give things over to God. I give myself over to God. I give my life over to God. I give my death over to God. I put my thirst for happiness into God’s hands. I give my worries over to God. I give my illness over to God or put the illness of a loved one in God’s hands. I place all suffering, my own and that of others, in God’s hands. I place the injustice and the racism in God’s hands. I put everything, absolutely everything in the hands of God.

Now we come to understand that the question goes much farther than whether God exists or not. The question goes much farther than believing in eternal life. Now it becomes a question of living now, in this world with my weaknesses, my frailties, and when nobody can deny the fact that I exist and live in the world. It is because I live and exist today in the world that I can put my whole life into God’s hands.

Now the question is no longer only about my death. It is about now. It is about my life now, in the present, in every moment. I am invited to place my whole life into God’s hands now, and this includes my death, when the moment has come. But beginning now, I have the possibility of putting my life into the hands of God.

What allows us to transition from “I believe in a God who exists” to “I believe in God and I place my life in his hands”? To understand, we must listen to what Saint John says in his Gospel today, “God is love.”

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HOMILIES

God is love. Because God is love, he comes into the world through love and reveals to us that in Jesus Christ, we are called to be children of God for all eternity. God comes into the world to give us the strength to live, the strength to love and to forgive. He has the power to transform death into the transition to eternal life.

Because God is love, I can place my life into his hands. No matter my faith, no matter my sins, no matter how far I have strayed from God or how close I remained, in every stage of life, God is love.

God is love means that God the Father never stops looking at me as his beloved child. It also means that God the Son never stops giving his life for me, never stops giving his grace so that I may have life and life in fullness. Finally, it means that God the Holy Spirit never stops coming to me to open my heart to the presence of God. Because God is love.

I believe that God exists. I believe in God, and I put my life into his hands. Let us ask for the gift of faith. The gift of faith, as faith is always a gift.

At the same time, God offers us this gift that transforms our life, a gift that transforms the way that I look at others, and that transforms my outlook on life, because my life is for all eternity within the plan of the love of God.



Why did Jesus Christ reveal to us that He is the Son of the Father? Why do the Father and the Son want to give us the Holy Spirit? Why reveal to us the life of God? Is it only to tell us about who God is? Or is it also to reveal to us who we are? What is particular about the revelation of Jesus Christ is not only that it reveals who God is or about his love for us, it also reveals who we are as human beings! That we come from the love of God and that his plan is a plan of love for eternal life! That his love is given to us today, here and now, every day. Jesus Christ comes to give a goal to the life of everyone.

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HOMILIES

The Gospel today says that God the Father sends his Son into the world, but at the same time he adds that it is not about loving the world in general, it is not only about loving humanity in general, it is about each one of us. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, whoever, will have eternal life. Therefore, it is each and every one of us. Someone might think, “Oh, God loves everyone but He doesn’t love me. How can He love me? I’ve done so many bad things in my life. How can He love me?” No! The love of God is for everyone! Everyone! The problem is not that we are sinners or that there is a failure of love in our lives. That is not the problem! It is a problem, but it is not THE problem! The problem is that we are slow to recognize the reality that we need the mercy of God.

It is very different when you say: “Oh, I have nothing to improve in my life. Everything is perfect. I am doing alright; I have no problems!” Then, every time you do something bad or maybe you hurt someone; you just don’t see it! You don’t recognize it; you think that it is because of others!

You say to yourself, “There are problems in the world, or my life, but it’s not because of me it’s because of others! It’s because of other people! It’s not my problem, it’s not because of me!” The problem is our difficulty to look at ourselves in the mirror and to say “It is because of me!” Of course, it is also because of others, because we are all sinners! But it is also because of me.

Therefore, I need the mercy of God. Everyone needs the mercy of God! The whole of humanity, every single one of us! We all need the mercy of God! Somehow though, if we can reach the point where we can say, “God, forgive me! God, I have sinned! God, forgive me,” it will open the door to the grace of God, to the life of God, to the love of God, to his mercy, to his presence, and to his power to transform our lives.

Jesus Christ came into the world, sent by the Father and the Holy Spirit. He has the power to transform us into children of the light, into children of God, into children of the Eternal Father, through Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ.

So, as we contemplate the mystery of the Holy Trinity, we also contemplate in some way the mystery of our own humanity. That life is bigger than what we see, that love is greater than what we see; because life is God and love is God.





25. Homily - Sunday, June 14, 2020

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ - Year A (Jn 6, 51-58)

“As I live because of the Father, you will live because of me.”

“As I live because of the Father, you will live because of me,” Jesus says to us.

Jesus is humble, much humbler than we are. He who is God, he lives because of the Father. His life is to live by the Father.

We, on the other hand, as God’s creatures with our limitations, are not God. We are loved by God, but we are not God ourselves. Jesus offers us God’s life, and He calls us to live through him. But often, we are reluctant to receive it, and we need time to let Jesus Christ live in us.

How do we live by Jesus Christ?

The first thing that comes to my mind is prayer! When we pray, we open our heart to the grace of Jesus, to the grace of the Lord.

Then there is the Word of God. By meditating on Sacred Scripture and reading it slowly and calmly, we can open our heart to the grace of God. This is how we can live! We live through Jesus Christ, we live by the Word of God.

But there is also the Eucharist. The Eucharist, without excluding other ways by which Jesus Christ is present, is his presence par excellence! “This is my body, given up for you, this is my blood, poured out for you.”

This is my body, this is my blood.

Jesus Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament of his body and his blood. Jesus, crucified and was resurrected, is indeed present. “This is my body, given up.” The mystery of the cross that is present in this word, and at the same time, the risen Jesus Christ is present as the new covenant.

When we are before the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, we are before Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. We are before him, in his personal presence. We are called to receive him, to enter into communion with him, to be in communion with his presence so that he may live in us. In living in us, he transforms us so that by his grace we live by him, by his love, by his peace, by his mercy, we may fully live through Jesus Christ.

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HOMILIES

Living in the presence of the Resurrected now asks us to open up to his grace: Do we really want to live through Jesus Christ? Do we thirst for Jesus Christ? Do we want to live by the presence of Jesus Christ in us? Are we prepared to make the effort to pray more? Are we prepared for the effort to open Sacred Scripture and read and meditate on the Word of God? When our church doors are open again, are we prepared to make the effort to go to Mass? Let us be ready! Are we ready, today, to make the effort to go to Mass?

During the pandemic, we have been deprived of the Eucharist. The people of God, all across the world, in a stunning and mysterious way, have been deprived of the Eucharist. It forced us to engage in other ways of praying, some that we may already have known, but also finding new ones, either in our personal or in our family life.

For example, we may already have been familiar with the Word of God, but now we might be praying with it more. Perhaps we have become more confident and aware that our family is a small domestic church, a house of prayer, a house of communion where different people come together, as a family, to be of service in society and in the Church.

Parishes looked for ways to be more present in the media, in various ways. Mass continued to be celebrated on television or online, to let the faithful be present even if in a different way. At the same time, we know that virtual presence cannot replace real presence or physical gatherings of the faithful.

Virtual meetings cannot replace life in community! But we cannot deny that this experience widened our horizons. By discovering new ways to be church, our prayer lives have deepened.

In a mysterious way, by knowing that the virtual presence at Mass cannot replace our physical presence, this absence of physical presence allowed our thirst for the Eucharist to grow. Perhaps we used to take the Eucharist for granted as something that was available to us every day, every week, without us being fully aware of it.

Quite often, we take things for granted. But here, we could no longer take it for granted.

For many of the faithful, the physical absence from the Eucharist is a real test! But we could transform this into something greater, as it lets our thirst for Eucharist grow, our hunger for the Eucharist grow. In this way, we are transformed if our awareness of the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of his body and his blood has grown! It will be to the good, if our faith in the Eucharist has grown, if our life became more eucharistic! It was a test to be deprived of the Eucharist, but good will come of it, if it increased our thirst, if it grew our desire to live life according to the call of Jesus Christ, the call to be true disciples who walk with Jesus Christ, faithful to God's commandments and the beatitudes.

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HOMILIES

We certainly passed through a time of trial, but we were able to leave it stronger and drawn more closely to Jesus Christ. While we could not personally participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, we could deepen our personal prayer and our family prayer, as we journeyed in a personal, community and family way. Our desire to celebrate Mass allowed us to put the Eucharist more into the centre of our life, to better respond to the call of Jesus, to live more fully through Jesus Christ, and, in this way, to live more fully through the Eucharist.

Do we want to live by Jesus Christ? Do we want to live by the Eucharist? This takes us back to the Lord's Day. Each Sunday, we celebrate the Day of the Lord, the day when the people of God are called to live by the Eucharist.

Let us take a moment to pray for each other so that we, as a people of God, not only personally as individuals, but as a people of God, as a family, we rediscover together the importance of Eucharist and its central character in our lives. Let us pray that we can always remain aware that the Eucharist is Jesus Christ given to us and coming into our heart.

Toward the end of this Mass, to end the Mass, there will be a moment when we are sent on mission.

When the prayer after communion is said, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed, and we will pray in silence.

Then, I will stand outside the Cathedral to bless the city. I will bless the city and the world, *Urbi et Orbi*, as is the ancient custom.

Thereafter, I invite you to join me in this adoration in spirit and in truth. May our thirst be ever-increasing that through Jesus Christ, we live by the Eucharist.





26. Homily - Friday, June 19, 2020

Solemnity of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus - Year A (Mt 11:25-30)

What is the origin of the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

What is the origin of the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

It began at the foot of the cross when the heart of Jesus was pierced by the Roman soldier. The Gospel tells us that his heart shed blood and water. Water is the symbol for baptism and blood is the symbol for Eucharist.

This heart draws us to him, this heart draws all humanity to him. Jesus himself, in speaking of his heart said, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens. Become my disciples, for I am gentle and humble in heart.”

As we remember loved ones whom we have lost in this pandemic, as we remember families who are grieving, we can confidently entrust them to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who will meet each person with gentleness, tenderness, comfort, peace, and strength.

Let us take some time to offer up to the Lord our prayers for these intentions. After each intention, we will say: Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have trust in you.

℟ Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have trust in you.

For all those who have died since the beginning of the pandemic, because of COVID-19 or by any other cause, such as illness, accident, or tragedy, may they find infinite love and fullness of joy in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and rest for their soul in life eternal. Let us pray.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have trust in you.

For grieving families who were not able to be with loved ones in the last moments of their life, may they receive the grace to let go of them by placing them totally in the arms of Jesus and his gentle and humble heart. Let us pray.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have trust in you.

(cont'd)



HOMILIES

For those who are at the hour of their death, may they be open to an encounter with Jesus who knocks at the door of their heart. May they abandon themselves to his all-powerful goodness and inexhaustible mercy. Let us pray.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have trust in you.

For those who currently have COVID-19, for those whose treatments have been delayed because of the pandemic, for the sick who suffer and are discouraged, may they find in the divine heart of Jesus the comfort and courage to live and to love by abandoning themselves to Him in full trust. Let us pray.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have trust in you.

For those who are with the sick, families, loved ones, caregivers, doctors, nurses, health care assistants, administrators and support staff, may they find, by contemplating the pierced heart of Jesus, the fortitude to accompany, support and care while fighting the pandemic. Let us pray.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have trust in you.

Lord Jesus. You who are with the faithful, coming together here in love of your Sacred Heart, hear us and respond to our pleas, according to your will.

You who live and reign, for ever and ever. Amen.





27. Homily - Saturday, June 20, 2020

Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Lk 2, 41-51)

What do you ask of Mary when you pray to her?

What do you ask of Mary when you pray to her? In recent months, people have asked for protection against the pandemic. But if one focuses on Mary's heart, is there something else for which we can seek her intercession when praying the Hail Mary? Mary's heart is truly a humble heart. Humility is the first quality found in Mary's heart. The second trait is faithfulness. Her heart is humble before God, faithful to God.

Mary is humble of heart, a legacy of her Immaculate Conception. Original sin is the sin of pride, the desire to determine good from evil without God's help. But Mary was protected from original sin through the grace that flows from the Cross, in expectation of the crucifixion on the Cross. She was shielded from original sin, and in that sense, from birth, she was inherently humble. She was protected from pride the moment she was conceived. She was conceived in humility; she was born humble; she grew in humility. Mary remained humble her entire life.

And one could even say that Mary is the humblest of human beings in the history of humanity, because she is the only one who was not marked by original sin.

When seeking Mary's intercession with the Lord while reciting the Hail Mary, this is certainly one virtue for which to ask: to have a humble heart. Humbleness before God is fundamental, and Mary can intercede for us. To be humble before God is to recognize that we are God's creatures. Lord God, my Creator and Saviour! I am a creature of God. In all humility, I stand before God as his creature, ready to welcome his plan, to welcome his never-ending desire to love. Being humble means being open to God and relying on Him.

So let us pray to Mary, so that our hearts may truly be humble.

