

Meditations for Sunday, March 22, 2020

Thoughts from Fr. Loecke this 4th Sunday of Lent:

"Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will give you light."

The readings for this Fourth Sunday of Lent could not be more appropriate given the realities we are all facing with the virus that is having such a dramatic impact in our country and in our world.

My nephew, Kael, until the last year or so, would be found sleepwalking. My brother told me that Kael would look like he was wide awake as he was getting dressed to go outside. When my brother would ask him what he was doing, my nephew would answer him just as he would in the middle of the day. The difference though, is that Kael was asleep not really knowing what he was doing yet he was able to go through the motions functioning and responding as if he were wide awake.

I use the example of my nephew because so many of us, myself included, sleepwalk through much of life. We have daily routines, we seem to be functioning but we are never fully alert to the present moment. We are either thinking about the past or the future. We do so many things without really thinking about what we are doing in life or where we are headed. It seems, then, the last line from today's second reading is very fitting for all of us at this time in life.

Everything has changed in dramatic ways the past week. Now, nobody knows what will unfold from one hour to the next much less one day to the next. Maybe this virus pandemic is a real wake up call to all of us. Perhaps the virus scare has shocked us out of our sleepwalking so as to be more aware of the present moment and to rethink what is really important in life. Today, we are forced to live as Jesus has asked us in the Gospels, not to be concerned about tomorrow as tomorrow will have its own troubles. We really have no choice but to simply live for today as it is all we can really know as being true and valid.

Some have asked if I am scared of the virus. To be honest, I am not scared of the virus. I certainly don't want to catch it or be sick, but I am not afraid of the virus. What frightens me more is what the virus is doing to the workplace with people losing jobs and to the overall well-being of people as a whole. There is a lot of sorrow and heartache already and it does not seem that it will end anytime soon.

This pandemic is a clear reminder that we are not in control. As Jesus said, "Fear is useless what is needed is trust." I believe with all of my heart and soul that God is with us in all of what we are and will be facing for some time to come. Will what we face be difficult? Quite possibly. I told somebody one day that I would never want to go to a nursing home as I think it would be very difficult. The person responded, "Well you are not being asked to do so today. When and if that time comes God will provide the necessary graces to deal with that reality at that time." The same holds true with the virus. We can stew about what might happen but that only leads to fear and anxiety which depletes energy. We need to deal with the challenges of today. The fears we have in our minds may or may not come to pass. If they do, I believe that God will provide the grace necessary to face such challenges with confidence knowing that He is with us in everything. Our work right now is to grow in faith, trust, and confidence in God's goodness and love for us, a love that we cannot fully grasp.

Christmas is one of my very favorite times of the year. Not because of the gifts but because it is a most wonderful time to remember God's great love for us in giving us Jesus. So, over the last week when I feel anxious or stressed I look at the Nativity scene I have on my dining room table. That beautiful scene helps to calm my anxieties and becomes a source of strength for me, reminding me that God is in charge and that goodness and truth always triumph over darkness and evil. Jesus is the Morning Star that never stops shedding light upon us if we are awake to see this great gift.

The image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Most Chaste Heart of St. Joseph and the Immaculate Heart of Mary pictured here is a lovely piece for meditation, for it is an image of love and peace for the troubled times in which we find ourselves. I would encourage you to look at the image and ask the Holy Family to fill your heart with peace and calm.

Lastly, when I offer the noon Mass I feel a deep sense of connection with all of you who are taking the time to offer prayer as I requested in the letter you received this week. Saying that Mass and knowing that so many of you are praying with me is an interior experience words cannot describe.

My offer still stands for anyone who needs help running errands or getting groceries for those who need assistance and have no other help available to them. All you need to do is call the office and let me know what you need and I will do what I can to help.

In the Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,

--Fr. Loecke