

"I must
proclaim the
good news
of the
kingdom
of God"

Catholic Charismatic Renewal
serving the Church

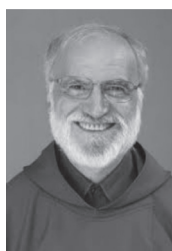
Good News



The newsletter of the
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Melbourne, Australia.
www.ccr.org.au

Coronavirus: Hope Does Not Disappoint

By FATHER RANIERO CANTALAMESSA



Read some wise words from Father Raniero Cantalamessa about hope in the midst of the current Coronavirus crisis.

During the general audience sent by video on Wednesday 11 March, referring to the crisis, the Holy Father urged the faithful all over the world to face the situation *"with force, responsibility and hope"*. Let's try to give a context to each of these three characteristics.

Strength

Let us listen to the word that God speaks to his people in a special moment of testing, as if He is speaking to us today: "It is not by power, nor by force, but by my spirit, says the Lord of the army" (*Zechariah 4:6*). This does not prevent us from putting into action all human resources and precautions, but it ensures that we are not alone in fighting. God is never so much Emmanuel, God-with us, as when we are in a test. In such a moment, go to Jesus, like the apostles in the storm: "Lord, you do not care what we are going through?" He is waiting for our cry so that his intervention will be at the same time fruit of his grace and of our faith.

Responsibility

Let's not just think about ourselves, to keep ourselves safe, possibly even at the expense of others.

Let's think about the consequences of one of our actions or any of our omissions. This situation gives us a unique opportunity to remember that we are one

family and "members of each other." A true captain leaves the ship only after all those for whom he is responsible has been rescued. This is the altruism shown by so many doctors and caregivers, but whose example was given to us above all by our Saviour who "offered himself to death for all of us."

Hope

The most beautiful contribution we can offer to our brothers as the people of Catholic Charismatic Renewal is this one: hold on to hope, and to the One who "does not disappoint, because the love of God has been spread in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us" (*Romans 5:5*).

On behalf of the Moderator of CHARIS and the entire International Service of Communion, as a church assistant, I wish to all the brothers and sisters of the CCR the wish that the apostle addressed to the faithful of Rome: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (*Romans 15:13*).





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"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life". We pray these words each time we pray the Creed but how much awareness is given to the third person of the Holy Trinity? Without the presence of the Holy Spirit, our lives as Christians would be very different. I have often wondered why we do not celebrate Pentecost with as much intensity as we do Christmas or Easter. An important truth spoken by many preachers is to pay attention to the 'little' words in the Scriptures we read. The importance of this is brought home when we consider that both Christmas and Easter celebrations reveal "God with us" whereas the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost reveals "God in us": through his indwelling in our hearts.

The Apostles were privileged to be witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus, yet this was not enough to rid them of their fears. They had followed Jesus for three years yet after the Resurrection they were ready to give up and go back to their old ways, their old workplaces. That is until Jesus prepared breakfast for them on the beach and broke through their inertia and told them to wait in Jerusalem until the promise of the Father was fulfilled.

Like many of us, the reality of what Jesus spoke only took a real effect when "something happened". How often do we hear that phrase "something happened"? Similar to our situation today they were behind doors – in lockdown so to speak – praying and waiting. We ought not waste our "lockdown" but use it to pray and draw deeper into our relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit turned the lives of the Apostles upside down – rabbits became ferrets (as someone once wrote). They received strength from on high to face the world as the Holy Spirit made his home in them. We need that same strength and power operating in us so that our lives can be a witness "that the world may believe that you sent me" (*John 17:21*). It is the love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit that enables us to be a witness.

One of the themes given by the Holy Father, Pope Francis, to Charis was the work of unity. He stated, as did Cardinal Farrell, that the Catholic Charismatic Renewal was the chosen instrument for the work of Christian unity. For this work of unity among believers, which Jesus says will convince the world of his mission, we need the fire of the Holy Spirit. It is something that is uncovered from within, not imposed from without. It is an overriding sense of family, of belonging. First to Christ and then to each other. St Paul speaks of it as the "unity of the Spirit". It is this unity that is the greatest form of evangelisation and it challenges the "bitter divisions among Christians." (*EDWJ March 2020*).

Technology has been a great blessing to us during these 'unprecedented' times of Corona Virus. Many of us have learnt new ways of connecting to each other and to be able to watch daily Mass. I, for one, do not want to live in an online world. I want to live in the real world where I can participate in praise and worship and the sacraments, where I can receive more than a "phone hug" from my grandchildren.

