

Fr. Rojas G. Juan, **Coronavirus (COVID -19), Part II: Role and Response of the Catholic Church in a Worldwide Crisis together with a Call for Charity** (St. Stephens, Kearny, NJ, 2020).

In the midst of this worldwide crisis, the COVID-19, we continue reflecting in regard to the Catholic **Church's role and response** in uncertainty times.¹ One of the *concerns and perhaps complaints* among some of our faithful people today is the Church's role and response to this world crisis. We hear very often in the social media and even among our circle of friends, arguments and questions like: Yes, it is true that we are living in **challenging times**,² but is closing and locking our churches the right response to this crisis? Our world is in great **need of God** and yet our places of encounter and worship **remain in quarantine**.

Actually, our **Holy Week** is here and yet there is no celebration of the sacraments, especially the public sacrifice of the mass. Faithful people are missing deeply the Holy sacrament of communion. Weddings and funeral masses are cancelled. Perhaps, some of us may not see it as a big deal but believe me for those who sadly have lost their loved ones, then it's another whole story.

And it is interesting because as we approach the celebration of our **Holy Week**, some of us may have *feel tempted* to cry out in a loud voice, *echoing* Jesus' words on the cross, "[M]y God, my God, why have you forsaken me [us]" (Mk. 15:34; Mt. 27:46).³ Why did you allow this world crisis? Why does our world seem to be collapsing and there is very little we can do about it?

Now, the claim goes even further by opening perhaps a more controversial question, what is the **Church's role or position** with *helping the needy* during this difficult time? Those families who live paycheck to paycheck and now are losing their jobs? Is there any **effort or strategy** to connect **those fortunate** faithful men and women to reach out to the **less fortunate**? Those who are not receiving any government financial assistance⁴ because of their immigration status. A lot of them attend and receive the sacraments in our own churches. They live in our neighborhoods. Some may even live across the street. **We cannot** forget or ignore them, because indeed they are also part of the suffering Church of Christ (Mt. 25:31-45). **The apostle St. Paul** also teaches us that **due** to our faith in God and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, "[we] are no longer strangers or foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints and members of God's household" (Eph. 2:18-19).

So, as Catholics it is **our duty** to reach out in *charity* to those who are in most need.⁵ To **search** for ways in which you and I can be **active participants** of a world of justice for all. Make them feel a part of our **large family of faith** in Jesus, "*who is the head of the body, the Church*" (Col. 1:18). Again, it is true that we all are in a **natural search for survival** in this time of crisis, but yet it is also true that we can **share** some of God's goodness with those less fortunate. **Today**, we hear a lot about a **collective effort** to make **America great again**, so let us **start** in our own churches, our communities, with our neighbors. And from this crisis perhaps our world can **learn** to be charitable, to be a world of justice and solidarity. A world that is not only based on personal efforts, but **collective efforts**, looking always for the **common good** of our society.

1 <http://www.usccb.org/news/2020/20-45.cfm>. For our **Archdiocese of Newark's** guidelines see, <https://www.rcan.org/covid19>.

2 **Rojas G. Juan**, *Coronavirus (COVID-19): A message of Hope and Trust in a Time of Uncertainty* (St. Stephens, Kearny, 2020).

3 For a background to Jesus' cry on the cross see, "[T]he **Suffering Servant**" (Psalm. 22). As scandalous as this cry sounds, it is important to highlight that Jesus' words on the cross, is not a cry of a desperate man, a form of complaint, but rather the cry of a faithful man. Jesus knew the Scriptures (Mt. 4:1-14). So, for sure he knew about Psalm 22 and surely, he knew how it ends. It is after all, "[M]y God, my God" to whom he cries. (For further details see **Peter S. Williamson and Mary Healy**, in Mary Healy's: *The Gospel of Mark* [Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2008]. See also a detailed account on modern scholarly work by **Rojas G. Juan**, *Psalm 22: A Shining Light at the Cross*, Mk. 15:34 (Seton Hall University, NJ, 2018).

4 <https://reliefbenefits.com/income-assistance>., <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/business/bailout-economy-coronavirus.html>

5 See also the seven-corporal works of Mercy (CCC# 2448).