A faithful heart perseveres in love to the end. It is a persevering heart like Mary's, which remained faithful to God's plan, to God himself and to his loving ways throughout her entire life. Mary was at the foot of the Cross; she remained at the foot of the Cross until the very end; her heart was pierced. She was faithful to the end! She literally gave her heart so as to remain faithful.

To have a humble heart, to have a faithful heart: let us pray to Mary, asking her to intercede with the Saviour, so that humility and faithfulness permeate our heart as well.





28. Homily - Sunday, June 21, 2020

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Mt 10:26-33)

The Loneliness of Body, Heart and Mind

“What I say to you in the dark, tell it in the light.” What does Jesus say to us in the dark, and what must we speak about in the light? And what does “in the dark” mean? It refers to what I say to you when you find yourself in darkness, in the darkness of your life, in the darkness of your existence.

There’s an element of darkness pervading everyday life, which we experience at certain moments of our life and, perhaps, we are feeling some of that today. Certainly, this pandemic is a form of darkness. Another form of darkness present throughout life and which every person must confront is loneliness, which many are feeling probably more so during this pandemic. Loneliness confronts all of us, all human beings, each person in different ways.

There is a loneliness that affects the body. Human beings are meant to be with people; human beings are meant to share with others, to develop relationships with them. The human person exists as an individual in his/her own right, with an ego, free will, intelligence and emotions that are unique to him or her. But at the same time, each person exists to be in relationship: with God, with another, with other people. The loneliness that afflicts the body is somewhat like the distance that can occur in a relationship. Distancing, even if only physical, has an impact. When circumstances make it impossible for someone to accompany a sick loved one and give him or her a hug, this is a form of loneliness affecting the body; it has an impact on individuals. Because the body is never just a body. The body is a person! The body is the visible manifestation of a person. The body is the expression of a person. When we touch a body, we touch a human being. When we move away from a body, we move away from a human being. That is a form of loneliness that affects the body.

There is also a loneliness that affects the heart, because human beings are made to be loved and to love. Loneliness afflicts the heart when we have no one to love. When no one loves us. We might experience loneliness only temporarily when we encounter difficult moments in our relationships. Maybe we feel our heart has been deserted, that no one loves us, that there is no one to love. That is one of the most difficult moments in life. It is one of the toughest hardships to bear in life!

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HOMILIES

There is also a loneliness that affects the mind, so to speak. This is a loneliness that can invade the mind when we struggle to find the meaning of life. And surely during this pandemic, some of you might have taken a second look at your life, wondering at one point whether it has meaning. As we live our busy lives, always having somewhere to go or something to do, then coming home and doing the same, we tend to forget at times what is the meaning of our life. But when our life is put “on hold” because of sickness or the threat of sickness, like COVID-19 currently has done, perhaps we stop for a moment and ask ourselves: What is the meaning of my life? What am I living for? Why am I working in that job, which keeps me so busy? Sometimes, the questioning even extends to the family because we may be unaccustomed to spending so much time together, which the pandemic has made necessary; this can expose our weaknesses and wounds! Why ... Why?

This loneliness makes itself felt in the body, heart and mind. It is the essential loneliness confronting each person in various ways and at different levels. And loneliness is a real hardship, but it is even more of a hardship because we are not made to be alone! In Genesis, God himself says in the creation story: “It is not good that the man should be alone.” We were not created to be alone! We were created to live as individuals, body and soul, but not to be alone. We have been created to live in openness with others. We are made to be in relationship with others.

Loneliness eventually hits us, because we tend to flee from it through various pleasures and distractions, perhaps even alcohol and drugs. But loneliness remains there, somewhere, lurking in the shadows like a threat. And we may want to run away from it, but it catches up with us. Loneliness catches up with us.

Being confronted with loneliness is so difficult to bear. Let’s imagine, for example, that someone is caught in a burning building on the 10th floor. The situation may become so desperate that he or she may want to jump out the window, even if they are on the 10th floor, just to escape the fire. Sometimes to escape loneliness, we throw ourselves into unsatisfying experiences. But the goal is not to jump out the window, but to flee from the fire of loneliness burning within us!

So, when we are surrounded by the darkness of loneliness, we are called to realize that we are not alone. For instance, let me take one example from among others, because not all examples apply to everyone: when I am in a forest, I walk. I follow a path. But if I see a stream, a flower or a mountain, I may get distracted and leave the path. A few hours later, I might realize that I am lost. At first, it was fun because I was discovering the landscape, but now I am scared because I have lost my way. I am lost. Just when I realize that I am lost, when I thought I was completely alone, all of a sudden, someone is there, right by my side. I do not know from where the person came, how he came to be there, but he is there and is guiding me.

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HOMILIES

Jesus has the power to stand beside us always whenever we feel lonely. That is the truth. He is there regardless of the intensity and depth of our loneliness. Jesus Christ is always there. And that power is doubled, even tripled! This is divine power in action because, as God, He remains close to his creatures, to all the creatures of God. Jesus is close, very close to us. He ensured that He would be close to us. First, He assumed a human nature. In doing so, it is as though our human nature becomes the language through which He speaks and draws close to us, so to speak. He is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Sometimes we move away from ourselves, but Jesus remains right beside us always. Second, He does so because He is God. He assumed our human nature to become a human being. And, third, He bore the entire weight of our loneliness when He was on the cross. Hanging on the cross, in his plea “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” He saw the extent of the loneliness crushing the body, heart and mind, and He bore it all. He bore the loneliness that we feel, the loneliness of body, heart and mind. He bore the weight of it on the cross, and in doing so one might say that He became the most solitary man in the history of humanity! Jesus, the Son of God made man, was the loneliest human being in the history of humanity when He hung on the cross, because He bore the totality of our loneliness.

No matter how intense or deep our loneliness is, no matter how overwhelmed we might feel, Jesus remains right by our side. When the darkness of loneliness invades us, what does Jesus say to us in that darkness: “I am with you always. I am with you always. Remember that I am with you always.”

This is where prayer is of utmost importance, because it is during prayer that we will hear Jesus tell us: “I am with you always.” It is during prayer that we discern Jesus Christ’s presence. It is during prayer that we realize that we are not alone. At one moment in his ministry, Jesus speaks about the depth of his loneliness, saying: “I am deeply grieved, even to death.” Jesus felt the crushing weight that loneliness brings to bear. But at the same time, as though in self-reflection, this response: “... yet, I am not alone because the Father is with me.”

As a human being, Jesus felt the depth of loneliness, but He knew He was not alone. This is reflected in his plea from the cross, when He cries out: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” But those words were not addressed to those standing at the foot of the cross, as if to say: “He has forsaken me.” No, Jesus addressed his plea — “Why have you forsaken me?” — to the Father. So, if Jesus was speaking to the Father, it is because Jesus wanted to say that He knows the Father has not abandoned Him. He knows the Father is there, and Jesus cries out to Him: “Why have you forsaken me?”

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His words offer another way to pray. When you feel lonely, really lonely, and are overwhelmed by loneliness, say to Jesus: “Jesus, why have you forsaken me?” But as you tell Him that, know deep down that He has not abandoned you! We know He listens to us. We know He hears us. We know He is here. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And what were the last words Jesus uttered on the cross: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Jesus knows the Father is there. So, “Jesus, why have you forsaken me?” and “Into your hands I commend my spirit.” Into your hands I commend my heart. I commend my body. Carry me. Strengthen me. Guide me. Console me.

In the darkness of our loneliness, Jesus speaks to our hearts, saying: “Do not fear. Do not fear; I am with you always!” And He does not stop there, which is amazing! He goes a lot further, telling us: “No one can snatch [you] out of the hands of the Father.” And “Through my grace, I place you firmly in the Father’s hands.” Nobody, no power on Earth, no power in hell, no power of darkness, no one can snatch you out of the Father’s hands. Those in the Father’s hands, those whom I place in the Father’s hands, the moment you are in the Father’s hands, nothing can snatch you away. No matter what happens or the struggles you go through, no matter the illness, the failure, or how lonely you feel, nothing can snatch you out of the hands of the Eternal Father. Nothing! “Do not fear. I am with you always. Nothing can snatch you out of the hands of the Father.”

Now we can understand what He said as we stand in darkness, looking back at what we have experienced or are currently going through. So, can we remain silent when we hear these words — “Do not fear; I am with you always; You are in the hands of the Father, and nothing, no one and no power in the world, or in hell, can snatch you out of the hands of the Father; there isn’t any power that can snatch you out of the Father’s hands” — and when we experience the peace and strength that faith in Jesus Christ offers? Can we keep that treasure or secret to ourselves and tell no one?

We now understand what Jesus meant when He said: “What I say to you in the dark, what I say to you when you are in the dark, do not fear; I am with you always; do not fear, for you are in the Father’s hands.” Speak of it in the light. Shout it from the rooftops. Proclaim it publicly. That is your mission. I give you a mission when I say to you what Jesus said: “Do not fear, for I am with you always, do not fear, for nothing can snatch you out of the hands of the Father!”

Your mission is to proclaim throughout the Earth that Jesus Christ is with us and that He has the power to place us firmly in the hands of the Father, and nothing can snatch us out of the Father’s hands. Do not keep this treasure for yourself! Share it everywhere throughout the Earth! It becomes a duty! It becomes a mission! It becomes an assignment! It becomes absolutely necessary. For our hearts, it is a necessity. Our hearts need to share this richness in a profusion of joy!

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As we are on the eve of reopening the doors of our churches, about to begin the process of “deconfinement,” let us ask for the grace to thank God truly for the gift of faith. Let us ask for the grace to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ! To proclaim, to go forth proclaiming the Good News!

Today, not only do we speak about the COVID-19 pandemic, but also about an epidemic — if not a pandemic — of fake news! But there is good news, powerful enough to counter all fake and bad news: the Good News brought by Jesus Christ!

Thanksgiving

As a prayer of Thanksgiving, we are going to invoke the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This great prayer was officially approved in 1899, but it originated in the 17th century. Venerable Anne-Madeleine Rémuzat (1696-1730) of Marseille composed 10 of the invocations and promoted devotion to the Sacred Heart during the Great Plague.

The Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God the Father of Heaven,
Have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
Have mercy on us.
God the Holy Spirit,
Have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, One God,
Have mercy on us.

(cont'd)



HOMILIES

Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mother,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, substantially united to the Word of God,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, of infinite majesty,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, holy Temple of God,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, Tabernacle of the Most High,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, House of God and Gate of Heaven,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, burning Furnace of charity,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, Vessel of justice and love,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, Abyss of all virtues,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, most worthy of all praise,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, King and centre of all hearts,
Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,
Have mercy on us.

(cont'd)



HOMILIES

Heart of Jesus, in Whom dwelleth all the fullness of the divinity,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, in Whom the Father was well pleased.

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we have all received,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, desire of the everlasting hills,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, patient and abounding in mercy,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, rich unto all who call upon thee,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, Fountain of life and holiness,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, Propitiation for our sins,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, filled with reproaches,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, bruised for our offenses,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, made obedient unto death,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, Source of all consolation,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, our Life and Resurrection,

Have mercy on us.

(cont'd)



HOMILIES

Heart of Jesus, our Peace and Reconciliation,
Have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, Victim for our sins,
Have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, Salvation of those who hope in Thee,
Have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, Hope of those who die in Thee,
Have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, Delight of all the saints,
Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,
Spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,
Graciously hear us, O Lord,
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.

∇ Jesus meek and humble of heart,
℞ Make our hearts like unto Thine.





29. Homily - Wednesday, June 24, 2020

Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist (Lk 1:57-66, 80)

Have you been able to recognize Jesus' presence in your life?

Over the course of the last three and a half months, since the onset of the pandemic, have you been able to recognize Jesus' presence in your life? In retrospect, when we look back at our personal, family, social and faith-life experiences, what have we learned from them? In general, a test is much like a double-edged sword; it can cut us, it can force us to the ground, but it can also open up a time for growth. Some questions that can come to mind: what will help us emerge from this experience and grow from it? It is through trials that we will succeed. The pandemic is a trial. But what can lead us through it? How do we look back at our experiences and make sense out of them? What do these experiences lead us to discover? Somehow, we tend to feel that all the powers of this world have been "weakened". What is left? It is the dignity of every human that remains; every human having been created in the image of God. And that, regardless of our situation, our health, our illness, or our loneliness, remains constant. Every human being is created in the image of God and called to eternal life. This is the inherent dignity of every human being. It is the dignity of each and every one of you. It is the dignity of all mankind, to be created in the image of God, which characterizes our inherent value. It becomes a matter of rediscovering the dignity of every human being.

Another area in our lives which needs to be recognized, but is sometimes taken for granted, is the family. As the world lives in confinement, only those closest to us live together on a daily basis. The family is what we often take for granted. The family, which is often tested, has already, under normal circumstances, its own share of trials to face amid its many commitments and engagements. During these times, however, the family has come together, more than ever before! Perhaps it was the first opportunity in a long time for many families to have happiness and rest restored in their homes by their newly found time together. However, perhaps certain wounds emerged as well, through fragile relationships, or misunderstandings. Maybe for many families, the time together was an opportunity to forgive again.