Will you join me in making this Pentecost a "something happened" moment in time where the power and fire of the Holy Spirit is poured into us so that we can turn this world upside down? We are preparing to livestream a prayer and praise time to celebrate the Holy Spirit. If we are allowed to gather it will be a great blessing.

Come Holy Spirit, enkindle the hearts of your faithful and light in them the fire of your love.

FEARS, HEARTS AND CLEAN HANDS

By CANON J. JOHN



Canon J. John considers how a disciple of Christ should respond to the situation regarding the virus COVID-19.



My, how the world has changed in recent days! A month ago, Corona

was a beer, hand-sanitiser was something that you only used when visiting hospitals and some of us probably thought that COVID-19 was a planet in Star Trek.

Now, strong men are running to the end of the railway carriage at the sound of a sneeze and how you place a face mask is the new fashion issue.

We hear discussions about how much pasta you need for two weeks' isolation and the best Netflix series for a fortnight's binge watch. Mediaeval theologians debated how many angels could stand on a pinhead; we discuss how many people can stand in a twenty-metre square room if everybody is expected to be a metre apart.

We watch the news with an increasing expectation of prophecies from the Book of Revelation. It's a time of serious health risks: I nearly put my back out last week turning a loo door handle with my elbow.

There are ever more creative replacements for the handshake or the affectionate hug: personally, I make the sign of the cross. It works well unless I'm carrying a cup of coffee and my bag.

These are remarkable times indeed: whoever invented bacterial wipes must be rubbing their hands.

Fear Distorts What We Are

Now, you may consider the above paragraph insensitive or politically incorrect. If so, I apologise but it is written to make a point.

Fear is out there and fear affects how we think and how we react.

Out of fear, decent men and women are now unashamedly stealing medicinal handwash. Out of fear, people who would have considered themselves dignified citizens are grappling with each other for the supermarket's last toilet roll. Out of fear, men and women are avoiding doing acts of kindness.

Fear distorts what we are, and what we are supposed to be. In the Bible, we read the phrase 'perfect love drives out fear' (1 John 4:18) but the opposite is also true: 'perfect fear drives out love'. It drives a lot of other things out as well.

Much that is wise is said at the moment about the virtues of handwashing and I am happy to endorse that wisdom.

Yet, in thinking about fear and morality, it's interesting that the one celebrated biblical case of handwashing – that of Pontius Pilate at the trial of Jesus – involved a man failing to do what was obviously the right thing because he was in the grip of fear (Matthew 27:24). There's a lesson there.

The Nature Of Our Morality

What is interesting about our current mood is that it is exposing the nature of our morality.

Morality – what we think and do about right and wrong – can be either an internal or an external thing. It can be profound – something that comes up from deep convictions inside us – or superficial because it's no more than the social conventions which we have adopted.

Yet it's times like this where the weakness of superficial morality is obvious. It is simply a veneer of behaviour: something so superficial that it disintegrates in the presence of fear. Only a morality that is deeply rooted down inside us, that is embedded in the heart, can survive the corrosion of fear.

It is that profound morality that allows men and women in times such as these to show the courage, love, service and sacrifice that are needed.

To borrow a phrase from *Psalms* 24:3–4: 'Who may ascend the mountain of the lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart.' At a time like this, clean hands are vital- but a pure heart even more so.

The Bible records that, only hours before Jesus was arrested, he promised this to his disciples: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid' (John 14:27).

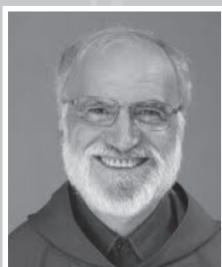
That's the peace of a pure heart that is capable of resisting the pressure of fear. It's the peace that allows us to be stable, solid and caring- whatever fears there may be. It's the peace we need now.

May you and I be granted it.

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*"The Word
of God
tells us
the first
thing we
should do
at times
like these
is to cry
out to
God."*



Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa,
OFMCA

"I have plans for your welfare and not for woe"

By FR. RANIERO CANTALAMESSA, OFMCA

Sermon for Good Friday 2020 in St. Peter's Basilica

St. Gregory the Great said that Scripture "grows with its readers", cum legentibus crescit.¹ It reveals meanings always new according to the questions people have in their hearts as they read it. And this year we read the account of the Passion with a question—rather with a cry—in our hearts that is rising up over the whole earth. We need to seek the answer that the word of God gives it.

The Gospel reading we have just listened to is the account of the objectively greatest evil committed on earth. We can look at it from two different angles: either from the front or from the back, that is, either from its causes or from its effects. If we stop at the historical causes of Christ's death, we get confused and everyone will be tempted to say, as Pilate did, "I am innocent of this man's blood" (Mt 27:24). The cross is better understood by its effects than by its causes. And what were the effects of Christ's death? Being justified through faith in him, being reconciled and at peace with God, and being filled with the hope of eternal life! (see Rom 5:1-5).

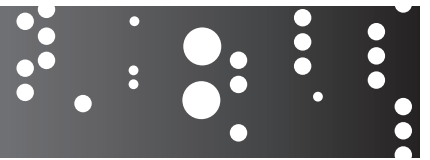
But there is one effect that the current situation can help us to grasp in particular. The cross of Christ has changed the meaning of pain and human suffering—of every kind of suffering, physical and moral. It is no longer punishment, a curse. It was redeemed at its root when the Son of God took it upon himself. What is the surest proof that the drink someone offers you is not poisoned? It is if that person drinks from the same cup before you do. This is what God has done: on the cross he drank, in front of the whole world, the cup of pain down to its dregs. This is how he showed us it is not poisoned, but that there is a pearl at the bottom of it.

And not only the pain of those who have faith, but of every human pain. He died for all human beings: "And when I am lifted up from the earth," he said, "I will draw everyone to myself" (Jn 12:32). Everyone, not just some! St. John Paul II wrote from his hospital bed after his attempted assassination, "To suffer means to become particularly susceptible, particularly open to the working of the salvific powers of God, offered to humanity in Christ"². Thanks to the cross of Christ, suffering has also become in its own way a kind of "universal sacrament of salvation" for the human race.

What light does all of this shed on the dramatic situation that humanity is going through now? Here too we need to look at the effects more than at the causes—not just the negative ones we hear about every day in heart-wrenching reports but also the positive ones that only a more careful observation can help us grasp.

The pandemic of Coronavirus has abruptly roused us from the greatest danger individuals and humanity have always been susceptible to: the delusion of omnipotence. A Jewish rabbi has written that we have the opportunity to celebrate a very special paschal exodus this year, that "from the exile of consciousness"³. It took merely the smallest and most formless element of nature, a virus, to remind us that we are mortal, that military power and technology are not sufficient to save us. As a psalm in the Bible says, "In his prime, man does not understand. / He is like the beasts—they perish" (Ps 49:21). How true that is!

While he was painting frescoes in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, the artist James Thornhill became so excited at a certain point about his fresco that he stepped back to



see it better and was unaware he was about to fall over the edge of the scaffolding. A horrified assistant understood that crying out to him would have only hastened the disaster. Without thinking twice, he dipped a brush in paint and hurled it at the middle of the fresco. The master, appalled, sprang forward. His work was damaged, but he was saved.

God does this with us sometimes: he disrupts our projects and our calm to save us from the abyss we don't see. But we need to be careful not to be deceived. God is not the one who hurled the brush at the sparkling fresco of our technological society. God is our ally, not the ally of the virus! He himself says in the Bible, "I have... plans for your welfare and not for woe" (*Jer 29:11*). The one who cried one day for Lazarus' death cries today for the scourge that has fallen on humanity. Yes, God "suffers", like every father and every mother. When we will find out this one day, we will be ashamed of all the accusations we made against him in life. God participates in our pain to overcome it. "Being supremely good - wrote St. Augustine - God would not allow any evil in his works, unless in his omnipotence and goodness, he is able to bring forth good out of evil."⁴

Did God the Father possibly desire the death of his Son in order to draw good out of it? No, he simply permitted human freedom to take its course, making it serve, however, his own purposes and not those of human beings. This is also the case for natural disasters like earthquakes and plagues. He does not bring them about. He has given nature a kind of freedom as well, qualitatively different of course than that of human beings, but still a form of freedom—freedom to evolve according to its own laws of development. He did not create a world as a programmed clock whose least little movement could be anticipated. It is what some call "chance" but the Bible calls instead "the wisdom of God."

The other positive fruit of the present health crisis is the feeling of solidarity. When, in the memory of humanity, have the people of all nations ever felt themselves so united, so equal, so less in conflict than at this moment of pain? Never so much as now have we experienced the truth of the words of one of our great poets: "Peace, you peoples! Too deep is the mystery of the prostrate earth."⁵ We have forgotten about building walls. The virus knows no borders. In an instant it has broken down all the barriers and distinctions of race, nation, religion, wealth, and power. We should not revert to that prior time when this moment has passed. As the Holy Father has exhorted us, we should not waste this opportunity. Let us not allow so much pain, so many deaths, and so much heroic engagement on the part of health workers to have been in vain. Returning to the way things were is the "recession" we should fear the most.

