

A Letter for Holy Week

FIAT (Let it be. Amen)

From your Parish Priest.

“This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.” (Is 30:15)

Dear Faithful,

A few thoughts that you might find helpful at this time.

In this time of the Coronavirus pandemic which has rocked the world, we need to constantly keep in mind that with God there are no coincidences; either he wills something directly or in the case of the evil we are undergoing, he permits it so that a greater good can come from it. It may appear to us that everything is in disorder: churches closed, fear, hardship, confusion, isolation but above all the separation of the faithful from the sacraments which are their ordinary means of salvation. But we must never doubt God’s mercy is still at work even though it may appear hidden to us. What might he be asking of us?

A) Evil and darkness leads us to reassess where we are at. To examine, to repent.

When God sent the plagues to Egypt, he did so in order that the Egyptians might repent; allow the Israelites to worship and thus, be converted themselves. God’s purpose is always good.

1) Coronavirus is an evil but one which brings with it a warning to mankind: repent, change your ways. This is the simple message of the bible and the message highlighted by Our Lady at Fatima. Jesus has been rejected by our society as a whole: his name is not mentioned in public meetings, the state will not bow its knee to him rather it spreads pernicious teachings hostile to the young, the innocent and the family.

Has it dawned on us just how evil the society we live in is? To give you one example: now in this time of lockdown the taking of an abortion pill is permitted at home without any consultation. Going shopping, going to the doctors, taking exercise, are considered essential but going to Church is not going to be permitted by the civil authorities. The prophecy of Isaiah is here: good is called evil and evil is called good.

We must offer up reparation for this. Jesus seeks those who at this time will accept the great sorrow of being deprived of his real presence and offer it up for the salvation of souls. Our Lady’s messages at La Salette, Fatima and Akita are simple: Repentance, Penance and Reparation. Also, we can already see a great deal of charity and community coming out of this. People are re-discovering their need for community.

2) At this time when one is deprived of the sacraments, it forces us to re-think and ponder our relationship with the sacraments which simply put is our relationship with Jesus. Did we pay enough attention to the importance of the mass? How reverently did we receive communion? What thanksgiving did we make? How often did we make use of confession? Do we attend adoration or even visit the Church during the week? How did we attend the last mass we went to? This applies even more to me, your priest. How reverently do I celebrate the Eucharist? How do I prepare? What thanksgiving do I make? Is it centre stage in my life? Does the mass simply become the ministry of the exhausted?

B) What might God be saving to us? What might we learn?

Let us consider that this virus wreaked its havoc during the holy season of Lent when Christians are preparing themselves for the Paschal Mysteries. Perhaps God is calling us in a special way this Lent - when many distractions have now become unavailable and we are confined to our homes - to focus more deeply on an interior renewal and to look upon Jesus alone.

- 1) The clearest undisputable lesson is that now the Sabbath Rest is being enforced upon society. Man didn't want to rest on the Sabbath, well now he must. The world has been closed down: travel, theatres, sports etc. This is a key lesson: Rest! When Jesus appointed the twelve in St Mark's gospel we read that he appointed the twelve that they might be with him. The first thing we need to remember at this time is simply to be with Jesus. Discipleship is most importantly what he does in us. He will profoundly change us this Lent, a total internal renewal if we are prepared to rest in him. So let us cut distractions to a minimum.
- 2) As the Catechism of the Catholic Church points out, we have to live out both in our own personal lives and in Holy Mother Church, the mysteries of Christ's life. When we understand this we can see that Holy Mother Church is going through her Gethsemane moment. It is like the time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday: between the first mass in the upper room and the meeting of the two disciples with Jesus on the road to Emmaus and the breaking of bread. Jesus is in the tomb we are missing him, he has been taken from us. But he will rise again.

Perhaps most importantly, we need to consider things from another perspective. The most common thought may be the deprivation of the mass and the sacraments. What we are suffering. But we need to look at it from Jesus' point of view. He was left virtually alone, his apostles had deserted him. Now let him take his rest in us. What does that mean? When we suffer, when we miss the mass etc, Jesus is asking us to take a little weight of the cross from him. Let us this Holy Week be there for HIM.

C) Great and Glorious HOPE.

In the darkest moment when sin abounds, grace abounds more. Great blessings are available to us.

- 1) We may be asking what can possibly re-boot our situation? No earthly human solution is possible for the long term restoration of our society and world. Only when society returns to God, will a true, balanced normality fully return. All the last popes have been telling us of the power of the Holy Spirit and the coming of a New Pentecost. In that way we are like the apostles between the Ascension and Pentecost. Praying, awaiting the power from above that will change everything. But we need to really desire this and realise our dependence upon it. It will come - the power of the Spirit cannot be resisted. Likewise, Jesus will rise this Easter, He will triumph once again over sin and death.
- 2) This is the time for devotion to Mary: for she promised that in the end her Immaculate Heart will triumph. By praying to her and making reparation for our sins and the sins of the world we greatly hasten the end to this evil and the coming of the era of peace that she promised. We need to consecrate ourselves to her. She is our model.

Concluding Remarks

Yes there is great trial and pressure in the world. But Jesus told us in John's gospel: Be at peace, Don't worry. Yes in the world you will have pressure but have faith for I have conquered the world.

My advice is rest, don't worry, pray the rosary, pray the divine mercy chaplet, ponder the scriptures. Become contemplatives. Ponder reflect. Allow Jesus to become the sole animating light of our interior. Spend time with Jesus during his passion. Above all have great hope and have great desire. Rest in Him and allow Him to rest in us.

I like the analogy of the chariot race that was used by one of the church fathers: the chariots race around an oval and as they changed direction there was a slight pause. We are at that pause. There is a great indrawing of breath (Spirit).

Whenever the end of the virus comes or how it comes, let us resolve that we do not simply return to how things were before. Let us learn. Let us change. If we go back to how things were before, I don't think as a society or as a church or as a parish, we shall have learnt our lessons.

Jesus, the sacraments, salvation, sin need to become once more centre stage.

God bless,

Fr Dominic