

Easter 2020

- Last week I invited you to do two things...
 - The first...was to watch where Christ goes during Holy Week...
 - watch the things that He does...
 - watch the things that He suffers and endures...patiently...lovingly...
 - watch Him as He undergoes His passion for the sake of our salvation.
 - The other thing I asked you to do...
 - was to focus on what you were unwilling to suffer...
 - what part of the Cross are you unwilling to bear with the Lord...
 - knowing that with His grace...
 - truly all things...work together...for your good.
- And this week...if you're anything like me...
 - you've had a really hard time making the transition...
 - to the joys of the Resurrection.
 - And that's certainly because...
 - in many ways...
 - the Church remains entombed.
 - There are no public Masses.
 - It's so hard for you and I...
 - that we still can't gather as a parish...
 - and worship the Lord together...all of us...under one roof.
 - But even beyond that...when it comes to the Passion...
 - I honestly don't think that we're done.
 - That's why we continue to have this extraordinary pause.
 - Because it's not quite time to move on.
 - And yet...
 - despite what we might be feeling and experiencing...
 - the grace and power of the resurrection are still well within reach.
 - Let me explain
- About a year ago the Lord told me to be ready...
 - that evil would greatly increase...
 - but that so would His grace.
 - And He gave me two different scripture passages to focus on.
 - *"Deep is calling on deep"*
 - And *"Grace upon grace"*
 - The first comes from Psalm 42
 - *"Deep is calling on deep in the roar of waters.*
 - *All your winds and waves swept over me."*
 - The commentary in my Bible says of this passage:
 - *"the waters arising are overwhelming and far from God's presence, like the waters of chaos."*
 - So evil is on the rise.

- But coming directly against that...
 - are these words from the Prologue of St. John (1:16)
 - “*Grace upon grace*”.
- Evil is increasing all around us...exponentially.
 - That seems to be the buzz word of the day.
 - And it's so true isn't it?
- But what's also true...
 - is the exponential growth of God's grace...
 - that is open and available to all of us as well.
- And only one of these is infinite.
 - The other...
 - at times it sure seems like it can go on forever and ever...
 - with no hope in sight...
 - but in reality...
 - it has very specific limitations placed on it by Christ.
 - Like the Cross itself...
 - what is allowed by Christ from the other side...
 - it can only last for so long...
 - and it is always allowed for our good.
 - It purifies our love...
 - it helps us to see...just how much we need to be saved...
 - that we cannot save ourselves...
 - So it helps us to rely solely upon the Lord.
- And whether that evil comes in the form of a second wave of COVID-19...
 - similar to the second wave of the Spanish Flu...
 - which was so much worse than the first...
 - Or in some other...as yet unknown form...
 - that brings society as a whole...even more to its knees...
 - it really doesn't matter....
 - because God's grace will exponentially increase as well.
 - The strength of His power...simply cannot be outmatched or outdone!
- And so even when all seems lost...as it did on the Cross...
 - there is always the resurrection!
 - Hope against hope right? (Rom 4:18)
 - I mean...
 - the devil certainly thought he had won...
 - with the death of Jesus on the Cross.
 - Even the majority of apostles felt that all was lost as well.
 - What reason could possibly remain for hope?
 - And just to make the whole thing seem even more hopeless...
 - The Lord made everyone sit and wait...
 - wrapped in Sacred Silence...for three long days.
 - But then...suddenly...everything changed!

- My brothers and sisters.
 - I firmly believe that what we are facing now in our world is just the start.
 - That our Heavenly Father...in His great love and mercy...
 - will let us experience more and more as a people...
 - the fruits of what we've really been longing for:
 - A life without God.
 - A life led by our own design...
 - thinking that we know best...
 - what can make us truly happy.
 - *"How can God know?"* we say. (Ps 73)
 - And the Lord will let us experience more of the fruits of that desire...
 - until...like the Prodigal Son...we long to return to Him.
 - He's waiting for us...even now...with open arms!
 - But it concerns me that there are already many signs...
 - that point to a human level of hope right now...
 - With the stock market fighting back.
 - With estimates by experts on health...
 - dialing back some of the more alarming statistics.
 - I can already hear so many people starting to say:
 - Oh good...it's almost over...soon life can go back to normal.
 - But this kind of hope is rooted in our pride.
 - We still think we can save ourselves...and make ourselves happy...
 - We can't. We need God!
 - And that's why I believe more might be on the way.
 - But you and I...we have absolutely no cause for fear.
 - Evil will increase...but so with God's grace!
 - Or as St. Paul said in Rom 5:20
 - *"Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more."*
- And as if to reinforce what I've been getting in prayer over the course of this past year...
 - Lord said to me recently:
 - *"You will suffer greatly."*
 - *"You,"* meaning all of us.
 - And then He used an expression that is very familiar to all of us as well.
 - But He used it in a new way.
 - He said of us: *"You are the greatest generation."*
 - That expression usually brings to mind the World War II generation.
 - They were known for their great determination...
 - for their ability to sacrifice for the common good.
 - They were perhaps the 'greatest generation' in many ways.
 - But certainly more in purely human terms.
 - And yet...when the Lord used that expression with me...
 - what He brought to mind...
 - was a quote from St Louis De Montfort.