*They shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
One nation shall not raise the sword against another,
nor shall they train for war again. (Is 2:4)*

This is the moment to put into practice something of the prophecy of Isaiah whose fulfillment humanity has long been waiting for. Let us say "Enough!" to the tragic race toward arms. Say it with all your might, you young people, because it is above all your destiny that is at stake. Let us devote the unlimited resources committed to weapons to the goals that we now realize are most necessary and urgent: health, hygiene, food, the fight against poverty, stewardship of creation. Let us leave to the next generation a world poorer in goods and money, if need be, but richer in its humanity.

The word of God tells us the first thing we should do at times like these is to cry out to God. He himself is the one who puts on people's lips the words to cry out to him, at times harsh words of lament and almost of accusation: "Awake! Why do you sleep, O Lord? / Rise up! Do not reject us forever!... Rise up, help us! / Redeem us in your mercy" (*Ps 44, 24, 27*). "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (*Mk 4:38*).

Does God perhaps like to be petitioned so that he can grant his benefits? Can our prayer perhaps make God change his plans? No, but there are things that God has decided to grant us as the fruit both of his grace and of our prayer, almost as though sharing with his creatures the credit for the benefit received.⁶ God is the one who prompts us to do it: "Seek and you will find," Jesus said; "knock and the door will be opened to you" (*Mt 7:7*).

When the Israelites were bitten by poisonous serpents in the desert, God commanded Moses to lift up a serpent of bronze on a pole, and whoever looked at it would not die. Jesus appropriated this symbol to himself when he told Nicodemus, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (*Jn 3:14-15*). We too at this moment have been bitten by an invisible, poisonous "serpent." Let us gaze upon the one who was "lifted up" for us on the cross. Let us adore him on behalf of ourselves and of the whole human race. The one who looks on him with faith does not die. And if that person dies, it will be to enter eternal life.

"After three days I will rise", Jesus had foretold (*cf. Mt 9:31*). We too, after these days that we hope will be short, shall rise and come out of the tombs of our homes. Not however to return to the former life like Lazarus, but to a new life, like Jesus. A more fraternal, more human, more Christian life!

¹ *Moralia in Job*, XX, 1.

² John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris* [On the Meaning of Human Suffering], n.23.

³ <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/coronavirus-a-spiritual-message-from-brooklyn> (Yaakov Yitzhak Biderman).

⁴ See St. Augustine, *Enchiridion* 11, 3; PL 40, 236.

⁵ Giovanni Pascoli, "I due fanciulli" ["The Two Children"].

⁶ See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-IIae, q. 83, a. 2.



May the Peace of the Risen Jesus be with everyone in the Mt. Alexander Shire and indeed the whole of Australia and the world. What a time we are living in. You are not alone. God is very close to us and He is weeping with us for all his people. This is a time for the whole world to turn to God and plead for His mercy and protection from this dreaded virus. There is so much fear and distress and worry about the effect of the Coronavirus with people being infected with this terrible virus and those who have died here and overseas, people losing their jobs and livelihood. Even the Churches everywhere have been closed down when we need God the most to help us through this terrible evil of our time.

I have been praying every day for you all, for every family in the Mt. Alexander Shire – while we are all isolated in our homes. We have been stripped of every possible distraction and have the opportunity to connect deeper with our own families at home and connect with our neighbours to help each other especially at this time. We all need to turn to God especially at this time of uncertainty about what is happening and the future we face together.

The word of God in the Bible can help us at this time and always asking for God's protection from this evil of our time. *Psalms 91* is a very powerful Psalm: "You need not fear the terrors of night, the arrow that flies in the daytime, the plague that stalks in the dark, the scourge that wreaks havoc in broad daylight... No disaster can overtake you, no plague come near your tent: He will put you in his angels' charge to guard you wherever you go. I rescue all who cling to me, I protect whoever knows my name, I answer everyone who invokes me, I am with them when they are in trouble; I bring them safety and honour. I give them life, long and full, and show them how I can save."

I invite everyone in the whole world to join together and pray for everyone especially those affected by the virus and those who died in Australia and overseas. For all our nurses and doctors risking their lives for others. Please join me on YouTube since we can't gather in our Churches. Please tune in under Wahid Riad for live streaming on Sundays at 10.30am Mass. God has provided me with a little Miracle recently to be able to celebrate the Holy Week Ceremonies on YouTube and reach far and wide with the

Joy of the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. We know that everything works together for the good for those who love God: *Romans 8:28*!!