In every case, the time together became an opportunity to rediscover the importance and the true value of family; and not only the value of family, but that of every individual, every human being, given that everyone is, in one way or another, related to a family! It was a chance to rediscover not just the importance of the family to the individual, but also the importance of the family to society as whole. The family is the nucleus that serves as a building block for society. We must also recognize the importance of the family unit in the Church. It is the family from which life is born, that provides new life, that raises new citizens, that brings forth children for Baptism; it is the true backbone for society and the Church.

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HOMILIES

This increased awareness of the true fundamental value of the family is important for everyone as a member of a family, for parents and for children. It is also important to society, and for the Church to know how to advocate for and minister to families. Do we know how to help foster family life and be of service to families? It is not always evident. Sometimes, we want to help or serve as a member of a family, and make family life a priority in our lives, but again, amid busy family life, it is not always easy. The family is very important, indispensable, and essential. A weakened family leads to a weakened society and to a weakened Church. A strong family unit however, helps create a stronger society and build a stronger Church.

Many continue to express a serious issue affecting family life: “We are still on 24/7. We have teenagers who work on weekends. In order to gather together at mealtimes, we have to book it with a month’s advanced notice.” Many have considered having Sunday become a common day of rest for everyone, allowing families to get together. It can be tiring being away so much from our families. Being together can be a great form of rest. So why not, then, put this request into action? Currently, there is a petition being presented to the National Assembly, advocating for Sunday as a designated common day of rest. I invite you to give your support and sign the petition online.

There may also be other issues that persist during the pandemic. Yet, in addition to the dignity of a person and the value of the family, above all, there is God. Among these three, God, in his miraculous ways, remains the one consistent presence that connects everyone on the entire planet. Interpersonal relationships, physical distancing, hindered communications, homes for the elderly, for healthcare, all these have become difficult, staying connected has become difficult. The only one who has the power to remain ever-present, to come close to us, is God himself. We cannot fathom the immense work it entails: all the time, all the love, all the care that God has given to all of humanity, to each and every one of us and to our families, to stir within us and coming knocking at the door of our hearts.

So the question really becomes: do I want to open the door of my heart to God? Do I want to make room for God? Several people have testified that if it were not for the pandemic, they would not have rediscovered prayer; be it personal prayer, family prayer, rediscovering prayer life and learning to give time to prayer again. Sometimes prayer can start off like a cry. It can start poorly but once you say “Lord, help me!”, that can become our prayer for the day! Saying “Lord, help me!” is a form of prayer that the Lord always hears.

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HOMILIES

It is also very important to rediscover our spiritual life. We recognize that our physical health is important. And that is an excellent thing! At the start of the pandemic, we focused a great deal on physical health, but a few weeks later, we started addressing psychological health, mental health, personal health, and overall health. Thus, psychological health is very important, too. It is also important to consider emotional health, mental health, and the health of our relationships. But we must not forget our spiritual health, the quality of our spiritual life, and in health, everything is connected. When we care for our physical health, it helps our psychological health and vice versa. When we nurture our spiritual health, it helps both our psychological health and our physical health. The human being is not a mechanism comprised of different parts: “Ah, I have a gear here which is damaged. I will fix it and it will be fine!” No! Every dimension of our being affects us as a whole! When our feet hurt, our whole being can hurt! When we are weak in some areas, our whole person becomes weakened.

To rediscover our spiritual dimension is to rediscover that we exist before God, we exist to pray, we exist in being called to eternal life. When we use “I”, we exist in the spiritual realm and affirm our spiritual dimension. It is our center, our heart, our spirit. It is our soul expressing itself through the body which exists as one with our spirit. But it all starts from within a spiritual core. A spiritual core that has an impact on our emotional life, on our health, and on our relationships. When we pray for each other, and with each other, it brings us closer to one another, much like the spokes of a wheel that meet at the centre. When we pray, we draw closer to God; and when we draw closer to God, we draw closer to one another, because we are all God’s creatures, called to be God’s children, and loved by God. God never ceases to look upon us as his beloved children! As his children, what then does this mean? This means that we are all brothers and sisters to one another!

Spiritual life has a very huge impact on the personal, familial, social, and most certainly, Church life. This pandemic presented an opportunity to rediscover these dimensions, the different fundamental dimensions of life: on being human, on dignity, on the family, and the spiritual life.

On this feast of St. John the Baptist, whose vocation was to prepare the way of the Lord, let us pray to St. John the Baptist that the Lord may prepare the way for our hearts to welcome Him, to welcome his presence, his work from within us and through us, so that we can all get through this pandemic, having grown in spirit, i.e. becoming more rooted in God, in solidarity with one another, in service to the most needy and the poor, in society and in the Church.



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After the Prayer of Communion

For three and a half months, I have spoken to priests, pastoral lay leaders, volunteers, via Zoom, on other platforms or by telephone. I am grateful to God because during the first week of the health crisis, many of us did not think that it would last long. But we soon found out that this would last much longer than we thought. People began respond rapidly in service to our mission during which there was no pause, it continued. Our mission to announce the Good News, to announce Jesus Christ and to speak of the Kingdom of God. In reality, we are called to be witnesses to the Word through our actions, our example, and our lives. The mission continued. But we needed to rediscover how to keep it going, because in the Church, as in society, much of our lives is based on physical contact and personal relationships! How then, do we continue our mission? Online platforms, various social media, the internet, everything that was possible, all became the tools to reach people. What was most surprising and astonishing were personal accounts from people who had been away from the Church but who had been touched by this outreach; this included those who have been absent from the Church for a while, and those had no faith or did not know Jesus. Many have been touched by the fragility of our circumstances, which we all experience on a daily basis. It is also a time of rediscovering our own lives and to perhaps realign ourselves with our priorities. Perhaps we are also realizing more fully that we need God in our lives. I am certain that for many of us, it had become an occasion to rediscover God – to quench our thirst for God, which He instills in our hearts.

This is evidence of the amazing hand of God at work! It is much like the tip of the iceberg, a great deal remains hidden beneath its surface, the great spiritual source alive and active during the pandemic. I contacted those who were shut-in, many who live alone, some who were lonely, and others whose network of resources and relationships were suddenly severed. Many shared with me how this became for them an occasion to renew their personal prayer life and to also renew their devotion to God. It was a similar experience for many families. I am thinking of a family who went to Church on Sundays and who, since the pandemic, pray together every day, more than ever. Though their children might have seemed a little distracted when they came to Mass, grew to share a prayerful life with their parents — the family became prayerful. And therefore, a lot of good was present, there was a lot of gentle tugging at people's hearts. We try to do things- we try to help, but in the end, Thank God for He is the most powerful Responder! Because only He has the power to touch our souls in a profound way.

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HOMILIES

But to see deeply into the soul, only God can do that! And it is better that way for us because God also protects our souls from anything that is invasive and menacing. Only God can really see profoundly into our souls - for God always does so by tugging gently at our hearts – God always does it by addressing our freedom. It seems to always be the case to ask, ‘Do we want to open our hearts to Christ?’ This is the major question that each one of us needs to ask. This is the essential question that each human being needs to ask when witnessing to their faith. It is the freedom of every individual who is addressed to answer. It is there that God touches the depths of our souls - but God also comes knocking at the doors of our hearts too.

Let us believe then in the work of God which is happening now and will continue to manifest itself. Let us ask for the grace to be ourselves in the light of God’s work, to be more open to God’s spirit within us, and that through us - God can use us as instruments in building the Kingdom of God.

On this feast of St. John the Baptist, let us pray to him, that the paths of our heart, all that impedes our hearts from being open to Him, that the curves or the mountains or the hills that prevent the Lord from reaching us, may be smoothed out so that we can welcome the Lord with generosity, trust, and openness.





30. Homily - Sunday, June 28, 2020

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Mt 10:37-42)

Is God first in your life? How?

What was your prayer life like during these last three-and-a-half months? Because the question, “How is God first in your life?” can really be answered by, “Is God first in your prayer life?”

There are different ways of praying and each of them has merit. There may have been times when you spent time in silence before God, listening in all simplicity. At other times, maybe more often, you might have asked God for something. This can take up a large part of our prayer time, asking for something. The Lord approves of it. He said: “Ask, and you shall receive!” Therefore, ask God for gifts. Ask for something in prayer.

However, there is also another form of prayer. This is the form of prayer in which we make ourselves completely available to God. In this case, we are not asking God to help us, important as this is. Instead, we approach prayer by wanting to be totally available to God.

There seem to be three ways in which our lives can unfold. There are not many options, but I can certainly think of three. One way is to say: “My will be done.” And my will may well be good. But the central idea is that “my will be done.” There is another way; we say: “My will be done with the help of God.” Now we’re adding a faith dimension, and we seek God’s help. Still, there is an additional way, and I would say a more profound way: “Your will be done.”

With this, there comes a moment when to pray is to give it all up. It is to give up all our preoccupations, all our anxieties, all our questions by simply placing ourselves in the presence of God and saying: “Lord, your will be done.” And this is not that easy to do! It really requires a conscious effort. Sometimes, we might do it spontaneously out of heartfelt emotion. But more often, overwhelmed by our neediness, we find ourselves petitioning God. But even then, it is good to say: “Lord, your will be done.” When we do, we move beyond all our concerns, all our questions and even our conscious hopes! We leave behind all our thirst, all our apprehensions, all our desires to place ourselves in the presence of God. “Your will be done!”

One of the ways this experience is expressed in the Bible is by all the references to the greatest commandment: “You shall love the Lord, your God. Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself.” First is “You shall love the Lord your God.” Second is “You shall love your neighbour.” “You will love yourself” is third.

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HOMILIES

The first is “You shall love the Lord your God.” Therefore, leave everything to place yourself in the presence of God with all your heart. Seek God’s will with all your heart because his will means eternal life! His will means your happiness! His will means peace! His will means harmony! His will means salvation. His will means our wellbeing, our good! It is for our good, for the good of humanity, but also for the good of the Church, for the good of the family, for our personal good. God wills our good!

Do we thirst for happiness? If we really thirst for happiness, then let us seek the will of God, because no one wants our happiness more than God does! Let us seek the will of God.

So give up everything to put yourself in the presence of God, give up everything to say: “Lord, you are first in my life.” Give up everything to say: “Lord, let me enter into your plan of love, into your plan of creation, into your plan of salvation. Lead me. Let my life cling to your will, let my life be obedient to your will.” Jesus says: “I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.” We do not normally see the link between obedience and will, and love, and the loving will of God. In the words of Christ, the link is very strong. What does it mean to love someone? Loving someone means many things, but it also means loving what the loved one desires. To love God is to love what God desires.

To love God is to want to be united with God by being united with his will. This really is a process of love. It is neither a process of domination nor of manipulation. These are distortions of obedience. Being united to the other by being united in will is true obedience. Being united with God is being united with his will, which means truly putting God first in our lives.

There are obstacles to putting God first in our lives. For example, we can doubt that He is really with us, doubt that He really accompanies us, doubt that He really wants to help us. Maybe there are moments when we ask for a lot, but without knowing how to put Him first in our lives, without knowing how to discern his will first. At the same time, God is patient. God really wants our happiness and really wants to guide us to eternal life.

Here is an example, a simple but revealing example: being a child. Part of being a child is to refer to your parents. Children ask things of their parents. When we were children, we asked our parents. This is what it is to be a child: it is to ask your parents. But how do parents respond? Do parents agree to every request of their child? Yes, when they see it is good. But when harmful, maybe a toy for which the child is too young, they say: “Too soon. When you are older.”

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HOMILIES

Maybe the child does not want to go to bed. If too young to stay up late, they respond: “No, when you are bigger, then you will go to bed later.”

“But my big brother goes to bed late,” says the child.

“Later, when you are older, you will stay up longer, too.”

Parents guide their children in fulfilling their desires. They want to guide them on the road to maturity, the road to happiness and the road of life.

God also says: “Not now. Later.” Sometimes He says: “No, this is not the way. This is for your own good; it is better like this.” Therefore, to seek the will of God is to seek what is truly good for us.

Life presents many mirages. A mirage is a very powerful image: Imagine being in the desert, being very thirsty. Suddenly, we see water on the horizon. Desire convinces us that it is real, but when we arrive, there is no water; only sand runs through our fingers. Such are the mirages of life. Sometimes, there are attractive promises of happiness. Alas, they are not. We get what we want but we are left with a pounding head and disappointment. Putting God first in our lives is the best way to uncover what is truly good for us. It is paradoxical. By putting love of self third, after God and neighbour, we attain true love of self and what is truly good for oneself and for each human being.

