

My dear friends in the Lord,

I would like you to remember this motto: “Be prepared; not scared! Trust in the Lord.” Faith is only tested when we live with great uncertainty, as we do now. None of us can predict what will ultimately be the outcome of this pandemic. It certainly has shaken our world in so many ways.

As your priests, Fr. Mau and I know how much you love the Mass, the Holy Eucharist, and how you long to be able to receive the Lord in Holy Communion. But we also want you to be safe; so does your bishops. Thus the reason for such drastic protocols that have been undertaken! I know it can be rather difficult not to be able to attend Mass at the parish until we get further clearance to celebrate Mass publicly. This is for the common good and to minimize as much as possible the spread of the virus. I want you to think about this. We here in the United States of America are especially blessed that we can go to Mass freely. This “absence” of public Mass at this time should help us appreciate this great gift more than ever. In many places in the world, many Catholics don’t have Mass every Sunday; in very remote areas maybe once or twice a year. Please be aware that Fr. Mau and I celebrate private Masses for you every day until we are permitted to once again celebrate publicly for you.

This is certainly the most unusual Lent probably any of us have experienced ever. It is for me. And with this declared pandemic that affects essentially every nation on the face of the earth with the subsequent protocols of “social distancing” and closures of public events to limit the transmission of disease, this certainly feels like the whole world is in Lent--fasting, praying and, hopefully, offering charity and compassion to those affected.

We are in this together, brothers and sisters, and we must do whatever we can humanly do to provide the best outcome and limit infection. One of the most important things we can do, however, one which has great power is pray. Tomorrow, Tuesday, March 17, I ask you to join your Archbishop, us priests and others in praying a 9-day novena to Our Lady of Monte Berico. The novena ends on the Feast of the Annunciation on March 25.

Most of the world may have never heard of St. Vincenza Pasini, but she was a prayerful peasant’s wife who understood the important of the earliest appeals for prayer during a time of plague in Italy in the 15th century. In 1426, St Vincenza told the townspeople that as she was bringing lunch and drink to her husband laboring on a nearby hill overlooking the valley, the Virgin Mary appeared to her with instructions.

The Blessed Virgin promised that the people of Vicenza would be delivered from the plague if on the spot of the apparition, they built a church. “I am the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ who died on the cross for the salvation of men. I beg you to go and say in my name to the people of Vicenza that they must build in this place a church in my honor if they want to recover their health. Otherwise, the plague will not cease.” We can pray to Our Lady under the title of Our Lady of Monte Berico to intercede for world at this time.

Here is the link for that novena.

<https://m.ncregister.com/blog/smcafee/pray-this-marian-novena-for-protection-against-coronavirus>

What is one of the stark symbols we use every Lent that remind us of the Lord’s total suffering for us? It is the crown of thorns. Is it not rather revealing that the name of the virus is “Corona”? “Corona” is Latin (and Spanish) for “crown”. Of course, the virus was given that name because it looks like a crown surrounds its structure.

During this Lent, and beyond, many are (or will be) suffering from the Corona virus. Lent is a time in which we participate in a unique way in the suffering of our Lord and we can unite ours to His. It is what the church calls “paschal mystery”, “paschal” referring to the sacrificial Lamb (Pasch) of God.

The crown of thorns worn by our Lord led to a crown of glory! Whatever “crown” of thorns we may have to experience can also lead to crown of glory and new life. I’ve often spoken in my homilies of being prepared for whatever the Lord might ask of us to endure and to not be afraid. Thus, the motto I like: “Be prepared! Not scared! Trust in the Lord!”

I’ve no doubt that, in some way, the Lord will use this world-wide pandemic to bring us back to what is important—that is, to turn our lives around, to love and serve Him in this world and to do His will. I also hope this will lead all nations, including our own, who often depend upon our human resources and capacities, to recognize we are not ultimately in charge. We must use them. But we also rely on the One Above. There is One greater than us and this world and all creation belongs to Him.

There is one other link you are being provided free of charge for daily reflection from Magnificat during this time until we can return to public celebrations of the Mass.

Take advantage of it. It is a very good resource. Here’s the link:

<http://us.magnificat.net/flipbook/HTML/index.php#!VVmJMiMyMDlwizEzMjlxMzl2>

“Be prepared, not scared! Trust in the Lord completely!
You are in our prayers,

Fr. Terry Kissell and Fr. Mauricio Bermudez