May God bless you all and give you his peace and joy at this challenging time and I wish you all a very Blessed Easter Season in the embrace of the Risen Lord Jesus – Shalom to you all. "My peace I give you all" – Jesus.

Reflection by a real prisoner

This year's Meditations for The Stations of the Cross published by the Vatican were prepared by prisoners from the Penitentiary in Padua, Italy. One in particular was very moving.

"It was the first time I fell, but for me it was death: I took someone's life. It only takes a day to pass from a blameless life to committing an act which encompasses the violation of all the commandments. I feel like a modern version of that thief who implored Christ with the words "Remember me!" I imagine him less a penitent than someone conscious of being on the wrong path. From my childhood I remember the cold and hostile environment: I felt like a stranger to everyone and I sought revenge at all costs.

I hadn't realised that evil was slowly growing inside of me. Until, one evening, my own hour of darkness struck: in a second, like an avalanche, the memories of all the injustices I had suffered in life exploded. Anger killed my kindness and I committed an evil immensely greater than I had received. Then in prison the ill-treatment by others led me to self-hatred: I was close to ending it all, I had reached the limit. I had also ruined my family. Because of me they lost their name and respectability. They had become merely the family of a murderer. I make no excuses and seek no reductions. I will serve my sentence to the end because in prison I have found people who have given me back the faith I had lost.

My first fall was failing to realise that goodness exists in this world. My second, the murder, was really the consequence, for I was already dead inside."

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"DO NOT BE AFRAID, I AM WITH YOU"

By CHRISTINE GRECH



How often I have read these words of scripture. To be honest these words have not always been of much consolation to me. In fact, from a very young age, fear has often been my companion. Fear has been used to control me and has affected my physical and mental health in negative ways. When Jesus said "do not be afraid" in the past, I have genuinely tried to be obedient but have fallen short.

One day in desperation I cried out to God, 'I don't know how to, "not be afraid." Help me! You see I come from a family who believed in God but remained fearful. What I have discovered is that you can believe in a loving God but not really know him intimately as loving you and caring for you. Now my conversion experience should have negated that belief system as I had a life changing personal experience of God's love. But applying that truth in my life was very difficult for me.

So God's answer to my question was very practical. He told me to question every fear that assails me in the same way I had always questioned anyone who showed me love. Is this real? What is their motivation? The door must remain closed till I trust that they speak truth. This speaks very much of the barriers that I set up through traumatic events in my life. On the other hand I was to open the door to love in the same way I had allowed fear to walk in without a second thought. This made sense to me and made me realise just how well God knows me and how He has all the answers.

Last August my husband needed an operation. It was delayed for three months. We were moving house for the first time in 45 years at the same time. I had not even unpacked completely when it became evident that we could not stay in our new apartment, which we had waited 3 years to be completed. He eventually had his operation but after 3 weeks he was readmitted with complications. His mental state deteriorated. We were in limbo financially. If it could go wrong, it did.

All the while I was talking to God, proclaiming His word and trusting that He would show up at some stage. Fear was trying to get a foothold but I remembered what God had taught me. Resist fear. So I did. I reminded myself that fear is False Evidence Appearing Real. During this time I would awaken to His voice in my heart saying, "*Don't be afraid. I am with you.*"

I decided that I needed to listen to His voice and obediently not be afraid. Interestingly, not being afraid had become a decision I was able to make. "I am with you", also impacted me in a new way. I became aware that the God who created the universe was actually on my case. 'I am with you', takes on real meaning when you stop fear from taking over. I waited on God to lead me out of the situation I found myself in and to support me as I cared for my husband with the help of family. By this time my husband needed full time care. I had to let go of my role as co-ordinator, healing minister and prophetic intercessor.

I tried to continue at first but found I could only get out of the house once a week. I also let go of the dream of moving into our new apartment. I couldn't understand why God had allowed all this to happen but I hung onto His word.

Romans 8:28. "All things work together for good for those who put their trust in God". I kept reminding God that I trusted Him and looked for the good that His word promised.

My husband was still in a dark place but was showing improvement when COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. As both my husband and I were deemed vulnerable to this virus I made the decision to leave my daughter's home and move to the country. Every day I tell God that He is my stronghold, my fortress, My God in whom I trust. *Psalms 91* consoles me. In this trying time I am not afraid. I have wept quite a bit as I grieve what I have lost. I am not overly concerned about how I'm going to pay my bills because I have already seen how God moved in ways that I would never have envisaged to meet my needs. If He did it once He will do it again.

