

SOME SIMPLE SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER DURING THIS TIME OF ANXIETY

It is true for everyone, but certainly so for people of faith, that it is important to take all necessary precautions, observe governmental directives and to take the medical situation seriously, but at the same time to be calm and not to panic

Above all, let us also not forget the importance of **PRAYER**. Our Catholic faith is very practical: we know well how it can help us navigate through tough and anxious times. We know too how important it can be to help our children and young people pray and to pray with them, especially in the disruptive and worrying situation they are experiencing at the moment. We also want to pray for others: for those who have died or are sick with the virus and for their families and friends, for all those who care for them, for medical professionals, for scientists working for a vaccine, and for all those who are afraid during this time of uncertainty.

Here are a few easy and practical suggestions for prayers at home in this difficult time:

- As an individual or as a family, if you cannot get to Mass on a weekend or during the week (or even if you can!), take a little time to read through the Scripture readings of the day. Various publications, apps or websites can give you these. Then spend a few minutes reflecting upon them with some questions in mind: What is the message in the reading? Do I live up to the message? What resolution can I make to live the message better?

Then offer some prayers and petitions. If you are praying as a family, perhaps go around the family group, so that each person can say a prayer about what is on their mind or in their heart. Articulating and speaking out aloud our concerns and joys is a great way of praying! Finish by praying the *Our Father* or the *Hail Mary* together.

- Perhaps you know someone who lives alone (for example, an elderly neighbor or friend). Why not phone them just to chat and to check that they are OK. You might even pray with them or promise to remember them in your prayers. Prayer & charity go together!
- If you have an area you can use in your home, you could set up some sort of prayer space. We are very visual and we pray with our bodies, so designating a special place in the home can be very helpful when it comes to praying.
- Do not forget all the various Catholic devotions that we have: the rosary, Stations of the Cross, Divine Mercy chaplet and all sorts of prayers. If you do not have the books at home, these are easily accessed online or through a number of Catholic prayer apps.
- You might want to explore saying what is called “the Divine Office” or the prayer of the church. This is recited by many religious and ordained every day, as well as by many lay people. The Divine Office is offered up for the whole Church and for the world, but it is also a wonderful treasury of prayers, psalms, Scripture readings etc. You can access the daily office online or via various apps such as ibreviary.

Sample Intercessions from the USCCB (the US Catholic Conference of Bishops)

- For those who are suffering in the current outbreak of sickness that they may be healed, and for the happy repose of all who have died from this sickness in recent week;
- For scientists, health professionals, public officials, and all who are serving the common good in this difficult and uncertain time, that they will be filled with wisdom and understanding;
- That in times of illness, our merciful and loving Father will strengthen our faith and trust in his goodness and divine providence;
- That our compassionate Father would touch all affected by the current outbreak with healing and peace;

A Prayer from the USCCB:

Holy Virgin of Guadalupe,
Queen of the Angels and Mother of the Americas.
We fly to you today as your beloved children.
We ask you to intercede for us with your Son,
as you did at the wedding in Cana.

Pray for us, loving Mother,
and gain for our nation and world,
and for all our families and loved ones,
the protection of your holy angels,
that we may be spared the worst of this illness.

For those already afflicted,
we ask you to obtain the grace of healing and deliverance.
Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful,
wipe away their tears and help them to trust.

In this time of trial and testing,
teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be patient and kind.
Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and to our hearts.

We come to you with confidence,
knowing that you truly are our compassionate mother,
health of the sick and cause of our joy.

Shelter us under the mantle of your protection,
keep us in the embrace of your arms,
help us always to know the love of your Son, Jesus. Amen.