



1869

Sesquicentennial

2019



**Celebrating our past with joy today
and with hope for the future**

DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES
Established April 25, 1980

The Most Rev. Glen John Provost, D.D., M.A.
Bishop of Lake Charles

**IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
CATHEDRAL PARISH**
Established December 8, 1869

PARISH STAFF

Rev. Fr. Rommel P. Tolentino, *Pastor*
Rev. Fr. Ruben Buller, *In Residence*
Canon Jean Marie Moreau,
In Residence

Rev. Deacon Christopher Fontenot

Mr. Robert Marcantel
Music Director

Mrs. Marlene Mullenix
Organist

Ms. Sue Burke
Receptionist

Mrs. Lavonne "Cookie" Dennison
Secretary

Ms. Carla Primeaux
Bookkeeper

Mr. Philip Ardoin
Maintenance

Mrs. Monica Broussard
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CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD
APRIL 5, 2020

**ALL PUBLIC MASSES HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED PER BISHOP PROVOST DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS
OUTBREAK. OUR PRIESTS WILL CELEBRATE DAILY MASS WITHOUT A CONGREGATION
FOR OUR PARISH INTENTIONS.**

THE CATHEDRAL WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR INDIVIDUAL VISITS AND PRAYERS THIS WEEK:

MONDAY—TUESDAY, APRIL 6,7...8:00 AM—5:00 PM (CONFESSION AND EUCHARISTIC ADORATION 11:00—12:30)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8...1:00—5:00 (CONFESSION AND EUCHARISTIC ADORATION 3:00—4:00)

HOLY THURSDAY, APRIL 9...10:00—4:00 (CONFESSION 11:00—NOON)

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 10...10:00—2:00 (CONFESSION 11:00—NOON)

HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 11...(CONFESSION 3:00—4:00)

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 12...1:00—6:00 PM (CONFESSION AND EUCHARISTIC ADORATION 3:00—4:00)

HOLY WEEK MESSAGE FROM FATHER ROMMEL

Dear Parishioners,

First, I would like you to know that you are in my thoughts and prayers during this time of trial and difficulty for our Church, our nation, and our world. While public Masses are suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic, you and your families are constantly remembered in my daily prayers and my private celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Secondly, I would like to thank those who expressed appreciation for our efforts at the Cathedral, such as keeping the church open for private prayers and making the Sacrament of Reconciliation readily available. I am sincerely grateful for your prayerful support for me and the clergy of our parish.

I am consoled by your patience, perseverance, and great understanding of our current situation. It is good to be reminded that we are not alone in this struggle. We are all in this together. We are in the same boat, as our Holy Father Pope Francis says in his recent message ("Urbi et Orbi" - To the City and to the World - March 27, 2020). Furthermore, our compassionate and most powerful Lord is with us, and has not abandoned us. He asks us to exercise the gift of faith and to trust in Him.

Next week, we enter into the most sacred time of year for us Catholics. During this special time between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, we commemorate the Paschal Mystery of Our Lord Jesus Christ, i.e. His passion, death and resurrection. While we are unable to gather together to celebrate the feast in the context of a public liturgy, I thought we could at least unite spiritually during this holiest time of year.

Below, I offer some suggestions of how we could unite as a parish family. Doing these things together (as much as possible) would help us, despite the social distancing, to be connected as we enter into the holiest of weeks. We may be physically isolated, but not separated, for we are united as the one body of Christ.

General Suggestions:

1. Give up technology (TV, Internet, mobile phone, social media) from sundown on Holy Thursday until Easter Sunday morning. Use it only for watching the Mass and the Triduum liturgies.
2. Sit down as a family each night of Holy Week to read and discuss the Scripture readings of the day.
3. Make an additional sacrifice by fasting and abstaining from meat from Holy Thursday evening through Holy Saturday, in addition to Good Friday.
4. Go to Confession (see Confession times below).

Palm Sunday - Today, we commemorate Our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

1. Put a green branch on the door of your house (any green branch you can find). Blessed Palms will be available for pick up in the church all week beginning at 1:00 pm on Palm Sunday.
2. Read the Gospel account of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11). Then have a Procession in your yard or around your house while holding green branches and singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel" or the hymn "All Glory, Laud, and Honor."

Monday & Tuesday of Holy Week - On Monday, Jesus cleanses the Temple and laments that the people have turned His Father's house into a den of thieves. On Tuesday, He returns to the Temple to teach the people in parables and to give them a new commandment.