We are all living in challenging times but if we keep our eyes on Jesus, which we must, then He will lead us in the way we need to go because He is with us. There is a purpose and a reason for all that we are enduring.

Lord, let your kingdom come in these troubled times. May your people seek your face and your will, because you have plans to prosper us and not harm us, plans to give us hope and a future (*Jeremiah 29:11*). Let us hear and obey the word of God when he says to us "I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the Lord your God and I will be there to help you wherever you go" (*Joshua 1:9*). I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord (*Psalms 27:13-14*).

Please pray:

- That God will grace our scientists with the ability to find a vaccine for the Corona Virus
- For the souls of all who have died from this virus, especially for those who have died alone and for their families
- That the joy of Easter will overflow from us as we live through the current restrictions
- That the Lord will provide a new home for Catholic Charismatic Renewal
- For unity among all Christians.

Thank you loving Father that the Son of righteous will rise with healing in his wings.

Amen.

THE HIDDEN AND UNHIDDEN CASUALTIES (AND BLESSINGS) OF THIS WAR



By DINA MANANQUIL-DELFINO

"You touched my coffee!", screamed one customer at a café to a young barista, who burst into tears and helplessly tried to offer a new cup to the angry woman. We sensed they were not from our area and those who are loyal to the café rallied around the young girl in her defence. "If you are so worried about contamination, you should not even go out!" shouted one patron. "Stay home!" another butted in. As a pastoral worker, mine was more a word of comfort for the girl. I told her, as she sobbed making my cuppa, the current environment made everyone tense and not to take it personally and not to let the incident ruin her day. It was easier said than done, for a few minutes later, inside Woolworths, as I accidentally took a few steps over the 1.5 metres sign, an elderly gentleman looked at me with disgust and said: "Stay in your spot!" then poked me on the arm with annoyance. Then one afternoon, while walking with my grand-daughter for a much-needed exercise, a mother of three screamed at her while passing by, shouting "1.5 metres!" and huffed away. Whew!!!

These are just some incidents in what seemed to be the hidden casualties from this COVID-19 pandemic. We are all so full of fear and anxiety that we seem to have lost the love, joy and graciousness of life. Hardly anyone smiles now as we walk past them. Heads are bowed, eyes alarmingly vigilant but spaced out, the body language indicates "stay away from me". This is fully understandable as the enemy seems so invisible that we do not know who will fall by its sword. Thousands of lives are being lost and livelihood affected and social distancing and self-isolation are much -needed shield against this new and unknown virus.

We all have been affected by it. I do not know of anyone who is rejoicing right now because of this great affliction. The sadness over the loss of loved ones including the dedicated heroes of our front-line health workers is overwhelming and unbelievable. My heart breaks for them and I could only pray for their souls and comfort for their families. Government and health authorities are scratching their heads and doing everything they can to enforce what they know to be the best measures to control and prevent it. Many of them consider it as going to war. And there are indeed casualties. Every nation is at its knees.

But what has been its impact on me personally? When the lockdown and the shutdown were imposed, I looked at the projects I was supposed to work on, complete, deliver or move forward with. They seemed irrelevant at present, shelved into lowest priority. I decided to put them away and store them at the garage, knowing there is no way that I would be able to work on them this year. My perspective has quickly shifted from future to just moment by moment living, and nothing as important as health and safety. I needed to visit my GP for a medical issue. I prayed so hard to the Lord to spare me, and not send me to hospital as I dreaded the atmosphere there at present.

I am forced to be reflective more, examine parts of my life that I need to change and repent from (there are many I know), pray on my knees daily to ask the Lord to help us. *Psalm 91*, my favourite has become an hourly claim for protection for everyone, with my cry of: "*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.*"

I always get excited about future projects, but with COVID-19, the future is a blur at present. The unknown has become more of a reality. But because I am used to being busy, I need to find some activities that would help me cope. I have learned to cook for the family more. My daughter and son-in-law work from home, so I have taken on substantial roles in the kitchen. Family life has become a core presence. The first few weeks of staying at home 24/7 became trying but the days became better, with family closeness and solidarity given paramount importance and appreciation. My grand-daughter, aged 11, has been given the special task of drying dishes as her contribution to family duties. Such things are blessings in disguise.

