

Extraordinary Times

We are living in extraordinary times. Only a few weeks ago, we were hearing that the virus was only affecting China and some countries in the Eastern part of the world. But very quickly, we began to hear that the virus had arrived in Korea, Iran, Italy, Spain, and finally here to the United States.

Then followed a scene worthy of the movies: everything began to close down, from schools to business to restaurants to movie theaters and even to the very doors of our churches.

This morning I celebrated a Sunday Mass on my own while recording it for my Spanish-speaking parishioners. Who would have thought that we would get to this point? And yet this is our new human reality.

Faith, Hope, and Love

In these turbulent times, how can we find some sense of stability and grounding? For followers of Christ, it is important to hold on to three things: faith, hope, and love.

First is faith, the firm belief that our God is with us no matter what, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, our God remains faithful to us. Second is hope, the conviction that this time of difficulty will pass, that it will not last forever, and that we will fight and persevere and come out of this challenge stronger than when we came into it. Last is love, the greatest of all virtues and the ultimate commandment which Jesus Himself gave to us.

I'm thinking now of all the families that are at home with their kids and grandkids home from school. If you were looking for an excuse to spend time with each other, THIS IS IT! Now is the best time to eat together, pray together, spend time together and cherish the relationships that you have and may have taken for granted.

The Lord is My Shepherd, I Shall Not Want

In today's famous Psalm 23 we hear, "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want." The psalm continues, "Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side."

This is the promise of God to us in these moments, that even though we walk through the valley of darkness, we fear no evil, for he is at our side. Therefore, holding fast to this promise, we do not give in to fear, we do not lose our hope, we do not falter in our confidence and faith. On the contrary, now more than ever is when we place greater trust, hope, and confidence in God.

We Are Not Gods

This pandemic has taught us another valuable lesson: that we are not gods. We are not invincible, we are not all-powerful, we are not all-knowing. This is the perennial human temptation since the time of Adam, that we would take for ourselves what belongs only to God. The fact is that in our humanity, we are weak, we are fragile. We are like the blind man in today's Gospel, and sometimes it takes something major as a pandemic to shake us out of our blindness and come face to face with the reality of our fragility.

And Jesus in His great mercy comes to us in these moments and says, "Come to me. Do not trust in your own power or your own strength. Trust in my power. Trust in my strength. Trust in my grace and presence to carry you through these moments of your life."

Conclusion

During these difficult times, may the Lord give us faith to trust in Him, hope to endure this trial, love to become who we truly are. May we remember that the Lord is our shepherd, we have no need to fear, and like the blind man in the Gospel, we turn to the Lord with all our hearts.