- He said...that in the end times...
 - and whether we're living in the end times are not...
 - only the Lord knows...
- but in the end times...
 - there will be greater Saints than at any other times in the history of the Church.
- Think about that for a moment!
 - Greater than Sts. Peter and Paul and the rest of the Apostles!
 - Greater than St. Francis and St. Dominic!
 - Greater than St. Therese...and St. John Paul!
- “*You are the greatest generation*” He said.
 - That means great gifts are being poured out on our Church right now...
 - Possibly greater...than at any other time in the history of the Church.
- So yes...evil will increase I believe...but even if it does...so will God’s grace.
 - “*Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more.*”
- But...my brothers and sisters...there is a catch.
 - This grace is open to all...but so few truly want to respond.
 - And it comes down to but one single word...
 - And that word...
 - has been resounding in my heart...
 - over and over again...these past few days.
 - “*Remain*”
 - It comes from John 15...and it’s all about:
 - ‘*remaining*’ in the Father’s will by obeying His commandments...
 - ‘*remaining*’ in the words of Jesus...as well as...
 - ‘*remaining*’ in His love...
 - But most especially...for our context...it also means...
 - ‘*remaining*’ close to Jesus on the Cross...
 - in His suffering...
 - especially by the way we live our lives.
 - When it comes to the Cross...
 - so often we flee from it like St. Peter...
 - But during this extended period of Sacred Silence...
 - the Lord is inviting us to ‘*remain*’ with Him at the foot of the Cross...
 - like St. John...
 - like Our Blessed Mother...
 - like the other women gathered in prayer.
 - And if we do... ‘*grace upon grace*’ will be poured into our hearts.
 - But only if we ‘*remain*’ with Him...right there...
 - even in the face of increasing evil.
 - We have nothing to lose if we do remain...nothing but our pride...
 - and we truly have everything to gain.

- So my homework for you...
 - is to look again at all those places where you are unwilling to pick up your Cross and follow after the Lord...and ask yourself this question:
 - In what do you place your hope?
 - I hope I don't get sick...
 - I hope I don't lose my job...
 - I hope all of this just goes away...
 - All those areas where you still have hope in your own ability and strength...
 - All those areas where you still hope to avoid the Cross...
 - In those areas...there is still ample room for fear to take root.
 - Hope instead in the Lord...and His will for you...
 - trusting that no matter what... truly all things will work for your good.
 - Even if everything...would seem to be lost...there is infinite grace at our disposal...but only if we *'remain'* with the Lord.
- I'll leave you with Psalm 42 in its entirety. This version is from the Breviary. It speaks about many desires in the form of a lament...including our desire for public worship! But notice where hope is to be found...

Like the deer that yearns *
for running streams,
so my soul is yearning *
for you, my God.

My soul is thirsting for God, *
the God of my life;
when can I enter and see *
the face of God?

My tears have become my bread, *
by night, by day,
as I hear it said all the day long: *
"Where is your God?"

These things will I remember *
as I pour out my soul:
how I would lead the rejoicing crowd *
into the house of God,
amid cries of gladness and thanksgiving, *
the throng wild with joy.

Why are you cast down, my soul, *
why groan within me?
Hope in God; I will praise him still, *
my savior and my God.

My soul is cast down within me *
as I think of you,
from the country of Jordan and Mount Hermon, *
from the Hill of Mizar.

Deep is calling on deep, *
in the roar of waters:
your torrents and all your waves *
swept over me.

By day the Lord will send *
his loving kindness;
by night I will sing to him, *
praise the God of my life.

I will say to God, my rock: *
"Why have you forgotten me?"
Why do I go mourning, *
oppressed by the foe?"

With cries that pierce me to the heart, *
my enemies revile me,
saying to me all the day long: *
"Where is your God?"

Why are you cast down, my soul, *
why groan within me?
Hope in God; I will praise him still, *
my savior and my God