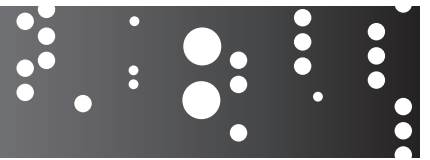
The daily laundry has become a consolation, its gentle whirring a sound of normality. Cleaning cupboards and sorting the house, having unrushed time to complete, have given me a purpose. Sleeping-in became an escape at first, but then I also realised how exhausted my body had been over the years and I welcome the rest and the slowing down. My shower in the morning has moved to an afternoon ritual as I rush to the shops for our essentials in the morning while stock is still available. Simplicity has become a norm – no make-up, no perfume, just my unmade self.

Little miracles happen. When I was desperate for toilet paper, hand wipes and disinfectant sprays and none was found at the shelves, some were left in an abandoned trolley!

Reports from some parts of the world reveal that nature is taking a recuperative rest and some forms of healing over our skies, oceans, forests are being seen. Our churches are closed and what a time – during Lent and Easter, and I wonder what message the Lord is revealing to us. And where is God in all of this – many people ask. Spiritual messages abound right now. Most of them encouraging and affirming that God is not the source of this, as He knows no evil. But He is travelling with us in this painful journey, just like in the agony of His Son, His torture and death. Indeed, we are laboured at present, in every way, but we have hope in the Risen Christ. As many encouragers proclaim, we will get through the other side.

As a prayer group that has been meeting weekly for the last 22 years, the spiritual lockdown did not discourage us. Led by the Holy Spirit, we now meet by phone conference every Friday and conduct our prayer meeting and spiritual fellowship, gathering prophetic messages and exhortations to see us through these difficult times.

Many have now opened their windows using technology, that even our churches have embraced. The blessing from this is that many people, who otherwise do not understand,



and who tune in to church gatherings, teachings and services have paved the way to a deeper and inner recollection, with greater understanding and appreciation of faith matters. Never again will I take granted, for example, the gift of the Eucharist. This time seems to be the most profound fasting I have ever experienced.

Recently, I got a call from a friend who is battling serious illness every day - any time, any day she can die due to heart and kidney problems. She just came out of hospital after another bout of complications. She tells me her life is on a one day at a time outlook. I comforted her that everyone's is.

COVID-19 is teaching us an important lesson – the value of each moment, of the gratitude we need to give to God when we wake up and get through our day, of the love needed to be spoken and acted upon to let people know we care - right now, right here – not tomorrow.

And have we ever said a genuine thank you to someone who served us today?

"New every morning is your love, great God of light, and all day long you are working for good in the world. Stir up in us desire to serve you, to live peacefully with our neighbors and all your creation, and to devote each day to your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ." Amen. (A Liturgy for Morning Prayer, Upper Room Worship book)

MAKING LEMONADE

By JOSH ANGRISANO



Remember all those plans you had for this year? All the goals you set for yourself? Vacations you envisioned going on with loved ones, career milestones you were committed to achieve, health goals you were striving to make?... I hate to be a typical millennial but "Lol". This is the epitome of losing control. Institutions that we thought were as solid as the ground beneath us that controlled how we spent the time in our day are also fallen victim to this crisis. For a moment (most likely a very brief one), the wheel has stopped spinning.

So, what do we do now? Well, a better question is, "what do we not do?"... It's much easier to answer;

We don't fill ourselves with anxious and fearful thoughts all day. We don't become self absorbed and hoard our resources (including time) from our neighbors. We don't consume our minds with negative and frightening content that's constantly blaring from the tv, more than we reflect on the Word of God.

Before I make this next point I want to make clear that I am not underestimating the severity of this situation. Loved ones are dying, many people will walk away from this pandemic without a way to put food on the table for their families. My heart, my prayers, and my offerings go out to all those impacted on a seriously painful level.

That being said, as Christians, Joy and Hope is all we have. If we stop being joyful and stop hoping for a better tomorrow, how will the World know we are Christians? Are we going to come out of this season more divided as a Church and a weaker personal Spiritual life? Or are we going to use this time to set aside all Worldly idols and distractions (God did most of the work for you in that regard) and align our hearts even more with Jesus? I believe God wants to use this time to answer massive prayers that have been on your heart for years, and change the course of your life into the direction you two have constantly spoken about.

I believe God wants to use this time to take out certain sins and ways of thinking that have been holding you back for far too long, you have just been too busy to address them.

