

Dear Parishioners:

As we began the battle against the coronavirus pandemic, the Church, out of prudence, closed her doors and suspended the public celebration of Mass. However, by doing these, the Church inadvertently conveyed two wrong messages.

First wrong message: the mission of the Church is non-essential business. While the hospital for the body is essential business and has been open all the way through, the Church, the hospital for the soul has not.

Second wrong message: if your life is in jeopardy, you may temporarily stop your sacramental life to survive. This makes the witnesses of the martyrs look absurd.

These two messages seem to be at odds with what Jesus says in today's gospel. "Fear no one. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

Although closing and suspending might have been inevitable decisions to prevent the spread of the virus, they caused confusion among the faithful and hurt them in certain ways. Some might have experienced doubts in their faith. Some might have felt abandoned by the Church. Some might have been disappointed in the leaders of the Church.

Unfortunately, we cannot undo what happened. We have to move on, yet we find ourselves in need of healing, consolation, and recharge. These can come from humans but they are limited and imperfect. Hence, we need to entrust ourselves, our family, and our faith community to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. As the Love, mercy, and compassion flowing from the Sacred Heart of Jesus are perfect and boundless, we can find complete rest, healing, consolation, and recharge in it.

In this manner, Jesus himself pastures His sheep. In chapter 34 of the book of Prophet Ezekiel, we find this truth proclaimed. "I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest. The lost I will search out, the strays I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, and the sick I will heal; but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd them in judgment."

-Indeed, this passage is fully realized in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. He always invites us to His Most Sacred Heart, but these days it is not easy for us to get there because of the pandemic. It is the Blessed Virgin Mary who helps us to do that. She does that with Her Immaculate Heart.

King David commanded a census of Israel and Judah. As a result, he was to be punished by God and he chose three days of plague in his land as punishment. After the death of 70,000 people, God stopped the angel who stretched forth his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it (2Sam 24).

Also, when a plague decimated Rome in the sixth century, St. Pope Gregory the great led penitential processions through the streets hoping to appease God's wrath. As the procession ended near Castel Sant'Angelo, the participants all saw St. Michael the archangel standing upon the cupola of the Castel as he sheathed his flaming sword. Their prayers were answered, and at that moment the plague ended.

There is a sword pierced the Immaculate Heart of Mary as Simeon prophesied, "you yourself a sword will pierce" (Luke 2:35). The sword here symbolizes the sufferings that she had to endure with her Son who suffered and died because of the sins committed by all sinners.

She draws the sword not to punish us sinners but to destroy things that harass us and obstacles that keep us from getting close to the Most Sacred Heart of Her Son. This time, the obstacle is coronavirus.

This year, on Friday, June 19th (yesterday), we celebrated the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the following day (today), June 20th.

Today, she unsheathed the sword from her Heart to use it against the coronavirus. Thus, from now on, there will be no new coronavirus infections throughout the world.

Of course, there will be new confirmed cases for the next few days because these cases were infected prior to the moment she drew the sword. But there will be no more new coronavirus infections. Since Jesus said, "What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops," I cannot but proclaim the message I received from the Lord.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the end of the coronavirus pandemic is right around the corner. We are almost there. Let us continue to pray keeping our faith and hope until that happens.

Let us never forget that our Blessed Mother, out of love for us her spiritual children, has obtained this miracle from Her Son and, holding our hands, leads us to His Most Sacred Heart. There we will find true rest, healing, comfort and recharge. And, let us always be deeply grateful to Her.

Blessed Mother, thank you so much.

Fr. Don Bosco Park

p.s. Fr. Eugene Bettinger is saying hello to you all. He dearly misses you.