1. Clean your house. Think of spring housekeeping as a prayerful preparation for Easter in the same way that Jewish families clean in preparation for Passover.
2. Go to Confession to clean your soul and make it ready to welcome the Divine Guest (Confession will be available at the Cathedral on Monday and Tuesday from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm).

Wednesday of Holy Week - This day is also known as "Spy Wednesday" - Judas betrayed Our Lord for 30 pieces of silver. It is an appropriate day to pray for our Priests - for fidelity to their vocation and for their sanctification.

1. Watch Bishop Provost celebrate the Chrism Mass live streamed from the Cathedral.
2. Offer prayers and sacrifices for the Sanctification of our Priests - Rosary, Holy Hour of Reparation, Chaplet of Divine Mercy, Stations of the Cross, etc.

Holy Thursday - On this day, Christ instituted the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. That same night, Our Lord agonized over our sins in the Garden of Gethsemane.

1. Make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the church to thank Jesus for the gift of Himself in the Eucharist (The Cathedral will be open from 10 am to 4 pm).
2. Read the Gospel account of the Last Supper and the Institution of the Eucharist (Matthew 26:17-46) or the Gospel passage of the day (Jn 13:1-15) and conclude with a simple evening meal.
3. Spend a Holy Hour of Reparation at home or in the church, and ask Jesus forgiveness for contributing to His agony and passion.

Good Friday - On this day, we commemorate Our Lord's Passion and we venerate the Cross, the instrument of our salvation.

1. Pray the Stations of the Cross at home or in the church.
2. At 3:00 PM, pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy (Don't forget to pray Day 1 of the Novena).
3. Gather the family around a big crucifix and read the Passion narrative (Jn 18:1-19:42). Afterwards, the father or head of the household could say, "Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung the salvation of the world. Come let us adore," and each member of the family would then venerate the Cross with a genuflection and/or a kiss.

Holy Saturday - This day is a day of patient waiting for the resurrection of Our Lord. On this night of vigil, the catechumens receive the Sacraments of Initiation and we renew our Baptismal promises.

1. Pray the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary.
2. Watch the movie "The Passion of the Christ" (for families with older kids).
3. Light a big candle (your own version of the Paschal Candle we find in the church) and meditate on how Christ, the Light of the World, dispelled the darkness of sin and death by His glorious resurrection. Renew your Baptismal promises and bless yourself and each family member with Holy Water.

Easter Sunday - The Day of Our Lord's Resurrection: "This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad!"

1. Have a special Easter meal with the family and greet each other with "Alleluia, the Lord is risen!" and answer "He is risen indeed!"
2. Pray the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary.
3. Watch the movie "Risen" or any movie about the resurrection of Christ.

As we pause to commemorate the central mysteries of our faith during this Holy Week, let us pray for each other, for the end of the pandemic, for those who are sick and the people who care for them, including the health care workers and family members who are suffering as a result of their loved ones' illness.

During this time of sorrow and darkness, we stand with Our Blessed Mother at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. Like the Beloved Disciple St. John, who stood by her, may we be strengthened by her faith and have the grace to weather the storm together. Let us never despair, but accompany her with peace in our hearts as we wait with joyful hope for a share in the glorious resurrection of her Son, Our Lord.

Sincerely in Our Lord and Our Lady,
Reverend Father Rommel P. Tolentino



March 25, 2020
The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

My dear people of God,

As we continue to heed medical and government advice to help keep our parishioners safe from COVID-19, so many have expressed their sincere gratitude for our televised Mass on Sunday and the many parishes that are offering Masses, Way of the Cross, Adoration, prayers and guidance and other spiritual opportunities through the use of technology. This allows parishioners to be reminded that this medical emergency is occurring during the Season of Lent when we are called to devote ourselves to prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

In prayer we seek the Lord, by fasting we practice moderation, and through almsgiving we serve the poor and marginalized and address the many needs of our parishioners. This is a time for us to take seriously the Gospel call to bring the message of Christ to the world. The Church's mission is essential. I am pleased to report that Catholic Charities and other services of our Diocese will continue to help those in need and that our parishes and our Diocese will continue to address spiritual and material needs, especially in this time of uncertainty.

