

We have a problem today. You are right! COVID-19 has not only created just a problem, but it created multiple problems and hardships for our families, communities, and nations. The biggest problem is not just the loss of employment and lockdowns but the social and emotional isolation from one another.

Two days ago, I was at Ballard Mortuary in Moanalua to conduct a private service and bless the body of a 20-year-old college student before cremation. Just her parents and I were allowed to visit the deceased. No one else, not even her grandma and immediate family members were permitted to be on site due to the COVID-19.

You get the picture. Death is the time we lean on another for consolation and strength, especially when we are confronted by the most tragic of circumstances.

The Scripture for this Sunday encourages us to reach out and look out for one another. In the first reading, God tells Ezekiel to watch over the people of Israel. When a person is guilty of sin, Ezekiel is to make him aware of it and give him a chance to repent and reform.

“Thus says the LORD: You, son of man, I have appointed watchman for the house of Israel ... warn the wicked and ... turn him from his way.”

Jesus in the gospel tells us to always seek reconciliation and peace with one another.

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone,” the Lord says.

Sincerely in my heart, we are to be concerned about one another - as God is concerned about all of us.

This is evident in the Scripture passage we’ve heard. We need to be community, for we all are created by God to be in communion with one another. God did not create us to live alone and isolated but in community and in peace with another.

Moreover, as St. Paul in today’s letter reminds the Romans he was writing to - and us - that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves.

“ ... for love does no evil to the neighbor.”

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

We live in a time when many are isolated and feeling depressed. No matter how frightened and lonesome we may feel, God is there with us and loving us always. God never stops caring for us.

Regardless of how challenging the situation or how long the time may be for us to come out of this pandemic, we can rely on our faithful God and discover how to live together, how to care for another, how to love our neighbor in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And in so doing, we might just realize the need for and be open to the possibility of others helping us remain faithful – to our call and to the dignity in which we were created. Imagine that. Others don't just need us. We need to care and love them too.

Let us not forget that as we continue struggling with the problems of life, we are not alone. We are never alone. We don't have to go through this alone. God is doing it with us. And we have others to rely on, walking side by side and hand in hand with us and with our loving God.

Allow me to conclude with a prayer written by St. Teresa of Avila, mystic and doctor of the church.

**“Christ has no body now but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion
on this world.
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.
Yours are the hands through which he blesses
all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”**