Yes, we might respond that it is good to love others, but what about Jesus’ warning in the Gospel when He says: “Love me more than you love your parents! Love me more than you love your children!” Is not the love of parents still important? Is not the love of children still important? But what He says is that “if you want to truly love your parents and your children, totally and without counting the cost, put me first. I will fill you with love for your parents and your children. If you want to love your husband or your wife generously and without asking for any return, committed, really caring, accompanying the other in mutual self-giving, if you want this, well then, put me first, and I will give you the grace to love truthfully, to love completely, to love tenderly and to love forcefully.” In the end, putting God first is not only a challenge, it is also the fundamental decision to put God’s plan first. However, it is also receiving from God the grace to live this plan and the strength to love as He calls us to love.

Throughout the entire Bible, God’s commandment is: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself.” In the Gospel, Jesus brings another dimension – in a matter of speaking – by the fact that He is the Son of God made man. In the Gospel, to love God is to have faith in Jesus Christ and to put Him first in our life, because Jesus Christ is the Son of God made man! Now, the love of

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HOMILIES

the other, the love of our neighbour becomes “Love one another, as I have loved you.” And we know how much He loved us! He loved us by giving up his life for us. Therefore, “Love one another, as I have loved you. I loved you by giving my life for you. Love one another by giving your life for another.” But all of this is possible only if God is first. All this is possible only if Jesus Christ is first. And all this is possible only if we live by the grace of God!

To put God first is to seek the will of God, but it is also to accept our need for God’s grace to love truthfully all those whom we ought to love! Unassisted, we are left to our own weaknesses and limitations. Therefore, putting God first is worth it.

Now we find ourselves at this Eucharistic celebration, at this Mass. After three-and-a-half months of confinement, our prayer life has become more intense, maybe more intense in the sense that we have prayed more. Sometimes it was easy to pray perhaps, but at other times, not as easy. At other times, it required an effort, because we were caught up in watching television or using our computers, tablets or cell phones. It is hard to quit all this in order to seek the presence of God. Therefore, the fight becomes more intense! Prayer becomes a more intense struggle. It is worth it, as putting God first is putting love first. Putting God first is putting truth first. Putting God first is putting goodness first. Putting God first is to accept God’s gift of beauty, goodness and truth. To live by God’s grace is to be transformed to love the people around us with more kindness, with more honesty, and with more generosity.

Let us learn to pray anew. Let us learn to be silent and listen to God, in all simplicity. Let us also learn to petition God without ceasing. Let us learn to leave everything behind to rest in the presence of God alone. Let us be available to seek his will and be open to his grace.



The confinement has literally put us in “pause mode.” Nevertheless, the mission of love continues. The mission to love never stops. The call to love God never stops. The call to love each other, beginning with our family, never stops. God’s grace never stops. Service, the spirit of service never stops. Life continues and love continues. Serving one another continues. Is it easy? No. It is demanding. It is demanding because being human is being in

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HOMILIES

relationship with others. Human beings exist as individuals in their own right. Yet, at the same time, they exist as individuals open to the other. They exist to encounter the other, to encounter God, to encounter one another.

All that we have learned over the past three-and-a-half months about communicating — online, by telephone, by radio or television, or by other means — is important. But we know that it does not replace direct contact with others.

This period of hardship continues. However, we are not facing this alone. I like to think that all those who are sick in hospitals or elsewhere, in residences, those at the end of their life, all those whom no one was permitted to visit, I like to think, and I believe with all my heart, that God visited them.

A week ago, when it was again possible to visit the sick, I went to see someone in the hospital. In the same room, there was a woman who had been there for three months. For three months, she had been there. For three months, no one could visit her! What struck me, what I found extraordinary is that she had been alone and sick in her hospital bed, receiving good nursing care but without physical contact with her family, yet in her eyes was the most astonishing expression of serenity. They expressed inner peace, serenity that I found incredible! As a man of faith, I was certain that I saw in her eyes the fruit of God's grace. Isolated from her family, even cut off from her family, but God was with her. And God has been with us since the beginning of this pandemic as He was before and will continue to be.

Let us continue to rely on Him and believe that we will continue to grow from this experience. This pandemic is an opportunity for personal growth. We can emerge from it having grown in grasping the meaning of our life; we can emerge having grown in our own family relationships; we can emerge, quite simply, having grown in our ability to recognize our weaknesses. Too much of life is about running away from and not even recognizing our weaknesses! But if we were able to grow in recognizing our weaknesses, we truly grew because someone was ready to welcome us in our weaknesses. This is the Lord! Now, having recognized our weakness and fragility, our love grows in humility. Perhaps we have become more humble through this pandemic. When we become more humble, we love more truthfully. In humility, we love others for being the other, rather than what we want them to be for us.

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HOMILIES

So, let us keep moving forward as the marathon continues. It is like a marathon. In a marathon – although I’m not a marathon runner, I have seen them in action – the runners find ways to maintain their strength along the entire way. They adopt a steady, sustainable rhythm. If they were to begin at full speed, they could not make it to the end! So, they pace themselves. Let us also find our rhythm, our pace, to furnish what we need to strengthen us, both human support and spiritual support. Find your rhythm. Move forward. Stay committed to the mission, the mission to love.

We are going to come out of it. When it is over, it will have been an opportunity to renew our willingness to love, to give generously, to give freely. It will have been an opportunity to renew our acceptance of God’s grace, because experiencing our limitations and weaknesses day after day, week after week, month after month will have been an opportunity to learn how to rely more fully on the grace of God. Let us pray for each other. Let us pray for the whole Church. Let us pray for all of humanity, because the Church does not exist for herself but so that the beauty and breadth of humanity knows the love of God.





31. Homily - Sunday, July 5, 2020

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Mt 11:25-30)

“I am gentle and humble in heart?”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Do you often repeat in your prayers: “I am gentle and humble in heart?”

These beautiful words of Jesus are perhaps his most comforting ones: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens. I am gentle and humble in heart.”

This sentence reaches out to us, these words touch us, but at the same time, these words remain somewhat mysterious. After all, we could ask, what is humility? What does it really mean to be humble? What is gentleness? What does it really mean to be gentle?

Speaking about humility remains a mystery. Throughout human history, in different philosophies, in different religions, different authors have addressed humility in different ways!

In Christian faith, humility is a virtue at the heart of faith. It is faith’s foundation. The word’s origin is the word “humus,” which means ground or earth. It is the ground on which the virtues stand, the foundation on which the virtues are built.

What, then, is humility? We enter into the mystery where we will never cease to discover what humility is as we will never be sufficiently humble. Being humble is the only way to discover true humility.

In the Gospel, Jesus affirms that he is humble: “I am gentle and humble in heart.” We can contemplate Jesus in his humility and ask him to teach us to be humble.

We can speak of one aspect of humility with this sentence of Saint Paul: “What do you have that you did not receive?” (1Cor 4:7). To be humble is to be conscious that what I have, I have received. All of it.

When Jesus says: “No one knows the Father except the Son”, what is he saying? He continues: “I know the Father, I have received all things from the Father. I attribute nothing to myself.

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HOMILIES

Everything I have, everything I do, everything I say, I have received from the Father. The Father begets the Son eternally. I have received everything from the Father. I was begotten of the Father. Everything I do, I have seen the Father do. Everything I know, I learned from the Father. I have everything from the Father.”

Jesus sees by his humility, and he recognizes that he has everything he has, he has from the Father.

And he is happy to have nothing by himself, to have all by the Father. It gives him joy that all that he has comes from the Father. Hear his joy! “I receive all from the Father. I know that all comes from the Father. I know that the Father who gives himself totally. I receive all from the Father!”

Jesus’ humility has repercussion in his life with us! Jesus is humble not only in relationship with the Father Eternal, but also towards each creature. The Eternal Son could say, on account of being God, that his is not humble, and it would have made sense! But being God himself, he is humble by nature, he is eternally humble! The humility of Jesus is not a humility in response to his incarnation, it is not a humility that only began when he became man! No, it is an eternal humility! Eternally, Jesus the Son, the Only Begotten Son, receives himself from the Eternal Father. Eternally, the Only Begotten Son receives everything from the Father. “What do you have that you did not receive?” “I received everything,” says Jesus.

When he comes into the world, the Son of God made man, Jesus, expresses his humility towards the Father by living constantly in prayer, because he receives everything from the Father, and through prayer, he continues to receive everything from the Father.

He also expresses his humility towards humanity, towards his apostles, his disciples, towards all who come to meet him! For he came to serve. He himself says so: “I did not come to be served, but to serve. The Son of man came to serve and to give his life.” To give his life. His humility gives life to his service. His humility gives life to the gift that he makes of his life. He is always serving. He is always giving his life.

At the last supper, according to the Gospel of John, he washes the feet of his apostles: “I have done this for you.” Jesus put himself at his disciple’s feet and washes their feet, performing the work of a slave.

In the tradition of the Middle East, washing the feet of guests who arrive at a house after a long walk, is a way to welcome them by removing the dust from their feet. It is a sign of welcome by the host, but given by a servant or a slave.

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HOMILIES

In the same way, Jesus has come to serve us. He came to wash us, to help us, to purify us, to save us. He has come to serve us. In this spirit, Jesus expresses his humility towards the Eternal Father: “I receive everything from the Father.” But he is also humble towards us, towards all humanity, towards each and every one of us. To every one of us, he presents himself as our servant. “I came to serve and to give my life for you.” What sign of humility, what extraordinary humility!

This humility challenges us. He who calls us to himself, he who is gentle and humble in heart, he calls us to be likewise and be humility incarnate, just as he. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be humble. To believe in Christ is to learn to be humble. And this humility increases our humanity.

What does it mean for us to be humble like Jesus?

First of all, we need to return to the word from St. Paul: “What do you have that you did not receive?”

Do I see that in my life I have received everything? Do I know that I have received my existence from God by way of my parents? I received an education, thanks to my parents, my teachers, the people in whose midst I grew up, but also people I met somewhere and sometime in life, or those who by the Grace of God became his witnesses to me. I received it all!

Even if I had the possibility to develop my talents, skills, and habits in the workplace, I must acknowledge that even there, I received it all! I received these talents, these beautiful skills, these gifts that I am trying to increase by my efforts. I have really received it all.

But I might have the temptation to say that because I succeeded in increasing my talents or professional strength, it is on account of my merits, because of my efforts.

What presumption! If I had not had people who love me, if I had not had people who took care of me, if I had not had people who prepared the food on my table, I would never have had the strength to work, I would never have had the strength to develop. Definitely, I received it all. Even my strength to work. I received it all. “What do you have that you did not receive?”

The more we develop within ourselves the sense that we have received everything, the more we walk the path of humility. It is like a call, the call to follow Jesus, to be his disciple, to follow the one who is meek and humble of heart, profoundly humble.

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HOMILIES

Before expressing humility in words and actions, his humility is expressed in his innermost being. He is humble. In the same way, we are called to be Jesus' disciples, to become humble ourselves, to be humble.

We can find the way through prayer: "Lord, teach me! Teach me to recognize that I received everything! Teach me never to forget that I received everything." And even when success should happen, I should pray: "Lord, I thank you because I received everything! I received my gifts, I received the strength to work, I received success. I received it all."

The more we develop our sense to have received everything, the more we walk on the path to humility. Being able to recognize that I have all received lets me recognize how lucky I am to be God's creature. Having all received and aware of being a creature of God makes me happy, it really makes me happy. As God's creature, I have received all. Without God, I had nothing. Without God, I were nothing. But with God, I am a human being called to be a child of God.

Humility is a fundamental quality in being human. It is truly a quality of the heart, a quality of the soul, a quality of the spirit, a quality that we are called to develop, with the challenge to make it grow in us.

This challenge is paradoxical. Humility is not acquired by practices that I might find in books that tell me what to do for 10 minutes a day, or maybe another exercise that tells me what to do for 20 minutes each day. There is no book that tells me what exercise to do in order to become humble. There are no exercises that let me acquire humility because humility is a gift.

If humility were the fruit of our efforts, then we could be proud of being humble. This would certainly not be humility! Humility is a gift, a pure gift. If we receive it, we must have an attitude of availability and total openness.

Where might we be able to learn what humility is about?

Look at the little ones, new-born babies, in their mothers' arms, in their fathers' arms. A new-born knows that he has received everything. He knows that when he cries and no one answers, there is a problem.

If he knows that there will always be someone who tends to him, he does not find his joy in saying "I have relied on myself." His joy is to know that he has received everything. He knows that his parents will take care of him. He remains continuously joyful in having received everything.

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HOMILIES

We are invited to imitate the little ones to experience the joy of having received everything. The joy of having received all from God, our parents, from other, people we met at some point in our life. Perhaps a professor enriched our life with a word he said in a moment when we were searching or suffering. This, too, we have all received.

Growing in the understanding that we have all received is not something that makes us sad or depresses us, thinking that because we have received everything, we are unable to do anything by ourselves. In the contrary, we rejoice because we have all received!

Having all received, what does this mean? It means that I received life from another. It means that someone loves me. Furthermore, if I have all received, it means that someone thinks that I exist. The one who gives everything, the one who gives us the gifts that we need, he who gives himself, what does he want to say? He says to us again: “It is good that you exist.”