To address material needs, we must remember that the call to almsgiving continues even in times of emergency, just as the business and expenses of our church parishes continue. This truth is most apparent now when we find so many of our brothers and sisters in great need. I understand that many of our parishes have online giving already in place, and I urge you to take advantage of that opportunity to give or to mail in your offertory envelopes and donations, if you prefer. To assist those who do not have online giving already established, we have made that option available for all parishioners on the Diocese of Lake Charles website at <http://www.lcdiocese.org/resources/support-the-diocese>. If you access "Support My Parish," you will have the option to select your parish and properly direct your donation. To assist our parishes, I am dispensing all parishes from the Parochial Assessment (Tithe); these funds will remain in the parishes to help them to meet pressing needs during these troubling and uncertain times.

Please be assured that during this time you and your families have been constantly present to me in my thoughts and prayers and remember the assurance our Lord has given to us: "I will never forsake you or abandon you" (Heb. 15:5; Deut. 31:6).

Asking the intercession of Our Lady Star of the Sea, I remain,

Devotedly yours in Our Lord,

+Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles

OFFERTORY DONATIONS

March 29...\$11,755 (mailed in...\$4,290)
(online...\$7,465)

The second collection this weekend is for the Building Fund.

Pope Francis has asked that we support the Pontifical Good Friday Collection on April 10, by joining Catholics around the world in solidarity with the Church in the Holy Land.

The second collection on Easter Sunday, April 12 will be for the Seminarian Fund. Our quota is \$1,782.

Our weekly offertory collection provides the necessary funds to meet our financial obligations - staff payroll, insurance payments, utility bills, building maintenance, etc. While public Masses are suspended at this time, our daily work of parish and pastoral ministry will continue on. Please consider sending your weekly donations by mail, dropped through our mail slot on the office door, or online. Here's the link to our secure online donations page:

immaculateconceptioncathedral.com/donations

You may now access online giving through the Diocese by logging onto:

lcdiocese.org/resources/support-the-diocese.

If you access "Support My Parish," you will have the option to select your parish and properly direct your donation.

Thank you so much for your generous spirit during this difficult time.

Given the circumstances, Bishop Provost is providing this prayer for the use of the faithful:

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least into my heart. I embrace You as if You are already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

(You may make this Act of Spiritual Communion anytime you need it and as often as you need it.)

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD



Blessed Palms will be available for pick up in the church all week beginning today, Sunday, April 5, at 1:00 p.m.

Helpful resources for celebrating Holy Week at home:

osvnews.com/2020/03/27/how-to-make-the-most-of-holy-week-at-home/

<https://www.elizabethclareblog.com/40-ways-to-observe-holy-week-in-the-catholic-home/>

<https://www.catholicicing.com/ultimate-guide-for-celebrating-holy/>

https://d2y1pz2y630308.cloudfront.net/15495/documents/2020/3/Holy_Week_at_Home.pdf from Liturgical Press may also be accessed through the Diocese of Lake Charles website.

These prayers are not intended to replace the liturgies of Holy Week. Rather, they are a sincere effort to cultivate some of the rituals and spirit of Holy Week in our own homes when public celebration may not be possible.



On Saturday, March 21, 2020, Sydney Thomas was received into Full Communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

As we welcome our newest member into our faith community, let us offer prayers that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide Sydney as she worships with us in joy.

Also, let us offer prayers for *Alexander Reese, Kat Ramirez and Christopher Neff* who are continuing their journey of preparation for Initiation into the Catholic Church.

Our Cathedral Parish offers Best Wishes to **Taylor Johnson and Andrew Champagne** who were united in Holy Matrimony here on March 21, 2020.

Taylor and Andrew adhered to the coronavirus guidelines for restriction of guests to a public event and had a lovely, personal ceremony with only their parents present.



A picture of the couple playfully donning masks in front of the Cathedral was recently published in the American Press.

Cathedral Schedule for Holy Week

Palm Sunday (April 5)

Church open from 1 pm to 6 pm

Confessions & Eucharistic Adoration from 3 pm to 4 pm
Blessed Palms will be available for pick up in the church all week beginning at 1:00 pm on Palm Sunday.

