

Good Friday 2020

Fr. Mark homily

“We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested.” (Hebrews 4:15)

We face a test. A test for the coronavirus? Maybe. But a bigger test. A more-profound test.

Something propelled St. Francis of Assisi to abandon all the security that he had. He could have lived a stable, well-fed life. He came from a prosperous family. Everyone expected him to marry well and take his place in society, to live out his days with plenty of food and no worries about where his next meal would come from.

But something propelled him to abandon that, to jump out of the airplane, so to speak. Francis preferred uncertainty. He fell in love with having nothing. He found no joy at all in a well-stocked larder, so he turned his back on it.

The test is this: I may die. Rather: I will die, and perhaps very soon--even before they ever play another soccer or basketball game. And not a dainty, theatrical death, either. A hard, grinding, thirsty agony.

The test is: Face this. Squarely. Death has the whole world in his hands. He always has, actually. Everyone gets the virus in the end, sooner or later—if by virus we mean: Dying. The test is: Face that fact fully, right now.

Who will blink? Me? Or fear? Who will back down in this confrontation?

And who will conquer?

“Christ-like.” What does it mean? He loved life, loved His friends, wished no violence or suffering on anyone, including Himself. But the hour came; the dark scheme of the fallen angels encircled Him. And He had no fear of it.

Does the world not need Him right now? The human race has never needed Jesus Christ more. We need His serene grace like we have never needed Him, in all of recorded history. Of all the chapters in all the history books, this one we’re living through right now cries out for Jesus of Nazareth like no other chapter ever has.

We are His ambassadors. He propelled St. Francis, and filled the little saint’s heart with love for this test. The troubadour of Assisi relished the chance to stare unblinkingly at death. Jesus will push us out of the airplane, too: to skydive with only faith for a parachute. Fear will lose this staring contest.