



Dear Friends in Christ:

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTORAL COORDINATOR

*May Christ's peace, joy and hope be with you all!*

One of the temptations we face as disciples is the attraction to respond to uncertainty and difficulty with fear and worry. Whether it involves our health, our relationships with our friends, our spouse, our children or grandchildren, co-workers, or even the moral and political challenges facing us, the easy way is to lose hope.

The consistent message of the Gospel and of the great evangelists of our Catholic tradition is one of hope especially in the midst of trial. There is never a time when God ever abandons us. It may be that we feel abandoned by God when serious crises hit us but our feelings, which are very real and must be addressed, actually can mislead us. God calls us to entrust to Him especially when we're afraid.

Three scripture verses remind us to invest in God's gracious love and kindness for us. Isaiah 41:10 states, "Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you!" In addition, Deuteronomy 31:8 notes, "It is the LORD who goes before you; he will be with you and will never fail you or forsake you. So do not fear or be dismayed." Lastly, from the Letter to the Romans 12:12, St. Paul writes: "Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer."

During tough times, like the two communities of Holy Rosary and Visitation have endured, it's far easier to give into discouragement, letting uncertainties dishearten us. Yet there is never a time when God isn't holding us up, isn't with us, isn't in us, giving us the strength to endure arduous times. For me, the most important way to maintain that hope is to commit to daily prayer with Jesus. In my own experience, it's then I slow down enough and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to my heart, the deepest part of myself. Prayer is less what I do and more what God does in me. Sometimes just being aware of God loving me and not doing anything is enough.

I made the decision many years ago to commit to getting up very early in the morning, usually at 3:30 AM, to spend time with Jesus and most especially to speak with Him and He with me. I use a variety of resources: the Liturgy of the Hours, Ignatian Prayers, *The Word Among Us*, *Give Us This Day*, some prayers I've collected over the years, an Irish Jesuit devotional called *Sacred Space*, a list of people for whom I'm praying, and two daily devotionals by Sarah Young: *Jesus Calling* and *Jesus Always*. When I have time to walk in the mornings, I like to recite a rosary too. What matters is not how long I pray but rather the quality and consistency of my daily encounter with Jesus.

Over the years this practice has helped to integrate my prayer with all of my life. My practice has made my celebration of daily and Sunday Mass far more meaningful too. This is especially helpful to me in demanding circumstances.

The Holy Rosary and Visitation communities have been and will continue to be in my daily intentions. We must all continue to believe, "for we have this hope, an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19).

In God's great love, hope, and mercy,

*Deacon Jim*