Monday (April 6) and Tuesday (April 7)

Church open from 8 am to 5 pm

Confessions & Eucharistic Adoration from 11 am to 12:30 pm

Wednesday (April 8)

Church open from 1 pm to 5 pm

Confessions & Eucharistic Adoration from 3 pm to 4 pm

Holy Thursday (April 9)

Church open from 10 am to 4 pm

Confessions from 11 am to 12 noon

Good Friday (April 10)

Church open from 10 am to 2 pm

Confessions from 11 am to 12 noon

Holy Saturday (April 11)

Confessions from 3 pm to 12 noon

Easter Sunday (April 12)

Church open from 1 pm to 6 pm

Confessions & Eucharistic Adoration from 3 pm to 4 pm

The Cathedral office will close at noon on Wednesday, April 8 and reopen on Tuesday, April 14.



**Salus Populi Romani
Protectress and Health of the Roman People
Prayer against the Coronavirus**

O Mary, you shine continuously along our journey as a sign of salvation and hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who at the Cross were near to the pain of Jesus, keeping your faith firm.

You, Salvation of the Roman people, know what we need, and we trust that you will provide for those needs so that, as at Cana of Galilee, joy and celebration may return 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, He who took our sufferings upon Himself, and took up our sorrows to bring us, through the Cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to the test – and deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.



THE CATHOLIC FAITH.
ON DEMAND.

Formed is a valuable resource for your homeschooling, religious ed, study and entertainment!

Don't forget to access formed.org, the Cathedral's gift to you! Go to formed.org, enter our parish code on the homepage: **J8M3GP**, create a personal account with your email and password. Start enjoying inspiring movies and video series, Catholic ebooks, and audio presentations. The best Catholic content is all in one place...and it's free!



If you haven't signed up for the Cathedral's **Flocknote** yet, we urge you to register **so that you can keep up with our news, latest developments and more.**

You can either visit flocknote.com/iccathedral or text **ICCATHEDRAL** to **84576** from your cell phone to subscribe. Then follow instructions from there. Flocknote is free, safe, secure, and your personal information will not be sold to 3rd parties. You can unsubscribe at any time, but please give it a try!

READINGS FOR THE WEEK April 6—April 12, 2020

Monday: Is 42:1-7; Ps 27:1-3, 13-14; Jn 12:1-11

Tuesday: Is 49:1-6; Ps 71:1-6, 15, 17; Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

Wednesday: Is 50:4-9a; Ps 69:8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34; Mt 26:14-25

Thursday: Chrism Mass: Is 61:1-3a, 6a, 8b-9; Ps 89:21-22, 25, 27; Rv 1:5-8; Lk 4:16-21
Lord's Supper: Ex 12:1-8, 11-14; Ps 116:12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Jn 13:1-15

Friday: Is 52:13 — 53:12; Ps 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25; Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9; Jn 18:1 — 19:42

Saturday: a) Gn 1:1 — 2:2 [1:1, 26-31a]; Ps 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35; or Ps 33:4-7, 12-13, 20-22; b) Gn 22:1-18 [1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18]; Ps 16: 5, 8-11; c) Ex 14:15 — 15:1; Ex 15:1-6, 17-18;

d) Is 54:5-14; Ps 30:2, 4-6, 11-13; e) Is 55:1-11; Is 12:2-6; f) Bar 3:9-15, 32 — 4:4; Ps 19:8-11; g) Ez 36:16-17a, 18-28; Ps 42:3, 5; 43:3-4 or Is 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6 or Ps 51:12-15, 18-19; h) Rom 6:3-11; i) Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Mt 28:1-10

Sunday: Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Col 3:1-4 or 1 Cor 5:6b-8; Jn 20:1-9 or Mt 28:1-10 or (at an afternoon or evening Mass) Lk 24:13-35



Resources to support prayer and engagement during these difficult days -

uscgb.org/coronavirus



The Diocese of Lake Charles will continue to stream Bishop Glen John Provost's private Mass at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays while public Masses are suspended. The Bishop's Mass will also be televised on KPLC from 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. The Mass will be available on the Diocesan website as well as on the Diocesan Facebook Page and on YouTube. You can also tune in at 9:30 a.m. on the radio to KLCL-AM 1470 or KJEF-AM 1290 in Jennings.

There are a number of priests throughout the diocese live-streaming Masses on their websites or Facebook Pages. (NOTE: This listing is being updated regularly. Please check the Diocese website: lodiocese.org often for the latest information.)

For more news, updates, and a daily reflection from Bishop Provost follow the Diocese on lodiocese.org and on its Facebook page Roman Catholic Diocese of Lake Charles.

