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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

In his extraordinary message and prayer for the city of Rome and the world, Pope Francis recently referred to the story of the Calming of the Sea in the Gospel of Mark. The disciples, most of whom were professional fishermen, were terrified and were panicking because their boat was being rocked by violent waves. "Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care if we perish?' And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?'" (Mark 4:38-40).

We are all experiencing the tempest that is COVID-19. What may have once been placid waters in our life is now churning and agitated. Fear is the result. Will we capsize? How long will the storm last? Will we sink? To our natural trepidation comes a tranquil reassurance, "Peace! Be still!" With these words, Jesus quelled not just the storm on the Sea of Galilee, but the far greater turbulence in the disciples' hearts.

The question Jesus put to the disciples about their faith in times of crisis was not a rebuke for lacking it so much as a reminder to rest in it; to rest as he himself had rested in the midst of the same storm. During this time, when we are unable to come together for Mass, we need – now more than ever – to remain connected with the diocese and our parish. Despite the physical separation of our community with the Church, many pastoral services are currently being offered and celebrated virtually. I am inspired by wonderful presence of our priests, parishes and ministries across social media.

On behalf of your pastor, I am personally asking that you please continue your weekly offertory support, whether sending your envelopes via mail or making an online donation through the parish website. I understand that many of you may not be able to contribute given the economic impact this pandemic is having on your personal finances; however, I hope that those who are able to continue to support their parishes will do so.

Please keep all our ministry providers in your prayers as they serve the faithful and our communities at this time. Rest assured that I, along with all our priests, will keep all of you and your loved ones in our prayers, especially the special intentions many have shared with me. God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend William A. Wack, CSC
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee