

PARISH VIDEO 5 (3-30-2020)

Hello everyone. I am still here and healthy and missing all of you. I am sure that everyone knows by now that we need to stay home as much as possible. That means that the only people we should be spending time with are the people we live with. We should not be visiting friends, relatives and neighbors. We all want to do that but we can't right now. We should stay home and go out only if necessary. That means that we should not be traveling to our cottages up north, or to other states. This is very temporary. Go out only when necessary.

These are a few things that I am doing each day to make myself feel better. I get up and take a shower and get dressed every morning. I get outside and walk outside every day. Since my day is less structured now, I check the weather app on my phone and I have been able to get a walk in between rain and sometimes even in the sunshine. I pray each morning and make a plan for the day. Make a plan only for today. Make a plan for tomorrow, tomorrow. We all have projects that we have put off because we do not have the time. Maybe now is the time. If your list is anything like mine, I have really been putting things off because I do not want to do them, like cleaning things out. I still do not want to do them, but I am tackling a few of them now. Pick one project each day so you have something to focus upon. I am calling people each day that I want to check up on. I also have one friend in particular that makes me feel better when I talk to her, so I call her every day. Find something to take delight in every day. On Sunday I managed to walk in the sunshine before the rain and wind began. I took great delight in that.

Limit the time you spend watching the news. When I talk to people who are anxious, the first thing I ask them is how much time they are spending watching the news. Usually they tell me all day. Do not do that. Try and get some objective information from government officials or from physicians to get updated and then turn it off. If you hear someone criticizing or blaming someone, turn it off. This is the time for all of us to come together and support one another. Everyone is doing their best. If you hear people speculating about the future, turn it off. They are probably giving the worst case scenario, and that will just make you anxious. We do not know what is going to happen in the future, so this just gives us things to worry about. About 90% of what we worry about never happens, so do not put all of that energy into worrying. Think about how our lives have changed in just the past two or three weeks. Two or three weeks from now, things could be very different as well. We do not know what is going to happen in the future, but I see many reasons to be hopeful.

First of all, God is with us and God is in charge. None of us know why God is letting this happen. We have to trust in him, know that he sees a bigger picture than we can understand and accept that God is God and we are not. God brings goodness out of every difficult situation. That has always been true in my life, and many of you have told me about these experiences in your lives. This is what God has always done in the past so we must trust that this is what God will continue to do. Our faith tells us that God loves us unconditionally all the time and wants only what is best for us.

And think about this. There are brilliant scientists all over the world who are studying this virus. I do not know if this has ever happened before. Scientists in the whole world are working together studying the same virus at the same time. I know that God will help them to use their skills, talents, abilities and charisms to solve this problem. We need to remember that the vast majority of people who get sick also get better. That is very good news. We will gain more knowledge of how this virus is spread. Right now we do not know for sure, so we are taking every precaution. We will also discover that some people are more likely to get sick than others. That will be good information. I believe a simple blood test is being developed to determine if you have antibodies to the virus. It is likely that the people who have already been sick and have gotten better now have immunity. These may be the people that can safely go back to work. It is possible that their blood can be used to treat sick people and to develop a vaccine. There are drugs that physician have been prescribing for years to treat other conditions that may be effective in treating the corona virus. They are in trials right now.

And remember, the vast majority of people who get sick will recover. If you are going to speculate about the future, look at these possibilities.

I am also going to suggest that you spend some time in personal prayer every day. One thing that I want you to pray about is what you are learning from this experience. Write them down so that you remember them when all of this is over. We have been choosing to communicate through technology rather than by face to face contacts. Are we going to continue to make that choice when this is over? We put off spending time with friends and family for a whole variety of reasons. Are we going to continue to do that? What would you give to go out to dinner with friends? How many times have we missed Mass over the weekend because something else seemed more important? Do they seem so important right now? Will we have a new appreciation of gathering with our Parish Family to worship together and support one another? Maybe we will learn what we can accomplish when we all work together. Will we learn that it is not about us and them, it is just us?

I also suggest that you spend some time in quiet prayer where you listen to God. I have done this daily for over 20 years and it has changed my life. It does not solve every issue in my life, but it gives me a sense of peace and allows me to more clearly see God's will in my life. As Catholics we call this type of prayer meditation, contemplation, or centering prayer. I prefer to call it centering prayer. Our prayer is centered on God. It is hard to explain exactly what happens in this type of prayer, but let me give it a shot. We all have an internal voice that is talking to us all of the time. It tells us things like: "I must stay busy all of the time." "I am not good enough." "I have to figure this out on my own." "God is not going to give me what I want so I have to make it happen myself." We are talking to ourselves all of the time and this controls to a great extent how we feel and what we do. In centering prayer, we quiet that internal voice and let God speak. You probably will not hear God's voice during prayer, but you will gain a sense of peace and you will also be able to see more clearly what God is calling you to do. This is what you do. Find a place where you can be alone and will not be disturbed. Sit in a comfortable position and relax. Close your eyes and put yourself in God's presence. Focus upon your breathing and try and clear your mind of thoughts. Pick a sacred word or words that you can say to yourself when you get distracted. I say love as I inhale and Jesus as I exhale. To begin, start with 5 minutes and increase from there. It will change your life. Let's close with a prayer.

Loving God,
we give you thanks and praise for this day.
We thank you for loving us
and being with us as we face this corona virus crisis.
Strengthen our faith in you.
Give us your peace.
Help us to see what you are calling us to do each day.
Bless and empower all of our scientists and health care professionals
and help them to use their skills, talents, abilities and charisms to defeat this virus.
We ask this in Jesus name.
Amen.
And may almighty God bless all of you
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen