



Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus,

Hope you are coping the best way you can. It's very lonely at the church. We will be cancelling all public events at Our Lady of Mercy Church beginning on Saturday, March 21 until further notice. Even the lights are dimmed both in church and in the school to save some energy. I know that a lot of my time at night is searching the TV channels for something interesting to watch instead of the news channels which seem to make me depressed or scared or both. I read a little bit; a few chapters of books that are collecting dust on my shelves. Who would have thought that this could happen in our time and place? Yet it is here! It doesn't matter where it came from but it does matter that we do our best to stop the tide of the Coronavirus tour de force.

I am confident that I (as a single man) can create a schedule for myself that allows me time for prayer, exercise, communication with friends (via social media) and eating, etc. But for families it takes so much discipline and patience to have everyone go in somewhat of the same direction. As parents please be patient with yourselves. You are doing your best and God knows that. If you lose your temper or say things that you regret practice saying a short prayer and saying you are sorry when appropriate.

As an aging friar, I am remembering things from my past; old friends and experiences, joys and sorrows. Spend time just talking about the past. As I get older, I regret not talking to my parents about my grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins. I am the youngest of all of my first cousins (about 30 of them). My grandparents on both sides came from Poland as part of the Swedish empire or the Austria-Hungarian empire in the early 1900's. We had some old birth certificates on my maternal side but none on my paternal side. My grandparents spoke Polish

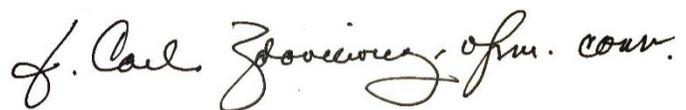
and both my grandfathers died in the coal mines when they were in their 40's. I had one grandmother -Anna, who we lived with until I was 5 years old. Then we made the great move across the street to my Dad's mother's house. Rose, my grandmother, died when I was less than 1 year old.

Many of the stories were spoken in Polish and I did not understand the language. But my aunt Helen, who was single and took care of me when my mom went back to work, would tell me about uncles and aunts and their children. I loved to hear about them and what they did.

Getting to stories. We have a lot of Bible stories that our children can learn while we are at home with them. Every day a new Bible story from the Old Testament should be taught and the lesson learned from it. Take your Bibles out and read a short part of the Life of Jesus in one of the 4 Gospels- Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I hope that each week I can provide something for all of us to reflect on and do while we are confined to our homes.

These last weeks of Lent have beautiful stories: The Woman at the Well, The Blind Man- Bartimaeus, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead. These are great teachings and miracles of Jesus. It's worth our while to reflect on them and speak about them to our families. Keeping the faith alive is very important for all of us to do. Even though we cannot gather in community, we can come together in the Holy Spirit and speak of holy things.

My prayers are with all of you and remember always the Lord will not abandon us, as He promised. Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am in their midst.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Carl Zdancewicz, OFM Conv." The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Fr. Carl Zdancewicz, OFM Conv.
Pastor