

My dear people,

Here it is Wednesday, the day to write my bulletin column but there will be no bulletin this week as hopefully we are all hunkered down safely avoiding the Corona Virus. This is the first full day of the shutdown. I do want to reach out to you, however, to let you know of my thoughts and prayers. While we cannot celebrate Mass publicly, today I offered the Sacrifice of the Mass for today's assigned intention. Of course, I was not alone as I "logged on" to Christ's Sacrifice in that one, eternal present moment on Calvary. The angels and communion of saints were with me before the throne of God. You were with me as well as I prayed for all of you.

Last Sunday, about half of our normal attendance felt safe enough to come to Mass. I realize that means the other half missed some thoughts I shared about this pandemic from a spiritual perspective. I write to share them now with a few additional comments.

The reading from Exodus recalled the thirst in the desert as God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt. The last line recalled how, in the midst of this great saving act, but without water in the desert, the people had wondered: "Is God in our midst or not?" I am sure more than one person has been wondering where God might be in the present, worldwide pandemic. Let me share two thoughts:

1. Do not look for God in the sickness. Remember Genesis. God looked at His primal creation and found it good. In Judeo-Christian belief the good creation was somehow wounded by Original Sin. With sin, came toil, sickness, suffering, death, and disorder in nature. As Our Blessed Lord slowly revealed His divinity while on earth, He performed signs that showed His power over the effects of sin in the world: He *healed* the sick, even raised the dead, and He calmed storms. Nowhere in Scripture did the Lord show His power by imposing sickness or suffering. Yes, it is true that in giving us free will with which to love Him, God left us with the option of saying no to His divine will. And, yes, God does permit evil to continue in the world in order that He might draw good out of it.

2. Look for God in the goodness coming out of the pandemic. Thank God for our human intelligence that is being brought to bear on limiting the spread of the virus. You will see the hand of God in dedicated health care workers, putting themselves at risk for others. I see God in the revival of the American spirit as I hear of college students and others organizing to go out and shop for the most vulnerable. As we wondered how we would endure the rancor of the 2020 presidential race, this pandemic came along and is bringing this divided country together again as Americans put their best feet forward. American ingenuity is finding new ways to help people be safe as grocery stores dedicate

their first open hour to the vulnerable while the sanitizing of the store is still recent and crowds are small. People are reaching out to the lonely via telephone and the internet. Our St. Vincent de Paul Society will gladly accept donations as we expect requests for help from those who cannot work. Last night, one of our priests said he telephoned one of his parishioners who owns a small restaurant. His wife answered and said her husband was down at the restaurant having to lay off most of his employees. These are the type of people that I am sure the St. Vincent de Paul Society will be trying to help

Other positive results are reported among families with children home and staying close to home. While I am sure there are tensions, some say this is becoming a time to bond with family and get off social media, share meals in common, and actually talk with each other at home.

Spiritually, we have a great opportunity for quiet introspection, spiritual reading and prayer. Pick up your Bible. Perhaps read some of the Wisdom Books such as the Psalms. People have been through things like this before many, many times.

Fly your flag. The country is united against a common foe. The foe is invisible to the naked eye, but we are joining together to fight it whether we can see it or not.

*Saint Roch, pray for us, that we may be preserved from all diseases of body and soul.*

Father McInerny