

Lent - 3rd Sunday

- I want to wander a bit from our readings...
 - And talk a bit about what's happening in the world...
 - As well as what's been coming up in prayer...with several of our staff.
- Some of us have been praying together regularly...
 - and sometimes we deal with big things...
 - other times...
 - we just sit with the Lord...
 - receiving His grace and His strength...boy do we need it!
 - But mostly...
 - it's meant to help us discern the Lord's will for the parish.
- Well about 4 months ago...we were praying around this question:
 - How do you help save people...
 - who don't want to be saved...
 - or don't think they need to be saved?
 - We were focused on so many people within our reach...
 - who either don't know the Lord...
 - or haven't really given their lives to Him.
 - And the answer that came...it surprised us...but it was clear and strong:
 - That's not for us to worry about...
 - that's the work of the Lord...
 - Our task...is only to prepare...
 - because God Himself will bring them to us...wanting our help.
 - How on earth is God going to motivate them...not our concern.
 - But the image we got...
 - about our preparation...
 - it was clear and strong as well.
 - Although at the time...
 - I don't think any of us realized it.
 - It was the image of an ER...and the need to do Triage.
 - But the focus...wasn't on what you are probably currently imagining.
 - It wasn't on doctors and nurses and patients.
 - It was on the storage closet!
 - We need to be prepared...by stocking the shelves.
 - This was back in November!
 - We didn't take it to mean stocking up on medical supplies
 - much less toilet paper!
 - We took it to mean...a need to spiritually prepare...
 - to prepare our hearts.
 - and be open to the ways that the Lord wants to prepare...
 - each of our ministries...
 - for the people He promised would come.

- But other than that initial thought...
 - I think all of us...put that image on the shelf...
 - We didn't even think about it again...
 - at least not until the Lord reminded us again this week in prayer.
 - And honestly...
 - despite what is happening all around us...
 - with people in stores and staff in hospitals...
 - all scrambling for enough supplies...
 - We still feel that the focus of that image...
 - is on the need to spiritually prepare.
 - But how?
 - More on that in a second...
 - First another image...
- About three weeks ago...in prayer...
 - I had the image of dominoes falling in a line.
 - And I heard in my heart from the Lord:
 - *“Things will happen quickly now... one thing quickly following another.”*
 - That was pretty obvious...and still is...from watching the news.
 - But the important part was the ‘pace’ at which they fell.
 - The Lord had me notice how dominoes appear to accelerate...rapidly...
 - once that first domino begins to fall in a line of them.
 - But really...the rate of their falling is constant.
 - It's set by gravity...
 - It's set by the Lord who created this world.
 - And I understood clearly...
 - that what we might perceive to be...
 - rapidly accelerating events...
 - that may seem to be out of control...
 - is really just the Lord's plan for our salvation...
 - being carefully...and meticulously...put into action.
 - He's saving us...one step at a time.
 - So focus on Him...
 - and not the rapid acceleration of events...
 - and we will be just fine.
 - But whether it's facing a true and genuine crisis...
 - or our own irrational fears...
 - In all of this...the Lord is helping us to see...
 - just how small we are...just how much we need Him!
 - He wants to take care of us and provide for all of our needs.
 - Will we let Him?
 - And the dominos might not stop with the coronavirus...or the economy...
 - only the Lord knows if there is more...and how many.

- So what do we do? How can we stock up those spiritual shelves?
 - In prayer...the Lord has promised us as staff...
 - that He would even do that.
 - So He's not only the one who will bring people to us...
 - He's also going to give us the gifts that will help them when they come.
 - But our part...is that we need to take the time to pray.
- Several months ago we had another weird image come up in prayer...
 - of running to the hills and hiding in a cave to pray.
 - How on earth can you evangelize people by doing that?!
 - Well...soon all of us might be hunkered down in our own homes...
 - unable to get to work or school...
 - unable to get to Mass.
 - That could be a fearful thing...
 - And it probably was a fearful thing...
 - when the apostles gathered in the Upper Room...
 - shortly after the Lord had vanished from their sight.
 - But what happened to them...
 - as they were locked behind those doors...
 - gathered with Our Blessed Mother in prayer?
 - Pentecost!
 - Unheard of power...so many gifts and graces...
 - were poured down upon them.
 - And I believe the Lord is readying us...
 - for our own time in the Upper Room...
 - as we gather within our domestic churches...because of this virus.
 - And we've got to take advantage of this opportunity.
 - So this is not the time to stay glued to the television...or on the internet...
 - feeding those irrational fears with news...
 - or binging on your favorite shows.
 - And there will be a time to spring into action...
 - Christians have always been on the front lines of helping those in need...
 - But if we let this opportunity for prayer pass us by - to paraphrase Mother Teresa - we will be too poor to help the poor.
 - So pick up your rosary...pray with sacred scripture...
 - but more than anything...just keep praying over and over again:
 - Come Holy Spirit...come by means of the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary your well beloved Spouse. Pour forth any gifts and graces we will need for the salvation of the souls entrusted to our care and those that will soon be headed our way.
- Hopefully all of this will pass away relatively quickly...
 - but whatever happens...
 - trust that it really is a part of God's loving plan to save.
- I'm praying for you and appreciate your prayers for me!