

04/03

We come to the end of our third week of working, teaching, studying, praying in a new mode. The coronavirus outbreak continues to threaten and disturb, to sadden and perturb our spirits, our lives, our wellbeing, all in the midst of Lent. This has truly been an eventful Lent: we have all been called to reassess, to cut back, to think about what is truly worthwhile. In many ways this is restorative as Ann Owen pointed out to me – and what Lent is all about.

Next week our seminarians, students, and faculty will be on a hiatus from classes for Easter Break. It is Holy Week, the most important week of Christian faith and religion. It is both a time of joy as well as sorrow as we enter into the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. On Holy Thursday we commemorate the Last Supper when the Lord freely gives himself over to death so that we might live forever. An act that culminates with dying on the cross but is fulfilled on Easter Sunday with the Resurrection, in which we live, breathe, move and have our being as baptized persons (cf. Acts 17:28). He gives over to us his body as the bread of life and his blood as the cup of salvation, which we share in at every Eucharist – in communion whether physically or spiritually. Consequently, it's important that all of us take that day to enter more explicitly into that great love God has shown us, even in the midst of such adversity, then and now. This supreme act of love is celebrated over a three day period, the Sacred Triduum in which we accompany the Lord from last supper, to his agony and death, and then his glorious rising from the dead.

As Pope Francis said in his Urbi et Orbi message last week Friday as he reflected on the calming of the sea (Mk 4:35-41): "The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith. **We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love.** In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, **let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side.** The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. Is 42:3) that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/27/0188/00417.html#en>

Next week at sundown on Wednesday, we also mark the start of Passover, the week-long Jewish celebration of liberation. I pray that our Jewish staff, friends and/or family members will also feel more fully God's liberation in the midst of the pestilence which the world is experiencing and that their faith will be renewed and strengthened. It is my hope and prayer that all of us will emerge from this experience better and holier people.

Finally, I ask you to pray for four of our seminarians who will be ordained in the proximate future but who have been unable to return to their homes. Consequently they were unable to arrange a canonical retreat in preparation for ordination. So Fr. George Mangiaracina OCD, of our faculty who has also stayed behind, will lead them in a retreat all week. Please remember them in your prayers as I'm sure they will remember us in theirs. And since most of us will be unable to participate in the liturgical rites of the Triduum due to the situation, let us take time to read the readings and orations assigned to these days as a way to enter into spiritual communion with one another, the Church, and our God.

Many blessings, may Holy Week truly be holy for all of us,  
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