

March 21, 2020

Dear Brother and Sister Legionaries of the Praesidia and Councils of the Toronto Senatus Council,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

With heartfelt concern for the welfare of your body but especially your soul, I write to you amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our Blessed Lord tells us to "interpret the signs of the times." (Mt 16:3)

In the first reading of today's Mass, the Lord through the prophet Hosea urges us to return to God who is the author of both our affliction and healing. "Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn, that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up." (Hosea 6:1)

As people of faith we know that all comes from the hand of God, whether directly willed or permitted by him by what is called his "permissive will. In the Garden of Gethsemane Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done." (Lk 22:42) He understood that the bitter chalice was lovingly offered to him by his Father; likewise, we, his followers, should not be surprised whenever bitter chalices are offered as remedies for the ailments of our souls, and heavy crosses given us to carry after him.

God has not called us to fear, so be not afraid like others who have no divine hope. For those of you experiencing mental distress, unite it with the anguish Our Lord experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane during his Passion, that you may worthily participate in the sufferings of Christ. Our participation in his sufferings sanctifies us and has an intercessory power to call down wonderful graces and blessings upon ourselves and others.

This virus will infect the good and the bad alike. If any of you are stricken by this plague, even though you are good and innocent, know that your suffering serves for your sanctification and the salvation of many of the wicked, in virtue of the solidarity which unites all of us. Our Lord is near to all who suffer, especially his beloved people.

Due to the cancellation of Sunday and weekday Masses throughout most of the dioceses of Canada, most of you are deprived of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the reception of the Holy Eucharist. This is a cause of great suffering to you and faithful legionaries. And so, I encourage you to spend more time with the Lord in prayer by devoutly reciting the Holy Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and meditating on the Scripture readings, prayers, and antiphons of the daily Mass. Because most of you will not be able to feed on the Body and Blood of Christ, I encourage you to make acts of spiritual communion, and especially to feed on his holy words in Scripture. The daily Mass readings are a good place to start. Whenever it is possible, and in churches that are keeping their doors open, as I have encouraged you this past year, make visits to Jesus who with the Father and the Holy Spirit is present in the Holy Eucharist in the tabernacles of our churches. Adore him and he will console you.

This crisis should compel us to make reparation for our sins and those of others! So, we offer the present sufferings and hardships to God, with the words, so many of us like to repeat again and

again, "...in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world." (Divine Mercy Chaplet). How often during this Lent we have heard, said and sung "Today, if you hear the voice of the Lord harden not your hearts." By faith we hear the Lord's voice in Sacred Scripture; let everyone now hear his call to repentance even in the distressing events of nature.

Lent is a privileged time of repentance. We take to heart, the words we hear today, Saturday, the Third Week in Lent, in the midmorning prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours; Our Lord says to us, "Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent." (Rev. 3:19).

As you know, many of the baptized have fallen away or were never instructed in the faith. We pray that this time of distress, which understandably for some brings the fear of mortality, may hasten repentance and a return to God. To this end, make opportunities to proclaim to unbelievers, whether baptized or unbaptized, that salvation is from God through Jesus Christ the Lord. Do so even by phone, email, text or other instruments of social media.

Brothers and Sisters: encourage and comfort one another with words of faith and hope, as far as it is possible, in these times of social or physical distancing. While following protective practices, let us assist legionaries who are in need because they live alone, are self-isolating or sick.

In addition to our prayers of petition for ourselves and one another, for those of you who are medically and physically able, join me in fasting and abstinence to implore God's divine mercy to protect and deliver us from this virus. Be assured of my closeness to you and prayers for you, especially when I offer Holy Mass and the Rosary.

Let us put our confidence in our heavenly Mother, Mary Immaculate, Mediatrix of All of Graces, who wants to be a help, support, comfort and source of hope for all of us in this strange time of distress.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or the sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Rm 8:35,37)

This COVID-19 virus will not defeat us.

Christus Vincit, Christus Regnat, Christus Imperat!

Holy Mary, Health of the sick, pray for us.

Yours in Jesus and Mary,
Father Joseph Moncada
Spiritual Director
Legion of Mary
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