Additional Resources:

Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) — broadcasts daily Mass, Sunday through Saturday, at 7 a.m., 11 a.m. (except Thursday at 10:30 a.m.), and 6 p.m. (except at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday and no 6 p.m. Mass on Sunday)
• For Mass in the Extraordinary Form, go to Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest or Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter.

• Word on Fire with Bishop Robert Barron @ Bishop Robert Barron on Facebook
• Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. — through the remaining Sundays of Lent, the Basilica will live stream Mass at noon, as well as several beloved Catholic devotions. Recitation of the Rosary will take place at 1:30 p.m. CT and the Divine Mercy Chaplet at 2 p.m. CT, followed by Benediction with the Most Blessed Sacrament.

CANCELLATIONS IN THE DIOCESE:

- ◆ Saint Charles Center temporarily closed
- ◆ Bishop's April Men's Prayer Breakfast and Women's Prayer Luncheon presentations
- ◆ Clergy Cook-Off scheduled for Saturday, April 18
- ◆ Catholic Charities Jazz Brunch scheduled for Sunday, April 26

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

**ALL PUBLIC MASSES HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED PER BISHOP PROVOST
DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK. OUR PRIESTS WILL CELEBRATE DAILY MASS
WITHOUT A CONGREGATION FOR OUR PARISH INTENTIONS**

SATURDAY, April 4—Gladys & Delma Devillier; Hidalgo & Fazzio Families (living & deceased); Scott Gauthreaux (living); Betty Henry (living).

SUNDAY, April 5—“Pro Populo” (For the People); Robichaux & Robert Families; Albert “Rabbit” Manuel; Edna, Sidney and J.H. Broussard; Ryan Skrnich; Concetta & Curtis Cardone, Sr.; Curtis Cardone, Jr.; Larry Miller; Velma & Dalbert Burleigh; Hugo Trejo; Mabel & Lee Trahan; Waldean Mae Broussard; Angel Infante; Cynthia Louise Williams (living).

MONDAY, April 6—Mrs. Kellie Moss & Family (living).

TUESDAY, April 7—Mrs. Aimee Romano & Family (living).

WEDNESDAY, April 8—Chrism Mass

THURSDAY, April 9—Holy Thursday

FRIDAY, April 10—Good Friday

SATURDAY, April 11—Dr. Francis X. Bride, Jr.; Louise & Joseph Bertrand; Gerald Simmons; Deacon Glenn Viau; Emmadell Bodin Hay.

SUNDAY, April 12—“Pro Populo” (For the People); Juanita, Morris & Bob Belaire; Thomas Gray Stevens; H. R. Stoma Family; Dena & Fred Nodier; Andrew Courville; Bev Wise; Doris & Earl Duhon; Peggy Guidry; Bernard Leger; Larry Miller; Waldean Broussard; Craig Smith (living).

PRAY FOR OUR FRIENDS WHO ARE ILL

Sondra Abraham; Rosa Adams; Sam Ange, Jr.; Owen Arceneaux; Renee Arceneaux; Jenna, Aden, Grace, David Babcock; James M. Bailey; Henry Barnatt; Gloria Bennett; Charles Benoit; June Benoit; Donald Blanchard; Leneta Boudreaux; Robert Boudreaux; Melanie Bowles; Chandra Broussard; Dean Broussard; Kylan Broussard; Stephen Broussard; Turner Brumby; Jerry Cain; Emily Carleton; Teresa Chapoy; Ada Cochran; Denise Collette; Thad Crouch; Betty Daigle; Wade Davis; Vickie Denison; Claudia Dyle; Charles Elter; Dee Elter; Bill Ferguson; Lamont Francisco; Carolyn Gauthreaux; Ty Griffen; Diane Hagerty; Gabriel Hardy; Michelle Hart; Mary Hebert; Stephanie Hinton; Brenda Hoback; Emery Hooper; Anne Hoyer; Jessica Hulin; Georgia Ieyoub; Mary Jeffers; Gary Johnson; Brice Jones; Darrel Jones; Hattie Kadlubar; Janet LaBiche; Cheryl Lecompte; Helen Lecompte; Sarah LeCompte; James Leger; Michael Lee; Della Lemaire; Melanie Lupo; Elizabeth Louviere; Judy Marcantel; Jules Maust; Brett McCaughey; Barbara McCombs; Ray Miles; Elaine Morrow; Betty Mueller; Kenneth Newman; Ruth Ottenweller; Larry Parker; Chris Percle; Ben Perry; Clifford Raleigh; Oliver “Rick” Richard; William P. Richard; Taylor Rock; Marian Rome; Lathan Russell; Rene Russell; Michael & Marie Scimemi; Cammie Shaddock; Sue Spears; Jaxson Spikes; Chris Stemmann; Rob Stephens; Beau Styron; Darrell Sullivan; Theresa Theriot; Warren Thomas; Betty Trahan; Charlie Viccellio; Aly and Riley Wilkins; Gay Young; Martha Young.