Exploring the depth of humility, we discover not only that we have received all, but we discover the goodness of our existence. We discover that it is good that we exist because we exist created by God, seen by God, loved by God. We exist and are made to exist under the protection and love of our parents, under their loving glances,

Yes, we can say it again, we have received everything.

In receiving these gifts, in receiving life, in receiving our talents, we also receive the strength to live. In receiving love, we received the strength to love. In the end, we are all called to love, but we cannot love if we have not been loved. We cannot love if we have not personally made the experience of being loved. When we have not made the experience of being loved, we are not capable of loving. Even if we desire to love, we cannot get there.

But when we have made the experience of being loved, we also made the experience that we cannot love by counting on our own strength alone. Once again, we can turn to Jesus and say again: “Lord, I received all, Lord give me the strength to live, give me the strength to love.” Let our love become what we have received! In receiving existence, we also received love. We received love. We received love and feel loved, we receive love to love.

Humility is a fundamental quality of existence, both in our relationship God and in our relationships with each other. With an attitude of having received everything, we learn to be humble and appreciate the gift of others. We can learn to see their capacity for truth, beauty and goodness that is present in their soul, in their heart, and in their flesh.

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HOMILIES

Learn to see the goodness in the other! It is very easy to see problems in others, but it is more challenging to see the problems they see in us. Often, when someone asks us what we can do better in our life, we find it hard to respond. Perhaps we need to take the time for a week-long retreat to discover what we need to improve in ourselves, because we are not able to respond right away!

But when it is the opposite, when it is about saying what others need to do to improve themselves, we will not hesitate to let them know. In life, we seem to know quickly what others need to do to improve themselves, but we do not know what we ourselves need to do.

Thus, growing in humility is really a long process. At the same time, it can be the fastest work to make us humble before others, because humility lets us see others as a gift from God. It lets us see the other as a human nature created in the image of God. Humility lets us see the other person as called to become a child of God. Humility makes us capable of seeing others with all their natural capacities, beyond their limits, beyond their fragilities, their sins, their difficulties, beyond the misunderstandings and disagreements. Finally, humility gives us a new way of seeing that safeguards our capacity to see the true, the beautiful, and the good in the heart of the other.

Having proper self-understanding permits us to recognize that we have received all. It permits us to truly see the other, and this way of seeing gives us the ability to learn how to appreciate the good that is in the other.

Understanding that we have received everything, keeping this attitude towards the other, being capable to see the good and the capacity for the good that is the other, lets us experience the fruits of gentleness.

Fruits of gentleness let us confront the difficulties in life, the difficulties and hardships in life whose existence we cannot deny. For this reason, we are more than ever in need of gentleness in our life so that we can face life's hardships.

This hardness of life, we are very close to it and very aware of it in this pandemic. At the same time, we can recognize in gentleness what we receive, we can easily see the gentleness of God who strengthens us against the hardships of life. But, with his grace, we are capable to give what we received, to be gentle and patient with one another.

The confinement period completely changed our habits. We used to be with many people, at work or even in our extended family. Due to physical distancing, we see each other much less frequently.

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On the other hand, in our immediate family, we are spending more time together. When we are forced to spend more time together, we are also more confronted with each other's presence, which includes our impatience and fragility.

In this particular context, gentleness is especially important, as it is so easy to say a hurtful word! It is much too easy! We see it every day, as the media are full of it. The world of communications is full of harsh words.

Let us remember that we can stand against hurtful words, that we can speak words of gentleness to those around us, to communicate gentleness.

Let us open our hearts to the gentleness of God so that we, too, can show gentleness in response to the hardness of life.

Let us remember that we can stand against this, that we can speak words of gentleness to those around us, to communicate gentleness. But how can we communicate gentleness if we don't experience the gentleness of God in our life? Let us open our hearts to the humility of God, to the gentleness of God's so that we, too, can be humble with others, being of service to others, and showing gentleness in response to the hardness of life.

The family is the environment that can become a microcosmos of gentleness. In the family, are we able to be patient with each other? Are we able to wait for one another? Are we able to be gentle with each other?

If ever there are moments of impatience, think of God who is patient with us! If ever there are moments of humiliation, ask for the grace to not humiliate another in return. Sometimes, we make the experience of being humiliated, maybe because of some failure that we experienced in the workplace, or even right within our immediate family, without having wanted any of it, even if our own actions might have had a lot to do with it.

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HOMILIES

When we make this experience of being humiliated, one way to respond to the humiliation that we resent so very much is to become aware of it and to ask God for the grace not to humiliate another in return: “Lord, help me, I am humiliated. Give me the grace not to humiliate another person.”

In this way, the fact of having been humiliated make us more humble and gentle towards others. Today, on this feast day of St. Peter, he invites us to believe in the victory of gentleness.

In the book of prophet Zechariah from which we read today, Jesus is anticipated as the Christ, the King of the Universe. The passage from the Gospel today makes other references to the prophet Isaiah and other prophetic writings where the Messiah is announced as a King-Saviour.

How does the King-Saviour present himself? He does not arrive on a great battle horse, he arrives on a small donkey. Jesus, the King and Saviour, arrives humbly, a humble king.

Does this humility mean that he will be a defeated king? No. Because he is a humble king, he will be a victorious king.

In humility is gentleness. And in gentleness is strength.

The real strength is gentleness. Gentleness is a force. The real force is in stability of gentleness. The real force is in perseverance of gentleness. Strength is stability and perseverance in service. This is gentleness, the service by love.





32. Homily - Sunday, July 12, 2020 2020

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (Mt 13:1-23)

How is it possible that God still wants to reach out to me?

Do you fear the Word of God? What are our fears before God, before the Word of the Lord? One of our fears could be for instance that “I feel I am unworthy to hear the Word of the Lord! One day I believed, one day I prayed, but I distanced myself from God, I distanced myself from the commandments of the Lord, and why would God still want me anyway? How is it possible that God still wants to reach out to me?”

When Jesus speaks about the parable of the sower and when he speaks of different types of land, he uses an analogy because normally a farmer would not sow the seeds on the road, on rocky ground, or among the thorns. He must first prepare the land and then he will sow there where the land has been prepared.

But in this parable of the sower, Jesus plants seeds everywhere, at random! On the road, on the side of the road, among the thorns. And finally, also in the good soil! He sows everywhere. He sends his Word everywhere. He addresses everyone’s heart. He speaks to every person, in all stations of life, to every life’s history, in all its complexities. He really knocks on every door of every human heart, regardless of how hardened that heart may be, regardless of how God may be forgotten by it, regardless of how far God is distanced in the life of that person.

Jesus never ceases to come to us with his mercy. He always offers his word, He offers his salvation, as well as God’s forgiveness. He never ceases to offer God’s life, as well as eternal life. He always offers himself to every person. We do not need to worry or fear of being too far away from God or to be distanced from Him.

Jesus never stops from coming to meet us. He comes to us even before we reach out to him. As St. John or St. Peter said, “God loved us first”. He loved us even before we were ready to receive him. He gives himself to us and lives within us. And finally, it is God himself who prepares us to receive him.

Like the farmer, the labourer will work his land, he will prepare the soil, even if it is rocky. He will prepare it to receive the seeds. So, God does more than just sow the Word, which is Jesus. And Jesus does more than just give us his Word, Jesus does more than just sowing his Word in what would be good soil, in what would be the hearts already prepared to receive him. He prepares the soil, and he prepares the hearts. He prepares us to receive him.

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HOMILIES

He gives himself to us when we are ready to receive him, but he also gives himself to us when we are not ready. In this case, he gives himself to us to prepare us to receive Him. He is the one who comes to prepare our hearts. He is the one who comes to open our hearts to his Word.

So, if we fear of being too far away from him or if we have neglected him for too many years, for a long period of time, and if we would think deep down that it is too late to return to him, let us remind ourselves that no, it is never too late!

Another fear we may dread is what God might ask of us. We want God, for sure! We want to pray, of course, but we also hope there are certain things God will not ask of us. Oh yes, we all want God to be present in our life, but we also want to keep Him at a certain distance.

You surely know the expression which states that “There is none so deaf as those who will not hear.” So, there are times when we would be ready to hear things from God but at other times, we are not ready. Because often, in fact, things are not black and white, not all or nothing.

We really like to hear about some things. For example, we like to hear of mercy, especially the mercy of God. Wouldn't we also like to hear of his forgiveness? We very much like to hear about God's forgiveness! But perhaps we do not like to hear about his commandments. Perhaps we do not like to be reminded that we must also forgive. When it is about God pardoning us, we like to hear it. But being told to forgive others, we are in no hurry to pay attention, we are not at all quick to forgive, not ready to hear the call to forgive. Forgiveness is a gift that goes further, giving twice as much, and we are probably not ready to go there, yet.

So, am I afraid of what God could be asking of me? Probably yes, because I know that it could have something to do with my vocation. Am I, ultimately, afraid to hear God's call? My plan for life is worked out, my project is set, and every step of my career is planned right up to retirement. I do not want God to interfere with this! Am I ready to hear the call of God, whatever it is? Being afraid to hear the call of God when it is about our vocation is quite normal. We should not be surprised about this.

Take the example of the vocation to marriage! So many people hesitate to commit themselves. They surely want to live as a couple, they want to establish a family, but the idea of getting married, giving oneself permanently to another, for life, is an altogether different matter! One prefers to keep an exit strategy!

Furthermore, in one way or the other, one might not feel ready to hear this call of radical self-giving, not ready to respond to the call to consecrated life as a priest.

(cont'd)



HOMILIES

Then there is the whole matter of considering all that concerns leading a moral life, an ethical life and the whole question of Christian values. Most often, we are not quite ready to live a life of sharing, to answer a call to solidarity, a call to faithfulness, a call to Adoration, a call to prayer, a call to keep the Lord's Day and live it as the Lord's Day. These are some of the many things we may not want to hear. We may rather prefer to not hear them.

When Jesus speaks of fear in the Gospel, this is precisely the fear he speaks about: the fear of conversion. "I do not want to hear, I do not want to see, because I fear it will bring me to conversion or to live a conversion I prefer not to live." Maybe I do not want to confront them because I am not ready to do this now. So, we put limits on things. It is for that reason that one does not want to hear the call from God to conversion.

On the other hand, it could be that if we have compartmentalized our life, and there are certain areas in our life where we are ready to hear the call of God. For example, we are ready to hear the call to help the poor. But then there are other areas where we would rather prefer not to hear God's call.

So what is my real fear, deep-down inside of me? What is my fear of the Word of God? Do I have trust in God? Do I have trust in his Word?

When we say, "I believe in God," believing in God does not just mean we believe that God exists, even if this already is a lot! But believing in God means we have trust in God, it means that I am ready to put my life in his hands. I belong to God with all my heart. I open my heart to him and I give every part of my existence to him, I leave all my projects in his hands. I believe in God, I give myself to God.

In this way, we can also consider the question of why we are afraid of death! What are my fears related to death, what are my fears related to illness? We tend to run away from illness and death, just as we want to run away from pain and suffering. We are afraid of suffering!

What is God's call in my life? What is God's call when we are sick? What is God's call when we are confronted with death? Even in death, there is a call from God because God is present. God is present, God accompanies us, God speaks to us, God prepares us, God makes us capable to confront, God fortifies us, God pacifies us.

At the heart of today's Gospel is Jesus' speaking of those who do not hear because they do not want to hear, those who do not see because they do not want to see, because they fear conversion.

(cont'd)



HOMILIES

How does the Gospel continue? Jesus proclaims: “I will heal them.” Jesus has the power to heal us from our fears. He has the power to heal our fears to hear his Word. He has the power to heal us from our fear to convert. He has the power to heal us from our hardness of heart, the hardness of the heart which closes it to conversion.

When the Bible speaks of a heart that is afraid of conversion, it speaks of hardness of heart. The rock is a symbol, so to speak, of a heart that is hardened. It follows that when Jesus speaks of sowing on rocky ground, he means in hardened hearts. He does it anyway, because he has the power to transform hearts of stone into hearts of tenderness. This is the faith of the Bible! And God has the power to transform our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.

Hearing this parable of the sower and the different types of soil, a parable which we have known so long and heard so often, we ask ourselves, how do I fit into this text? Each one of us will probably say to himself, “Well, yes, I have problems, I am not perfect, but there must be at least some good soil in me.”

But perhaps we should look at this question from another angle. Perhaps we should say, more fundamentally, “Well, this hardened heart is in me!” There probably are certain areas of hardness deep down in my heart. Some areas remain open, yes, areas of tenderness, yes, but there are also still areas of stone. Therefore, the hardened heart that Jesus refers to is probably mine!

The path, on which some of the seed mentioned by Jesus fell, could represent times when we were rather indifferent to God’s Word, times during which we neglected to take the Word of God seriously enough, letting the Evil One stop the Word of God from reaching us. Somehow, the image of the path applies to us as well. We might have a forgetfulness of God, a forgetfulness of his Word, and a forgetfulness of his will.

