

## Thoughts in the Time of Covid-19--#2, March 24, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters:

This morning, my staff and I met to consider issues arising from the Government of Ontario's declaration of emergency measures coming into effect at midnight today and lasting for two weeks at least. Most of our employees will be working remotely, several have been laid off and a very few are designated "essential" and will be able to access the Diocesan Centre on an occasional basis. Clearly, we will not be able to serve the parishes and you the lay faithful as we normally do, so we ask for your understanding. We will try to respond to queries and communications to the extent possible.

Pope Francis has invited the whole world to join him in gestures of solidarity in this time of the Corona Virus pandemic. He asks that tomorrow, the Solemnity of the Annunciation, we all say the "Our Father" at noon. For those who wish to join him at the specific hour of noon in Rome, that would be at 7:00AM in Eastern Ontario. Since he recommends saying it several times, let me invite you to pray with me the prayer deliberately and prayerfully at 7AM, Noon and 7PM. Here is the Holy Father's explanation in his own words:

"In these trying days, while humanity trembles due to the threat of the pandemic, I would like to propose to all Christians that together we lift our voices towards Heaven. I invite all the Heads of the Churches and the leaders of every Christian community, together with all Christian of the various confessions, to invoke the Almighty, the omnipotent God, to recite at the same time the prayer that Jesus, our Lord, taught us. I, therefore, invite everyone to do this several times a day, but all together, *to recite the Our Father this coming Wednesday, 25 March, at noon*, all together. On that day on which many Christians recall the annunciation to the Virgin Mary of the Incarnation of the Word, may the Lord listen to the united prayer of all of His disciples who are preparing themselves to celebrate the victory of the Risen Christ.

"To the pandemic caused by the virus, we want to respond with the universality of prayer, of compassion, of tenderness. Let us remain united. Let us make our closeness felt toward those persons who are the most lonely and tried. Our closeness to the doctors, the healthcare workers, nurses, volunteers... Our closeness to the authorities who must impose stringent measures, but for our own good. Our closeness to the police, to the soldiers who try always to keep order on the streets, to ensure that the things the government asks to be done for the good of all are implemented. Closeness to all."

There is a second invitation Pope Francis has proposed. I'll tell you about that on Thursday.

God bless you.

✠ Terrence