

April 6, 2020

My very dear people,

In phone conversations I have had with as many of you as I can, I have been so impressed with your cheerful outlook and steady faith. Those phone calls and these letters help us to connect in ways we hadn't explored until the Coronavirus came into our lives and changed them for the better. Outlook, attitude, and service, inspired by faith, hope and love are transforming us as people and as a parish in the deepest ways possible, in ways, perhaps, that all the preaching and teaching that Father and I could ever do might never have accomplished. Now, we are in the holiest week of the year. May humility, patience and meekness be our clothing, no: our armor, now more than ever.

Palm Sunday was always a special day for our families; it was the beginning of Holy Week, with Easter just around the bend. It still is a special day. Yesterday, Father Lino and I con-celebrated the Palm Sunday Mass, without palms, without parishioners, without *you*. Our beloved Dan D'Agostino assisted us, as always. He truly has the heart of a servant. In that he excels, but he is not alone. On Saturday night Frank and Alison Truslow arrived in plenty of time to watch patiently over our narthex and sanctuary as confessions were heard, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., so as to maintain the 10 person rule that we are faithfully trying to follow.

To be sure, our celebration wasn't the same; something was missing, but Someone was there, and it was still the Mass, the Mass for you, the People of Saint William of York, and once again, though you were not present to me face to face, you certainly were spiritually present and connected to me, as I was to you, and as we all were, and are, to Jesus, for we are indeed His Mystical Body.

The Collect for Palm Sunday, the opening prayer of the Mass, spoke so poignantly to me as I prayed...

Almighty ever-living God, Who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross, graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering, and so merit a share in his Resurrection.

Graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering. In ourselves, and in our homes, let us commit ourselves to follow our Lord's example of humility this Holy Week.

Yesterday, on Fox News, when asked about the current trajectory of the Coronavirus, Surgeon General Jerome Adams said:

Well it's tragically fitting that we're talking at the beginning of Holy Week because this is going to be the hardest and the saddest weeks of most Americans' lives, quite frankly. This is going to our Pearl Harbor moment, our 9/11 moment, only it's not going to be localized it's going to be happening all over the country.

The Surgeon General went on to say that *there is hope, but we've gotta all do our part*. I was touched at the start of his nine minute discussion of this painful virus to hear him reference and connect it to this Holy Week.

Here, at Saint William of York, we're doing all that we can to keep our church open for prayer and for confessions. Father Lino and I continue to offer Mass for intentions that were requested months and months ago.

Following the *Liturgy of the Hours* and the rule of life that I adopted almost thirty years ago gives me an absolutely uninterrupted sense of continuity. I love to pray; indeed the gospel admonition to enter into my secret place, close the door, and be alone with my Father in Heaven* appeals to the boy in me who watched the *Miracle of Marcelino* at a movie theatre in Queens, New York, when I was in the first grade. I still remember walking with our Dominican sisters from O.L.P.H. (Our Lady of Perpetual Help), past Aunt Daisy and Uncle Victor's house on 122nd Street, to Liberty Avenue where the theatre was, five blocks down from where the A-train came to its final stop on "the el" (the elevated railway). From that day on, I wanted to be alone with Jesus, *just the two of us*, in some secret place, and talk to Him as Marcelino did.

Last night, united with Him in my room at the back of the rectory, I was irresistibly drawn to Jesus and inspired by the *Canticle* from Sunday, *Evening Prayer II*, taken from 1 Peter 2:21-23:

*Christ suffered for you,
and left you an example
to have you follow in his footsteps.*

*He did no wrong;
no deceit was found in his mouth.
When he was insulted
he returned no insult.*

*When he was made to suffer,
he did not counter with threats.
Instead, he delivered himself up
to the One who judges justly.*

My dear people, if all that we've heard is true, than we're just beginning to live through one of *the hardest and the saddest weeks of most Americans' lives*. May we not forget, for a single moment, that this week was on our calendar as **Holy Week** long before we heard of the menacing virus that is now in our midst and that Jesus Christ, the Lord of History, *has gone before us in His Passion* that we might *follow in his footsteps*. His grace will not be wanting as we follow Him together now.

Now I send you my blessing, through the air, while remaining, always, with love,

Your grateful pastor,

Father *Marcelino* DeMartino

*Matthew 6:6