Now we consider the other image used by Jesus, the one of the thorns representing life’s worries, our being preoccupied with material well-being and anxieties, which may be legitimate. But we can let our concerns about health and wealth, as much as they are linked to our wellbeing, suffocate our life, take control of it, paralyze us and keep us from living our life and loving. Perhaps we can find some or all of this in ourselves. But Jesus comes to heal us!

Jesus mentions all these types of hearts, but he says, “I will heal them.” Jesus has the power to heal all our forgetfulness of God, all hardness before God, and our anxieties which we have allowed to imprison us. Jesus has the power to heal us.

(cont’d)



HOMILIES

Let us ask God to give us not only His Word so that it yields fruits in us, fruits of goodness, fruits of beauty, fruits of justice, fruits of peace. Let us also ask him to be at work in our soil, to work on our hearts, to prepare us to receive his Word, which is the Word of Life, the Word of Salvation.



Among the fears we may have, we find one linked to the COVID-19 virus, as we are confronted with the pandemic and the fear of the unknown. The unknown always frightens. Sometimes, we would prefer to imagine to know what is coming, whereas in actual fact, it is impossible to know what will happen. In this situation, the fear of the unknown can become an experience of abandonment, a time when we can turn to God. It can then further transform into a time of collaboration, a time of solidarity, a time of opening up to others. If we consider these things under the aspect of things to do or to avoid, what is asked of us now is to turn towards God in prayer. We are called to be in solidarity, to think that we are all in this together and that, by the grace of God, we will come out of this pandemic stronger than before.

Amongst the things that we should probably avoid in our lives, I want to emphasize one. We must avoid blame in the situation that we face or with the people who we meet. Blame does not help to move things forward. Blame does not help us to find solutions. Blame does not help us to grow in solidarity. Blame does not help us to open up to God, to abandon ourselves to him. Blame misleads us. Blame is like a veil in front of our eyes which prevents us from seeing the good, the truth, and the beauty in the heart of every human being.

All human beings have their frailties, but every human being is also created in the image of God and capable of beauty, truth, goodness, capable of being in community.

Therefore, I ask you not to let yourself be carried away by blame. For instance, do not blame the Chinese people because COVID supposedly coming from China. This makes no sense. On this topic, remember that the Spanish flu from long ago did not come from Spain! The first time we heard of the Spanish flu, we heard of what occurred in Spain. Maybe COVID comes from China, but it may also have come from elsewhere. What matters now is not to blame anyone.

It is the nature of the world we live in now, with its frailties and where viruses exist and spread easily. The question is how we can work together to protect ourselves and prevent the virus from spreading. In summary, blame should be avoided more than ever.

(cont'd)



Likewise, there is the question of prevention measures. During this time of confinement, we have wanted to go fast, we want soon to go meet others, as we missed them for so long. Of course, there are nice things on television, nice things on screens, and all is well with physical distancing, but the nature of human beings is made for physical human contact! A human being is made to meet others! A human being is a person, a being made to be loved, body and soul! Clearly, nothing can compensate or replace this.

Some suffering remains with us, some suffering remains. It is not easy to say "yes" to it. It is not easy to say "yes" to physical distancing. It is clear that this time of trial continues. But, in prayer and solidarity, we can walk together and encourage each other. We will grow through this.

Some suffering remains with us, some suffering remains. It is not easy to say "yes" to it. It is not easy to say "yes" to physical distancing, even now when we are no longer separated from one another. It is not easy to say "yes" to wearing masks and not seeing the faces of our relatives and their smiles. And it is clear that this time of trial continues. But, in prayer and solidarity, we can walk together and encourage each other. And, I repeat, in a way, we will grow through this.

There are so many things that happen deep in our hearts. It is just like the tip of an iceberg. We only see its tip, but we do not see all that is underneath. Nowadays, thanks to television and radio, but also thanks to the social media and the Internet, we can see many more things. But, at the same time, there are many things we do not see.

For example, we do not see all that God does in our hearts. We do not see the suffering present in hearts, just as we do not see what God does in the heart of every human being. Humanity is at standstill. God is at work in every heart.

(cont'd)



HOMILIES

God alone, as I said already but cannot repeat enough, God alone can make himself close to each one of us everywhere in the world! With God, there is no social distancing. The only distance from God is the one we impose on ourselves. God wants to embrace us how we are, what we are, or where we are. He comes to visit us when no one else can come to us.

I wish for us that this pandemic will be a time of renewal and openness to God, both on a personal level and as families. This will also be seen in our church. Sometimes, we go ahead with our own plans and think we are doing God's will, but we don't always ask ourselves whether it is really God's plan that we are following!

This idea can also be carried into our place in society. In an increasingly secular society, with the laïcisme of our society, we must stress that we are created by God and are called to eternal life. We must find again a space for God in society, a space for faith, a space for those who believe.

Let us pray to the Lord that together, personally, individually, in our families, as a Church, and as a society, we will grow through this pandemic.



PASTORAL LETTERS



Ten pastoral letters written and published by the Archbishop during the confinement period between mid-March and July to sustain and encourage the entire faithful and ecclesial community.

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PASTORAL LETTERS



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral Letter

Care for: Body, Heart and Soul

March 13, 2020

Dear People of God in Montreal,

For several months now, we have found ourselves in a state of growing concern and heightened worry regarding the health of those already infected by the COVID-19 virus. To face this challenge, we need to maintain solidarity, take proper care of our body, without forgetting our heart and soul.

Take care of the body by following all personal hygiene measures, especially hand washing.

Take care of the heart by continuing to acknowledge those whom we meet, in ways other than by shaking hands. It is important to avoid isolating people; we need to keep in touch in a visible way or through any of the many communication means available.

Take care of the soul by praying at home, with the family, in small groups, at church.

With regard to parish churches, there are two cancellations for the moment: Saturday evening and Sunday masses, whose congregations include many people who travel, and catechesis, which keeps young people and their families moving in the same direction.

That being the case, it is also recommended that parish churches remain open seven days a week, and that all other events, and pastoral and liturgical activities, take place according to the good judgment of the priests and their parish teams.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



Individuals, families and small groups are welcome to come to church during Sunday Mass hours and also whenever the church doors are normally open.

During Sunday Mass hours, it is recommended that parishes keep their church doors open, have greeters on hand to welcome people, possibly offer an opportunity to dialogue, and make the Sacrament of Reconciliation available. It is recommended that exposition of the Blessed Sacrament be arranged to facilitate prayer, and that Communion be available, in accordance with our guidelines on hygiene, paying attention not to touch the hand or the tongue.

People at risk are encouraged to stay at home and to follow Sunday Mass on television or via the Internet. Everyone can access Salt + Light TV until April 14 through Videotron, on channel 242, and through Bell, on channel 654. Mass will be broadcasted on Sunday at 8:30 a.m. Sunday Mass is also broadcast on Radio-Canada at 10 a.m. year-round.

Seniors residences and religious convents/houses, with the consent of the management or superior and following the pastoral judgment of the priest and his team, can celebrate Sunday masses, but these are not open to the public. Remember to observe the 250-person limit set by the government.

Regarding the financial impact, we recommend that the required staff continue to be remunerated. We will see how best to organize a solidarity campaign to address the possible revenue shortfall in parishes.

This message does not address all questions. Other messages will be issued in response to changes in the public-health situation and to deal with various concerns or upcoming events, such as Holy Week.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



However, everything in parish life continues, except for what has been cancelled. Saturday evening/Sunday masses and catechesis in parishes are cancelled until further notice. Therefore, weekday masses, baptisms, funerals and weddings can take place, as long as the required 250-person limit is observed. For the rest, we place full confidence in the judgment of the pastors and their parish team.

Let us honour Sunday and rediscover the Lord's Day. Let our sadness in not going to Sunday Mass be an offering that helps us to appreciate this celebration when it returns. Let us continue to visit those who are struggling with illness.

During this time of Lent, leading to Easter, let us not forget that Jesus Christ continually draws near to us. Let us remain tuned in to prayer, solidarity and prevention. Let us ask God for the grace to remain serene, ready to respect others and filled with hope.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ Christian Lépine'.

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal

PASTORAL LETTERS



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral Letter

Rediscovering the depths of our soul

March 17, 2020

Dear People of God of the Archdiocese of Montreal,
Dear Brother Priests,
Dear Pastoral Team Members,

TURMOIL

Day by day the COVID-19 pandemic, declared March 11, continues to spread while preventative measures intensify. There is much uncertainty, but in just a few days, you have already courageously committed yourself to embracing important hygienic, social and pastoral measures to fight the contagion. I thank you most sincerely for the personal and communal efforts you have made.

As outlined in my March 13 letter, we adopted certain measures to contribute to the care of the body, heart and soul, while we continue to monitor the situation. In that letter, I asked that Saturday-evening/Sunday masses be suspended in parish churches, but that parishes keep church doors open and offer a welcoming presence.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



OPEN DOORS

Government authorities at various levels have now asked us to introduce more restrictions, such as preventing gatherings entirely because they bring people together, which increases the risk of contagion; something we want to avoid as much as possible.

This is why the measures that I applied to Sunday now apply to the entire week. Along with the bishops of Quebec, I ask that all weekday public masses be cancelled in church, as well as all pastoral or liturgical gatherings, until further notice.

That being said, I also ask that church doors be kept open for as long as possible each day to welcome people, that exposition of the Blessed Sacrament be arranged to facilitate personal prayer, that personal accompaniment and the Sacrament of Reconciliation be available, while respecting the social-distancing requirement of keeping one-metre apart.

It is an uncomfortable measure but, at the same time, it expresses social solidarity in the fight to contain the virus. How can we ensure that this period – which can be likened to Holy Saturday and the Silence of God – becomes a time to seek God in the depths of our heart, soul and spirit? How can we take advantage of this time to learn to listen more to others, learning about their burdens, loneliness and thirst for God? How can we take advantage of this time to draw closer to God? **Why not begin to pray every day, at home as in church, and to honour Sunday, the Lord's Day, more fully?**

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



FAMILIES and SOCIETY

The family is the basic unit of society and the Church. Drawing upon faith, hope and love, the stages of life and the gift of grace are highlighted in the celebrations of **baptism** and confirmation, **weddings** and **funerals**.

During this health-care emergency, it is necessary to postpone these celebrations until public-health concerns have diminished. These are events that bring many people together, which in the current state of affairs increases the risk of spreading the disease. However, should a funeral be held with bodily remains present, rather than cremated, it might not be possible to postpone the liturgy. The funeral must, therefore, be celebrated “in camera” (privately, with restricted attendance), with the possibility of celebrating a memorial mass for the deceased at an appropriate time in the future.

SENIORS

As a society, we are indebted to our senior citizens. Because of underlying health issues, illness or age — especially for those 70-years-old-plus — they are particularly vulnerable during this pandemic. As a precautionary measure, they need to stay at home and refrain from going out, so as to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus. However, it may lead to a sense of loneliness and isolation.

Is it possible to create prayer networks via phone or online, of ten or more of these homebound individuals, who share their intentions and offer their days, burdens and prayers for their family, society, the world and the Church?

I’m asking our many priests, permanent deacons, people of consecrated life, and lay people, who are 70 years of age and above and who give so much of themselves, to stay at home. It is a demanding request because you have hearts of gold, but at the same time, we want you around to share in the life of our parishes and various communities for as long as possible.

(cont’d)

PASTORAL LETTERS



WORKS of PRAYER and MERCY

It is possible to emerge stronger from this ordeal confronting us if each one of us focuses on the role of prayer and mercy in our life. Let us show solidarity in doing our part regarding prevention and showing compassion for those most-at-risk.

Let us not forget those who are sick or alone, people in our family, movement, community, parish or mission. Let's remain in touch with them. Let us assure them that we are very reachable. Let us be available to those approaching the end-of-life and to their families.

Let us make sure we are informed and share the timetable of masses available on television. Parishes could use the technology at their disposal to record a mass not open to the public and broadcast it on their website or post it on a YouTube channel.

Let us pray to Mary with confidence using this ancient prayer, which dates from the 3rd century: "Beneath your compassion, we take refuge, O Mother of God, do not despise our petitions in time of trouble: but rescue us from dangers, only pure, only blessed one."

Let us pray to St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church and of Canada. St. Joseph, protect our families, city, province and country.

May Jesus Christ keep you in his Peace!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine".

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal

PASTORAL LETTERS



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral Letter

Jesus is knocking at the door of our heart

March 20, 2020

Chers frères et chères sœurs,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Over the past week, day after day, there has been a gradual escalation of the fight against COVID-19. In the diocese, we started by suspending Sunday masses as of last weekend. The very next day, Monday, we announced the cancellation of all weekday masses, as well as all pastoral and liturgical events.

From the outset, it has been all about avoiding different kinds of public gatherings and maintaining physical distancing, about one to two metres. Regarding the acceptable size of groups, directives went from a 250-person limit to 50, then even a minimum number of participants was being discouraged. This is why, knowing that a given church could still be open and visited by several people at the same time, I now ask that all **our places of worship – churches and chapels – without exception, be closed to the public until further notice.**

All of us find this restriction on church access very painful, because each church is a house of prayer. Just think of the elderly who have always received the Eucharist. How do we connect with them? How do all those affected by this pandemic connect with their parishes? Together, let us find innovative ways to be present and united in the mission; let's share the good ideas generated with one another.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



Pope Francis has asked us to reach out to those on the periphery. The crisis through which we are now living can be embraced as an opportunity to learn how to do just that. It can be seen as an opportunity to re-evaluate how reachable we are, how available we are, and how well we respond to our neighbors' needs.

Oftentimes, people of faith, families who pray and thriving parishes feel as though they are alone, the only ones embracing faith. How can we move beyond this impression and rediscover that the diocese of Montreal is filled with fervent, courageous People of God?

Cancelling public masses does not mean that there are no more masses. I thank my brother priests for celebrating mass in private every day, and through the Holy Spirit, for presenting Christ's offering to our Almighty Father together with the intentions of the faithful for the world and the Church. I welcome initiatives where mass is celebrated "in camera" and broadcast on television, radio or the Internet.

I thank all those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours (Breviary): priests, deacons, men and women of consecrated life and lay faithful who do so. The Liturgy of the Hours is the prayer of the Church and it is an essential ministry. I thank all those who, in their homes, pray the rosary, read the Bible reflectively and glorify God in spirit and truth.

Let us remember that Lent, even the very unusual one through which we are journeying this year, is an intensive time of prayer and fasting, of generosity and sharing. May the Holy Spirit help us to be creative and to remain open to the needs of our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



For an undetermined period, the doors of our churches are closed, but our hearts are open to the call of Jesus: “Look, **I am standing at the door, knocking.** If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person’s side.” (Rv 3:20).

May St. Joseph invoke God’s blessing on the world and the Church,

May Mary intercede for our protection,

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus show you his mercy.

+ Christian Lépine

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal

PASTORAL LETTERS



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral Letter

Time to awaken the soul

March 25, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In a world developing without any thought of God and which prioritizes what can be seen, touched and quantified, human beings do not cease to be made for God and to seek the type of meaning in life that can bear the failure, frailty, suffering and death we all experience.

What happens to the meaning of life that is based on success in the event of failure; on health, in the event of illness; on fame, in the event of public humiliation; on wealth, in the event of impoverishment? As some have expressed so well, can it not be said that the day we comprehend the meaning of our death is the day we comprehend the meaning of our life (cf. Saint-Exupéry).

What happens to our sense of meaning when our thirst for the absolute and for ultimate happiness is defined by limited experiences, the sum total of which will always be limited, leaving us with a sense of emptiness (cf. Blondel).

In a universe where we cannot see beyond that which is visible – i.e. matter – everything perishes in the end. If all perishes in the end, then life has no real meaning. “Let’s eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” (Saint Paul). When we talk about the sustainable development, is it not also necessary to talk about the sustainable meaning of life itself? And to speak of “sustainable meaning” regarding life, are we not speaking of eternity, an eternity looming on the horizon of our life, toward which we journey; eternity, which approaches us and which we embrace.

(cont’d)

PASTORAL LETTERS



Eternity, as the fullness of eternal life, as the existence of God, as an encounter with God. This might sound very abstract, yet there is nothing more concrete. We know from experience that neglecting God leads to neglecting human beings, neglecting the dignity of the human person whose very life has inherent value, from conception to natural death.

God, who is Spirit, establishes our mode of being by giving coherency and meaning to our existence and life. When we no longer know what it is to be a human being, man and woman, it is a sign that we no longer know God. When human beings are nothing more than the result of chance that eventually dissolves like a shadow in the night of death, paradoxically, this becomes the sign that God exists. When there is no longer a sense of journeying through life, there is no longer meaning in life. But human beings resist the absence of meaning. They know in the depths of their soul, at the bottom of their hearts, in the pinnacles of their minds that they thirst for a continuous source of water, for water that remains, eternal life. They thirst for God. Their thirst, which is impervious to all neglect, indifference and evasion, is a sign that this thirst exists in the world but is not of this world (cf. Saint John Paul II).

If only matter, plants, animals and biological bodies existed, there would not be a thirst for the absolute, there would not be a deep aspiration to get the most out of life, love and happiness. If human beings were only bodies, only limited desires would exist. Human beings forget their sense of humanity the more they forget that which God desires, present within them (cf. Henri de Lubac).

Isn't it time to reclaim the soul, essentially the spirit dimension that is open to God, which knows and acts through the body? It is not for the soul to neglect or repress the body, as it is not for the body to neglect the soul. Human beings exist body and soul. "I am body and soul." The human body is an established entity, but it exists with the soul.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



It is within the soul that the thirst for infinity reverberates, the desire for an undying love, the hope of bearing fruit that will last (St. John). My heart beats in the soul and it wants to beat forever (cf. Péguy).

The soul is invisible, yet it is still visible. When I forget it, it is at the expense of my humanity; it diminishes my strength to live and love freely. The weakness that occurs in a body that does not breathe properly is a sign that the body is made to breathe, so too, the weakness that pervades a life without love is a sign that life itself needs to breathe. I exist, body and soul, and I am made to breathe, body and soul. I am a body that must breathe, but I am also a soul that must breathe. The body is made to breathe the surrounding air. The spiritual soul is made to breathe God who is Spirit.

The soul that breathes is a soul that prays. As all saints testify, prayer is the breath of the soul. To become aware of the soul is to become aware of prayer. To discover prayer is to discover the soul. Prayer is the most humblest of states and actions, in which I recognize that I am a creature of God.

In prayer I stand before God, Infinite and Eternal, whom I adore by prostrating myself, body and soul. I yield to Him: Holy God, I adore you from the depths of my heart (cf. the angel at Fatima), and into your hands I commend my life and spirit (cf. the Cross of Christ). In God's presence, I discover who I am: I am created in the image of God, I am loved by God, and I am called to love God and others. God's commandment itself reveals to us precisely who dwells in our hearts, but we no longer hear: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength, and your neighbour as yourself (cf. Bible).

When I experience the deepest aspiration to love unconditionally to the "nth degree," when this desire leads me to endure suffering and pain, I am also experiencing that my soul is profoundly thirsty for goodness and truth, beauty and unity (cf. Zundel).

I am a soul comprising mind and heart. I am a soul that animates a body, a mind open to God, a heart made to love and be loved.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



In our dialogue with the world, we often say what we think people are ready to hear. Yet, human beings keep searching, often in places other than themselves, at the periphery of their soul. Perhaps, they're fleeing their innermost selves, sensing that if they stop, their life will be transformed, perhaps challenging preoccupations to which they are attached.

Even if we have faith, we might have forgotten—if not neglected—our soul, delaying prayer until the next day oftentimes. May God set us right, may the Holy Spirit lead us to stand before Jesus Christ and adore Him, may Jesus Christ transform us into children of light (cf. Saint Paul), and sons and daughters of the Eternal Father.

Only by doing so will we awaken our soul and become “soul awakeners” in the world today, which has been described in various terms: post-Christian, modern, postmodern and secular.

Cultures are varied and changing. Times vary. Yet, human beings remain human beings; something we need to recognize continually in the light of reason and faith. Ample sources can be found in the Bible, the Magisterium and the Doctors of the Church. There is no lack of such references in the lives of saints, and Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit fill us abundantly with grace.

We are called in these times to a deep awakening of the soul. Young people, couples, families and the elderly are waiting for the Word of life: souls, wake up, stand up, body and soul.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine".

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal

PASTORAL LETTERS



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral letter

TOGETHER, LET US PRAY

April 8, 2020

Dear Sisters,
Dear Brothers,

This pandemic, which everyone would like to see end as soon as possible, throws us into a state of heightened uncertainty. We are heartbroken when we think of the people who have died because of COVID-19 and their grieving families. We pray to you, Lord Jesus Christ: welcome into your Kingdom those who have died and comfort their loved ones.

The healthcare professionals who are risking their health and their lives through tireless dedication to heal the sick remain constantly in our thoughts. We pray to you, Lord Jesus Christ: strengthen them when they are fatigued, grant them your peace, which surpasses all understanding, and protect their families from the anxiety that grips their heart.

Then, there are all those who have lost their jobs and all those affected by financial insecurity, overwrought with worry about tomorrow: We pray to you, Lord Jesus Christ: through faith give each one assurance of your active presence in their life and the fortitude to live each day with confidence.

Also, we remain mindful of the various levels of government, employers and the whole of society that is making a concerted effort to support one another, take preventive measures and promote healing. We pray to you, Lord Jesus Christ: may each one of us be guided by compassion and neighbourliness in all personal and organizational decisions we make.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



During this time of tribulation afflicting the whole world, let us pray together:

God, in your infinite Love, illuminate humanity and society with your Goodness and Truth! Free us from the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic! Guide us so that we become a world ever concerned for the most fragile among us! Lead us to serve the common good, the family and life, your Justice and your Peace!

Dear sisters and brothers, I impart to you, your family and your community, God's blessing, rich in Mercy. During this pandemic, may the Eternal Father fill you with His tenderness; may Jesus Christ shower you with His grace; may the Holy Spirit protect your heart.

In the name of the Father ✠ of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit ✠.

Together, we believe in the Crucified and Risen Jesus Christ.

Happy Easter!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine".

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal

PASTORAL LETTERS



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral Letter

Every generation, together

May 5, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We were relieved to learn yesterday that some restrictions affecting seniors living in residences, in force for several weeks, are now being eased.

Our thoughts instinctively turn to the seriously ill facing the end of life whose loved ones can now arrange to visit them, while respecting the necessary hygiene and protection protocols. We prayed a lot for those families who could not visit their dying parent. We are comforted by the latest announcement allowing such accessibility at this critical time in life: the loss of a loved one.

Let us encourage one another to go for a daily walk outside the home, even if it means taking a detour necessitated by physical distancing to preserve personal and social hygiene. Let us not pass judgment on others; we know that people living under the same roof can remain physically close. We are all called to do our part to get through this pandemic together.

Let us express, once again, in word and deed the friendship and solidarity we feel toward our elders who have given life to us through family, work and prayer. Let us remember the men and women religious, those living a consecrated life and priests who, by giving their lives to Jesus Christ, have served and continue to serve the Church and the world of our time.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



The doors of our churches are closed but our hearts are open. There are still many unknowns attached to the phases of economic, social and church-related “deconfinement” that lies ahead. Let us pray to the Good Shepherd, who, in his almighty power, draws close to each person and each family. Let us entrust ourselves to the protection of St. Joseph the Worker and to the care of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church.

Together, let us take care of our souls.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine".

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal

PASTORAL LETTERS



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral Letter

PRIMACY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

May 13, 2020

Dear Sisters,
Dear Brothers,

As Archbishop, please join me – everyone within the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Montreal – in commending all elected officials and their advisors currently serving in various levels of government. We thank them for what they are doing, what they have done and what they continue to do regarding the current pandemic afflicting us and all of humanity in order to save lives threatened by COVID-19: be it through their co-ordinated response, the implementation and monitoring of preventive measures or the promotion of social solidarity and cohesion. Decision-makers initially focused on the issues related to public health and the introduction of measures to address the emerging economic challenges. The circle of concern has progressively expanded to include mental health and societal issues as we seek ways to begin a new phase of safe “deconfinement” while minimizing, as much as possible, further collateral damage from this ongoing battle.

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PASTORAL LETTERS



We know that the search for meaning and spiritual wellbeing is also an essential aspect of our human condition, for we are more than just physical matter. Since the dawn of time, every human being has been confronted with fundamental questions regarding the meaning of life, especially when facing precarious situations, like the COVID-19 pandemic, when existential questions naturally come to the fore. Let us simply say that, in universally-accepted terms, spirituality is what makes us alive, what impels each of us to be the most we can be, what reaches deep within us and, at the same time, goes beyond us, and what gives a unique dimension to our personal history and our relationships with others.

Currently, the spiritual dimension and associated needs of individuals have received little attention, and during discussions related to essential services, there appears to be little time to discuss this issue.

Nevertheless, having come face-to-face as a society with our limitations in combating the isolation of the sick and the elderly, our inadequacies in overcoming all the organizational challenges in meeting some basic needs, our shortcomings in ensuring the survival of many businesses, only highlights the need to discover deep within ourselves the fortitude to live, to love and to serve. Without this, the solidarity to which the whole of society has generously committed itself risks being undermined by fear and blame.

