

“PRAY, HOPE AND DON’T WORRY”: REMAINING STRONG IN TRUST AND HOPE

Mala Tempora, laboriosa tempora... “The times are bad! The times are troublesome! This is what humans say. But we are our times. Let us live well and our times will be good. Such as we are, such are our times.” These words come from Sermon 80,8 (ca. 410 A.D.) by **St. Augustine**. His text that day was **Matthew 17:18-20**, a passage that is read today each year on Saturday of the 18th Week in Ordinary Time, in early August. It is the account of a man who had approached Jesus, begging him to help his son who was suffering severely. He had previously brought his son to the disciples, and yet found no relief. Jesus said in reply: “O faithfulness and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring the boy here to me.” Expelling the demon, Jesus cured the boy on the spot. Jesus explained to the disciples that they **needed more faith**. “Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed...Nothing will be impossible for you.”

The backdrop of Augustine’s homily was equally a critical time in his lifetime. In August of 410 A.D., the city of Rome was **sacked by Alaric**, first King of the Germanic Visigoths. Thus began the demise of the Roman Empire. Augustine’s homily was most likely delivered during that same year. At this critical time, both in our nation and the world, we need faith the size of a mustard seed and then some! As you now surely know, the Archbishop took a painful but necessary step in the interest of public health by **suspending all public Masses** in the Archdiocese until such time as our national and state health officials deem that we have passed the critical stage in the battle against the spread of COVID-19, the coronavirus. It is obvious that this is a **drastic step**, and yet at times such steps are absolutely **necessary**. By now, you have all heard of the phrase “flatten the curve,” and that is precisely the goal. We must act now, so as to avoid the staggering infection rates in some areas of the world.

Indeed, these are bad times, troubling times. For most of us, they are unprecedented, though both our Church and society have been here before. History is replete with examples. Some of our eldest seniors can recall the polio outbreaks and the government rationing and quarantine measures taken in the 1930’s. That provides some perspective, but the sting now is real. Many are fearful— what are we to do, where are we to go? The first thought that came to my mind was: **“Pray, hope and don’t worry.”** This is the sage advice of **St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina**, the beloved Italian Capuchin and stigmatist who died at the Friary in San Giovanni Rotondo in 1968. St. Pio was known for his wisdom and for wise (and sometimes blunt!) counsel in the confessional. We plan to continue to offer confessions on a daily basis, perhaps even with multiple priests or possibly expanded hours. Consult our parish website www.cathedralsaintpaul.org for regular updates, as this bulletin went to press immediately following the Archbishop’s announcement.

The situation is **constantly developing**, and we will deal with the necessary adjustments in faith and trust. We are in an emergency situation and I have confidence in the epidemiologists, infectious disease experts who have spent their professional lives studying the impact of such outbreaks. Think of those words of St. Padre Pio—take them to heart. If we listen to the professionals, and heed their directives, the potential harm of this virus will be greatly reduced. See this current **critical 15-day phase** (as outlined by the President’s COVID-19 Team) as a “retreat” of sorts, a bold step back from the frenetic pace of daily life as we know it. Certainly, the economic effects on families will be severe, though as a resilient people, I believe we will bounce back. Families have extra burdens with children out of school and are making adjustments, keeping them engaged and calm.

I encourage you to stay abreast of the Cathedral news by frequently visiting the **parish website**. It is our best way to remain connected with each other. While I have a long way to go in terms of understanding technology, our current situation will force us to play catch up ball very quickly. We are **quickly** gaining the capability to **livestream Masses** in the Cathedral. This could be valuable for many reasons beyond the current coronavirus pandemic. I ask for your patience as we adjust to the “new normal” in our fight against this “invisible enemy” as the virus has so rightly been dubbed. Let us remain close to one another in prayer. I close with this prayer:

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

- Believe it or not, there is actually a **Saint Corona**, and she is buried in a basilica in **Anzu, Italy**, a town of 600, located sixty miles north of Venice. The word Corona is Latin for *crown*. Ironically, St. Corona is considered as one of the **patron saints of pandemics**. She was a teenager, and witnessed a man being tortured for his Christian faith. She came to his aid; She knelt and began to pray for him, letting him know she was there for him. That raised the ire of the authorities and she too was martyred. Saint Corona, Pray for us!
- Quite understandably and with little grumbling, all **major sports** have suspended their seasons or delayed their start, as in Major League Baseball. Yet, the National Football League has continued its off-season roster moves, etc. I understand that life goes on, but it just seems so tone deaf. Are we supposed to be interested in the free agency moves involving Patriots Quarterback Tom Brady or the Vikings trade of Stefon Diggs? I do not mean to be rude, but, please, spare us.
- While I desire to honor the daily and Sunday **Mass intentions** that people have already arranged, without two daily Masses being offered and five on Sundays, it will present unique challenges to fulfill these requests. Where possible, **Frs. Bambenek, Pavlak** and I are trying to spread out our existing Mass intentions among us. We will take no new Mass intentions, as I tend to think it may be more advantageous to offer more of our Masses for “the people of the parish”, “the elderly” or “those ill with COVID-19”.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector