

# Encouragement Encouragement



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**Healing of the Nations**



**THE HOST APOSTOLATE**  
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I have written many Encouragements and I hope too that I have encouraged many through the Grace of God, but now I find I need encouragement myself... Yet I must write what is in my heart – I must, because if we write only when the sun is shining, how will we cope when the sun is dimmed and diminished. We are in a time of increasing struggle. All over the world people are dealing with either poverty, wars, domination or conflict.

People are being killed and driven all over the globe with little redress – and yes, we have another danger, a virus – Covid19, Coronavirus.

We are told that its effects are mild for most, save those that are older and/or with underlying health conditions. We are told that it will pass – eventually. Yet country after country are either closing their borders or making emergency provision to combat this threat. Fear has been growing and there is a general feeling of both apprehension and of being overwhelmed. Stockpiling abounds, while generosity still exists, but there is much self-interest which is manifest. Of course there are real difficulties and dangers, but there are other forms of illness infinitely more dangerous for us.

On an early morning television newscast a doctor gave advice on how to sustain people for a few months of isolation or short-term illness. He said that as well as our bodies we must take care of our minds and hearts (emotions). He had some practical tips but the interviewer said, actually unexpectedly, “and our souls... there is help there”. In these times words from the Lord come from unexpected sources.

Today the unthinkable was announced. As from Friday there will be no services in the churches... yes, unthinkable! Yet it is happening. Many years ago I received a word from the Lord which was ‘What will you do when the churches are closed and the tabernacles empty?’ It was meant as a forewarning and a challenge. Others have had similar words.

Over the years I have received many such and always found another way to explain them – shortages of priests, loss of faith, but never did I imagine that it was a virus and a need to protect that would have the faithful deprived of the Eucharist and Mass. I also could not envisage that the Leaders of the Church would comply with such a request, seemingly to protect us from a virus. The words that come to me now are ‘And what does it gain a man if he gains the whole world but suffers the loss of his own soul?’ (Mark 8: 35-37).

I have found it difficult enough to comply with the already imposed restrictions – no handshakes, isolation, no receiving the Precious Blood from the chalice, and the manner of receiving Holy Communion, but never would I have believed that Mass for the people would be stopped. Many have died over the centuries in order to maintain faith – martyrs, of this and other lands. We know that once people leave the fold for whatever reason, it is hard to bring them back. Many have already left and others are leaving in fear, leaving a remnant.

Jesus came to heal. (Matt.15: 29-31). The Gospel abounds with histories of healing – of miracles of grace of healing of minds and hearts as well as bodies. He showed that He can heal either sin or illness or failure and bring about transformation. We are now in Lent, leading to the celebration of a rising, a conquering of death and a rising to new life. ‘By His stripes we are healed’ (Peter 2:24). It was a key part of Jesus’ Mission to give new life to anyone who asked for it, or in some cases desired it without asking (blind beggar beside the Pool of Siloam).



**“Are any of you ill? You should send for the church elders who will pray for them and rub oil on them in the Name of the Lord. This prayer, made in faith, will heal the sick.” James 5: 14-15**

Surely this is a time when **Hope** must be the hallmark of any **faithfilled Christian**. We either believe that the Lord is a Redeemer or that He is not. We either believe that He can heal us and the Nation or that He can't. We either believe in the Resurrection and Eternal Life – or we do not... For those who do not believe, they have made their choice. But surely, for those that profess to believe and have not yet affirmed this in their hearts, this is a time of choice and commitment.

As we approach the deepening of this darkness we must depend on the Word of the Lord. This is Year of the Word – The God who speaks. We must listen to those precious Words, and let them sink into our hearts and spirits to give us fresh hope. We must not let the forces of the world defeat us with fear and gloom. It is in moments such as these that our Faith is tested and Grace abounds. Let us look at some of these Words which we must live our and proclaim to others who feel alone and lost.

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled” Matt 11: 28-30*

*“They cried to the Lord and He saved them from their distress and sent out His Word and healed them. He rescued them from the grave. Let them give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for Mankind”. Psalm 107: 19-21*

This is a time not for hiding but for prayer and supplication. It is a time for us to be able to pray together... (if necessary 6 feet apart...smile). A time to proclaim that the Lord will release us from our misery. Our Shepherds too, need our prayer, so that they continue to witness to God's Love for us and our love of Him. We must pray that they have the courage to lead us and not bow merely to temporal needs. Isn't it strange how we admire those who have made a sacrifice for others yet somehow do not think it ever applies to us? We are the lights in a broken world, or should be. A martyr is no more than a witness to the truth.

Not only must we witness but we must trust that we will defeat the sources of darkness and despair. In all this too we must remember charity and joy. We can **all** do something for our neighbour in whatever way – practically or spiritually.

*‘I assure you that anyone who gives you a drink of water because you belong to me will certainly receive his reward’ Mark 9:41.*

Let us give others real water, the water of life. I recall too, the words of St. Pio (Padre Pio)...

*“Pray, pray, pray – Hope and do not worry.”*

As we approach **Easter** and we suffer the loss of communality, which we take for granted, maybe the Lord's Prayer will come to our rescue. But we must remember the loving heart of Our Mother who will intercede for us if we but allow her to do so with our trust in her maternal protection. She was, after all, at the foot of the Cross and held her beloved Son in her arms. But I conclude with a Psalm that many of us know, as it is deeply consoling....

**THE LORD'S MY SHEPHERD, I'LL NOT WANT  
HE MAKES ME DOWN TO LIE  
IN PASTURES GREEN.  
HE LEADETH ME THE QUIET WATERS BY.**

**MY SOUL HE DOTHT RESTORE AGAIN  
AND ME TO WALK DOTHT MAKE  
WITHIN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS  
E'EN FOR HIS OWN NAME'S SAKE.**

**YEA, THOUGH I WALK IN DEATH'S DARK VALE,  
YET WILL I FEAR NO ILL.  
FOR THOU ART WITH ME,  
AND THY ROD AND STAFF ME COMFORT STILL.**

**MY TABLE THOU HAST FURNISHED  
IN PRESENCE OF MY FOES,  
MY HEAD THOU DOTST WITH OIL ANOINT,  
AND MY CUP OVERFLOWS**

**GOODNESS AND MERCY ALL OF MY LIFE,  
SHALL SURELY FOLLOW ME,  
AND IN GOD'S HOUSE FOR EVERMORE,  
MY DWELLING PLACE SHALL BE. PSALM 22 (23)**

Halina Holman

#### **Feasts Days in April**

2<sup>nd</sup> St. Francis of Paola      4<sup>th</sup> St. Isidore

**5<sup>th</sup> Palm Sunday**

7<sup>th</sup> St. John de la Salle

**9<sup>th</sup> Holy Thursday, The Lord's Supper**

**10<sup>th</sup> Good Friday (Fasting & Abstinence)**

**11<sup>th</sup> Easter Vigil, Holy Saturday**

**12<sup>th</sup> Easter Sunday**

13<sup>th</sup> Easter Monday

16<sup>th</sup> St. Bernadette

**19<sup>th</sup> First Sun. East. Feast of Divine Mercy**

23<sup>rd</sup> St. George, Patron of England

25<sup>th</sup> St. Mark, Evangelist

**26<sup>th</sup> Third Sunday of Easter**

28<sup>th</sup> St. Louis Grignon de Montford

28<sup>th</sup> St. Peter Chanel, Priest

29<sup>th</sup> St. Catherine of Sienna      30<sup>th</sup> St. Pius V, Pope