The role of chaplains and spiritual-care workers, where they are present in healthcare institutions, offers such support whenever possible, not only to the sick but also to the staff working tirelessly to provide the required care. Like you, my heart goes out to all the elderly, the sick and the dying, who, whether they are believers or not, have no other recourse than to undertake their interior journey in relentless isolation. Spiritual accompaniment focuses on the freedom of the individual. Those who are receptive to what it has to offer can see in it a path of hope. Those who are not disposed as such may still discover in it a supportive and comforting presence.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



These days, we are very aware of the questions and apprehensions that preoccupy individuals, families and the whole of society. There remains much uncertainty and concern regarding health, family, death, the economy, education, culture, society, and local and global solidarity. You are full-fledged citizens and your faith equips you with a vision that embraces every dimension of an individual. Various religions, each in its own way, have always focused on responding to our search for the meaning of life, through joy as well as through sorrow, and on guiding us along the spiritual journey that provides the breath of life to sustain us throughout every weakness. As in every sphere of human life and activity, there are times when we tend to serve ourselves rather than serve others, and members of the Church have not always rendered needed service. But in all honesty, it is indispensable that we draw on the spirit of service, which lies at the core of each human being.

That is why, during this time of confinement, we have not ceased to offer prayer and pertinent reflections through our outreach via radio (Ville-Marie), television (Salt +Light), online platforms, i.e. websites and social media, and telephone communication. We have appealed for social solidarity and the practice of prevention. We have prayed, connected with one another observing physical distance, comforted, encouraged, and persevered to reach out to individuals, families, the lonely and those most in need. I commend and thank all the faithful, volunteers, parish and diocesan personnel, women and men religious, those committed to consecrated life, deacons, priests, and bishops, who, in offering their frailty, illnesses, lives, search for meaning, deeds and prayer to God, trust that He will touch hearts and transform our weakness so that his Light and Goodness might burst brightly through it.

Now that “deconfinement” is being prudently implemented, we hope that there is the same consideration for church-related “deconfinement,” following a well-planned, controlled, phased-in process that allows us to begin gradually expanding our response to spiritual needs while adopting safe practices.

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PASTORAL LETTERS



As we are now between Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, and as we begin to appreciate the downtime we have experienced together for the past two months, I support those efforts to establish Sunday as a common day of rest. Our longstanding tradition is one of observing Sunday as a day of rest. Reasons may vary — religious, psychological, philosophical or social — but as a society, might it not be possible to recognize the need for a common day of rest? For some, it will be a day devoted to God; for others, a day for the family; and for others, a day for the environment – a common day dedicated to rest because we all need to pause and breathe: individuals, families, society and the planet, our common home, as Pope Francis reminds us. Even the economy needs a chance to catch its breath, given that its primary resource is people. We need to take time to breathe together in order to remain together: the family together, which is the building block of society; society together in all its complexity; and the Church together, to bear witness to Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, together, let us recognize the many initiatives undertaken for the benefit of society, the participation of different Christian denominations, different religions and different humanistic approaches. A democracy requires the participation of all. Let us do our part to stand together and to overcome COVID-19. Let us resolve to put the spiritual dimension of our personal, family and faith life first. Let us help create a society that moves ever closer to nurturing all aspects of our quality of life by establishing a common day of rest, which for Christians is the “Day of the Lord.”

(cont’d)

PASTORAL LETTERS



I invoke upon you and upon all the land the blessing of God who is rich in Mercy:

God, in your infinite Love radiate your Goodness and Truth onto humanity and our society!

Free us from the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic!

Guide us so that we may become a world ever more concerned for those who are most vulnerable!

May we give of ourselves to serve the common good, the family and life, justice and peace!

Make us children of Light!

Eternal Father, we ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Crucified and Risen, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

℟ Amen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ Christian Lépine'.

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal

PASTORAL LETTERS



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral letter

In solidarity with ‘those who mourn’

May 27, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Losing a loved one, at any time, always entails suffering and grief. During this pandemic, this suffering is compounded by considerable obstacles that make a bedside visit to someone who is ill difficult, someone whom we love and who is approaching the end of life. Added to this are the restrictions, due to the risk of contagion, prohibiting gatherings with family members, friends and acquaintances, be it in the funeral home, church or cemetery.

It was suggested that we dedicate the month of June to pray for all those who have died during the pandemic since March, whatever the cause of death, a suggestion that I readily embraced. Accordingly, I invite you to join me every day to pray what I’ve called the CATHEDRAL-HOME ROSARY, praying for the intentions of the men and women who have died – often feeling very isolated – from an illness, an accident or any other tragedy.

I am deeply thankful to the many individuals and families who responded to Pope Francis’ invitation to pray the Rosary during the month of May, and to all those who participated in our diocesan-led Rosary, having invoked Mary, Mother of the Church, to protect humanity, the Church, families and individuals during this pandemic.

(cont’d)

PASTORAL LETTERS



I reach out humbly, with this new invitation, to those suffering a recent loss, bearing immense sorrow in their hearts. Alternating between the cathedral and the homes of families and individuals, together, let us entrust our departed ones to the maternal intercession of Mary, who, as Jesus was dying, remained at the foot of the cross. The Virgin Mary has no other desire than to show us Jesus and to lead us to Him, He who died and rose again, opening the way to eternal life for us.

During the month of June, which is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we can turn with confidence to the One whose heart has been pierced out of love for us. Be assured that your departed loved one whom, perhaps, you were unable to visit, has now been visited by Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, who knocks at the door of our hearts. We can pray — prayer which transcends time itself — for this encounter between your loved one and our Lord and Saviour.

Included with this message are steps on how to participate in praying the Cathedral-Home Rosary and how to submit a name for inclusion in our online IN MEMORIAM listing. One may submit the name of a deceased individual, together with his/her date of death, which will be added to the list of names to be posted on the diocesan website for those who have died from March until now.

Sacred Heart of Jesus with your pierced heart and open arms, we turn to you with confidence.

We present to you all those, from every generation, who have died during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Welcome them lovingly into your Kingdom.

May their sorrow be transformed into joy.

(cont'd)

PASTORAL LETTERS



May their experience of aloneness be transformed into everlasting communion.

May their death be transformed by their passage into the fullness of life.

May You, who have the power to console hearts and to cultivate hope, apply a healing balm to these hearts stricken by such sadness.

Carry them in their pain, renew their faith in your Love, and strengthen their hope of being united with their loved ones one day.

Guide us along this path as we journey in grief and in solidarity with those who mourn.

Through Mary's intercession, let us entrust these deceased members and those who grieve their loss to the gentleness and strength of Jesus Christ.

+ Christian Lépine

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montréal

PASTORAL LETTERS

*Guidelines for participating in praying the Rosary and for submissions to the online IN MEMORIAM listing:

Recitation of the Rosary will continue to be broadcast every day in June, at 7 p.m., either live from Mary Queen of the World Cathedral, or as a pre-recorded segment from individual homes. Viewers may follow via the diocesan YouTube channel or via the Facebook pages of either the diocese or the cathedral.

Archbishop Lépine will lead the Rosary from the cathedral, on alternating days until June 30, with families or individuals who will lead the prayer from their homes.

We are currently looking for faithful interested in virtually leading one session of praying the Rosary during the month of June, at 7 p.m. (to be broadcast on the diocesan YouTube channel and Facebook page).

To help support this initiative:

1. IN MEMORIAM listing: Send us the name and date of death of the deceased online at: <https://www.diocesemontreal.org/en/lets-connect/prayer-requests>. We ask you to enter your e-mail address in the assigned field. As we receive the names of those who have died during the pandemic (as of March 2020), a list will be published and continually updated on our dedicated diocesan COVID page.
2. CATHEDRAL-HOME ROSARY: Record a home video featuring you and/or family members praying the five Mysteries of your choice, in any language of your choice: JOYFUL (Monday and Saturday), LUMINOUS (Thursday), SORROWFUL (Tuesday and Friday), GLORIOUS (Wednesday and Sunday) (cf. [Family Prayer booklet](#)).

To do this, record yourself with your cell phone or other device (N.B. use the landscape setting, in HD), stand in front of the camera and state the language in which you will pray, then state each mystery as you proceed to pray the Rosary. Send your video to: rmaltais@diocesemontreal.org (via any of the following file-hosting services: Dropbox, WeTransfer or Google Drive). It is important to mention in your email that you have granted the diocese authorization to broadcast your video on the digital platforms mentioned earlier.

Archbishop Lépine wishes to thank the many families who responded to his invitation in May, those who prayed with him and those who submitted their videos. To view archived videos, please visit our [YouTube channel here](#).

PASTORAL LETTERS



Archbishop of Montreal

Pastoral letter

The spiritual, always essential

June 11, 2020

While the easing of restrictions regarding outdoor gatherings and the gradual resumption of activity in many sectors have sparked renewed hope in the general public, a cloud of uncertainty still hangs heavy over many facets of life: personal, family, social and religious.

The government and public-health officials are proceeding with caution, rightly so. However, I must draw attention to the impact the closure of places of worship has had on the lives of many individuals and families.

The pastoral team of the Archdiocese of Montreal is in touch daily with many people, those who believe and those who do not, seeking spiritual support. Deprived of access to their usual social and community surroundings, they describe feelings of being lost and adrift.

People searching for meaning, peace and strength seek to recover their equilibrium in a tranquil space, such as a church offers; or they express a need for accompaniment, which, as a starting point, is being met through social media and online services, but it can never replace direct physical contact with one's faith community.

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PASTORAL LETTERS



Those gripped by grief long for an event, even with limitations imposed, where prayer is offered and, at the same time, their sorrow eased. When a loved one approaches death or dies, whenever that moment occurs, it always entails suffering and grief. During this pandemic, this suffering is compounded by conditions that make it difficult to be at the bedside of someone whom we love and who is approaching the end of life. Add to this the restrictions governing how we gather to mourn.

Still others, who had prepared to be married, to celebrate a milestone that will enhance and transform their lives, have seen their public commitment of love put on hold. They have dealt with it by postponing their wedding ceremony and reception, but it is no less of a trial that is no less upsetting.

We understand and share the urgent concern to protect public health. Again, we express our appreciation for the crucial role that governments have played during this public-health emergency. Still, we want to draw attention to the suffering of those struggling to find meaning in life, dealing with grief, wrestling with deferred marriage plans. They need a compassionate response.

With that in mind, we want to underline the need to recognize the importance of the spiritual dimension, which is integral to the human person. Let us not underestimate the importance of the spiritual life as a source of inner peace and strength to help us calmly and courageously face the challenges arising from this pandemic and other hardships.

We sincerely hope that through the experience of the pandemic, we become acutely aware that attention to the spiritual is essential. We need to consider all the dimensions of each individual, and the reciprocal relationship that binds body, mind, heart and soul.

We are constantly being asked the question: When will church doors open again? We want to reassure everyone for whom this remains a pressing concern that we have been working, both from an inter-faith as well as a Catholic perspective, to put in place the necessary protocols and guidelines. Rest assured, we will be ready!

+ Christian Lépine

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montréal

PASTORAL LETTERS



Archevêque de Montréal

Pastoral Letter

A Church reaching out with open arms and doors

June 29, 2020

Dear Brother Priests,
Dear Pastoral Team Members and Parish Catechetical Leaders,
Dear Members of local “Deconfinement” Committees,
Dear Volunteers,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Given that church doors have been closed for more than three months and the concerted efforts made by your parish or mission to reach out to people, you are keenly aware of the need for spiritual care that people of all generations require. In many cases, prayer life at home has grown, together with a renewed appreciation for the family as the “domestic church.” Meanwhile, so many people have told us how much they long to be able to return to church, be it for personal prayer, to receive the Eucharist, to become actively involved once again in Church life and in society.

Church doors received the “green light” to open as of June 22; however, we remain mindful of the ongoing threat posed by COVID-19 and must continue to work toward prevention during the “deconfinement” process. From the moment visitors are welcomed at church until their departure, by providing guidelines governing indoor movement, personal prayer and liturgy, implementing the various elements of the diocesan protocol will create the appropriate safe environment that is so necessary.

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PASTORAL LETTERS



As you implement the protocol locally, which includes posting your opening hours and mass times; observing the frequently mentioned measures of hand-washing, physical distancing and mask-wearing; refraining from congregational singing; and disinfecting the premises between celebrations, all these efforts help to reduce the risk of transmission through contact and the discharge of respiratory water droplets.

I would like to thank the Diocesan “Deconfinement” Committee for developing the documents and facilitating the webinars. The process entailed a considerable amount of work for the team members. Implementing the protocol at the local level will equally require a considerable amount of work for parish and religious community teams. However, when you see people eager to enter a church once again and to pray there, it makes all the effort worthwhile. When you see people whom you have never seen before **come to church** attracted to the faith, one realizes that, though we are sailing into the unknown, God never ceases to stir hearts.

The doors of your heart never closed, and I thank each of you for all the work you have done and continue to do. Let us continue to keep in mind those individuals and families who are still confined at home, by reaching out to them in a thousand-plus ways. Let us grow in our readiness to meet, to reach out and welcome, to accompany and to lead others to Jesus Christ. The People of God are thirsty.

May God guide us in standing together for the Mission, to be a Church close to people, and at the same time, a Church that reaches out with open arms and doors.

On the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads “+ Christian Lépine”.

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal



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