***If you would like to add or remove a name, please call the church office at 436-7251.
Please let us know if your loved one has recovered or is deceased.***

Prayer Intentions:

Pope Francis: We pray that those suffering from addiction may be helped and accompanied.

Bishop Provost: May the celebration of Easter increase our devotion to Christ, strengthen our faith in His Resurrection, and keep us united in the pursuit of what is good, moral, and just.

URBI ET ORBI (TO THE CITY [OF ROME] AND TO THE WORLD)

“When evening had come” (Mk 4:35). The Gospel passage we have just heard begins like this. For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in the air, we notice in people’s gestures, their glances give them away. We find ourselves afraid and lost. Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying “We are perishing” (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this.

It is easy to recognize ourselves in this story. What is harder to understand is Jesus’ attitude. While his disciples are quite naturally alarmed and desperate, he stands in the stern, in the part of the boat that sinks first. And what does he do? In spite of the tempest, he sleeps on soundly, trusting in the Father; this is the only time in the Gospels we see Jesus sleeping. When he wakes up, after calming the wind and the waters, he turns to the disciples in a reproaching voice: “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” (v. 40). Let us try to understand. In what does the lack of the disciples’ faith consist, as contrasted with Jesus’ trust? They had not stopped believing in him; in fact, they called on him. But we see how they call on him: “Teacher, do you not care if we perish?” (v. 38). *Do you not care*: they think that Jesus is not interested in them, does not care about them. One of the things that hurts us and our families most when we hear it said is: “Do you not care about me?” It is a phrase that wounds and unleashes storms in our hearts. It would have shaken Jesus too. Because he, more than anyone, cares about us. Indeed, once they have called on him, he saves his disciples from their discouragement.

The storm exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our communities. The tempest lays bare all our prepackaged ideas and forgetfulness of what nourishes our people’s souls; all those attempts that anesthetize us with ways of thinking and acting that supposedly “save” us, but instead prove incapable of putting us in touch with our roots and keeping alive the memory of those who have gone before us. We deprive ourselves of the antibodies we need to confront adversity. In this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more that (blessed) common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging as brothers and sisters.

“*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*” Lord, your word this evening strikes us and regards us, all of us. In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling powerful and able to do anything. Greedy for profit, we let ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste. We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick. Now that we are in a stormy sea, we implore you: “Wake up, Lord!”

“*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*” Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting in you. This Lent your call reverberates urgently: “Be converted!”, “Return to me with all your heart” (Joel 2:12). You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing*. It is not the time of your judgment, but of our judgment: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others. We can look to so many exemplary companions for the journey, who, even though fearful, have reacted by giving their lives.

This is the force of the Spirit poured out and fashioned in courageous and generous self-denial. It is the life in the Spirit that can redeem, value and demonstrate how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people – often forgotten people – who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines nor on the grand catwalks of the latest show, but who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves.

In the face of so much suffering, where the authentic development of our peoples is assessed, we experience the priestly prayer of Jesus: “That they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons.

“*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*” Faith begins when we realize we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we flounder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God’s strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

Embracing his cross means finding the courage to embrace all the hardships of the present time, abandoning for a moment our eagerness for power and possessions in order to make room for the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of inspiring. It means finding the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognize that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity. By his cross we have been saved in order to embrace hope and let it strengthen and sustain all measures and all possible avenues for helping us protect ourselves and others. Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from fear and gives us hope.

“*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*” Dear brothers and sisters, from this place that tells of Peter’s rock-solid faith, I would like this evening to entrust all of you to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, Health of the People and Star of the stormy Sea. From this colonnade that embraces Rome and the whole world, may God’s blessing come down upon you as a consoling embrace. Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: “Do not be afraid” (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, “cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us” (cf. 1 Pet 5:7).

Pope Francis March 27, 2020

