

Is the Lord in our midst or not? As we heard in last Sunday's reading from the Hebrew scriptures, the Israelites of the Exodus forgetting that God was leading them to the freedom of the Promised Land asked that question. In these days of the coronavirus, no doubt it is still a question that many are struggling to answer in a positive way. As men of faith we know that fear is not from the Lord. Let us help our people stay strong in faith.

United with our Holy Father Pope Francis, let us pray in solidarity for our brothers and sisters here and around the world who are sick. Let us pray for those who have lost loved ones to this virus. May God console them and grant them peace.

Ironically, on our March 10th National Fraternity call, we decided to put together a necrology of our brothers who have gone before us. Bob Amundsen agreed to take up the task along with Tom McCormack, once Bob gets settled in his retirement quarters in late June. I'll have more details on this in our Spring Newsletter.

Two of my own fraternity brothers have passed this year. Mike Hull died last July 10th and my confessor for the last 26 years and brother in Fraternity for the last eight years, Peter Clarke, died on February 18th. Both priests were brilliant and had great ego strength which means with a smile they could speak truth to power. I miss them both.

Our International Responsible, Eric Lozada, sent out this notice yesterday about one of our former International Responsibles, "Feeling deeply both gratitude for the gift and sadness for the loss, I announce to you the passing of our big brother, dear friend and a living icon in the fraternity, MARIANO PUGA CONCHA from Santiago, Chile. He passed away last 14 March 2020 at 88 years old. He died of lymphatic cancer." When Mariano attended the International Assembly last January in the Philippines he had to be hospitalized for a couple of days. I loved his

charismatic presence and I'll be forever grateful for his affirmation of my leadership.

Alejandro "Alex" Trejo, pastor of Our Lady of the Desert Parish in Mattawa, WA also attended the International Assembly in the Philippines and was a member of the US delegation to the Continental Assembly in February of 2018 in the Dominican Republic. Most recently, last month, Alex worked with some of the members of the National leadership at the monastery in Conyers, GA to produce an outline for the Week of Nazareth. Unfortunately, Alex has tested positive for the coronavirus and has been hospitalized since March 1st for treatment of pneumonia caused by the virus. He has been taken off the ventilator and is recovering well enough to have been allowed to go home today. He'll remain in quarantine for the next 14 days. Alex is still very tired but happy to be on the mend and is grateful for the prayers of his brothers in Fraternity.

Brothers be careful out there. Take seriously the call for "social distancing." Keep well!

Fraternally,

Hap Ragan