As the saying goes "when life hands you lemons, make lemonade". God is so prolific in doing this with his Children throughout history. I'm sure the enemy is thinking "We've done it! We have closed the Church's down and isolated it's believers"... But do you not see what is happening? The Church building has closed, but now there are millions of Churches everywhere inside of every believer's home! Every Sunday people are gathering around you (the Church) and participating in the celebration of the Mass, or worshipping together, or listening to talks. The Body of Christ is communicating more than ever via online. And since no one's got anything better to do... PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY LISTENING.

Have faith, do not worry yourselves with how life will look 6 months from now, or even 6 weeks from now. Seek God in the present. Let the Holy Spirit speak vision and life once again into you. Praying for you always.

I use the vehicle of Hip Hop to share my faith and testimony - I try to inspire others to perfect their passions and do the same!

Editor's comment: Josh Angrisano is the Co-ordinator of Young Adults for CCR.

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



Like a kid at Christmas, Wally wanted ALL the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. **1 Cor 12:8-10**

HOW I COULD PARTICIPATE IN THE NEW THING?



By BAN WEE

Over the last few years I have been hearing prophecies that God will do a New Thing for the Renewal in Australia – I interpreted this as a new revival is coming soon. It seems that we are still waiting. As far as I can remember we have been waiting in our pews for at least three decades in Melbourne for the rush of people wanting to experience the touch of God.

According to an evangelist on a TV broadcast, revival is happening all over the world now – we just don't see it happening as we are not in the market place to see it; just stuck in the pews. This reminds me of *Lk 17:20-21* where Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed but the Kingdom of God is among us.

This COVID-19 pandemic will most likely turn many people back to God seeking his protection. I believe this is the start of the fulfilment of the prophecy for the New Thing – God's calling to people to turn to him for miraculous solutions and not to rely on human wisdom.

Be a Witness

Prophecies will only come true if we act on them, or at least believe in faith they will happen but we must keep reminding ourselves of his promises. I expect and believe there must be people outside the church reaching out to God blindly or trying to draw closer to God. As a Christian, I should encounter these people and bear witness to this real and living God because lay Christians through Baptism and Confirmation, have the right and duty to ensure people can hear the Gospel and know Christ (*cf CCC 900*). This witness should be "a transmission of faith in words and deeds" (*CCC 2472*). This suggests that if I want to witness to a prophecy I must not only tell others but also to show my belief in deeds.

Acting out in faith (ie. deeds) means I must stop waiting and just get out of the pews and look for the lost sheep in the market place... in the world at large. From evangelisation courses that I have attended, I have learned that I have to go to shopping centres and streets to talk with people. How do I start the conversation as almost everyone has and will ignore me? I do not have the gift of the gab and people may have difficulties in understanding me (I have been constantly reminded I have a terrible accent.) How can I get people in the street interested in what I am saying?

It seems to be all too difficult. I don't think I really have an excuse to just sit in the pews because *CCC 905* says "Lay people also fulfil their prophetic mission by evangelization, that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." However I believe God did call me to be involved in the Renewal and to trust in him always as I step out in faith. I wanted to be sure I am following Jesus and not my thoughts. What better way than to read the bible and let the word of God mould me as I find out how Jesus wants me to evangelize.

Being a Disciple

Before I could figure out what Christ would actually teach a Christian how to evangelize, I have to find out what is the word used in the Gospels for a Christian. In *Acts 11:26* we are told that "it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians.'" Hence a Christian today would be called a disciple in the Gospel. A disciple literally means a pupil in Greek but what Christ demands is more than that so using the equivalent in Aramaic, it should mean an apprentice and it is more what Jesus expects of us. Hence disciples are apprentices copying Jesus as presented in the Bible.

Jesus expects his disciples to do many things like putting him above everything (*Lk 14:26 and Lk 14:33*), carrying our own cross (*Lk 14:27*), acting on his word & teachings as well as loving others (*Jn 8:31, 13:34-35*). Jesus calls all of us to follow him as he is the way – the way to calvary.

CCC 2475 refers to *Eph 4:24* in saying Christ's disciples have "put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." This is what I have to strive for to be the new man, not only in spirit but in soul and body. In baptism the I have been given a new spirit and during confirmation I receive the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit to build up the body of Christ. These seven gifts are traits of Christ that should transform me to be like Christ. Actually I never felt any change until I experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit and spent a lot of time praying in tongues. This is only the beginning of my discipleship journey.

Transformation

I need to be totally transformed (spirit, soul and body) to evangelize effectively as called in the great commission (*Mat 28:18-20 and Mk 16:15-18*). John Wimber said that signs and wonders is the most effective tool in evangelization. Healing does attract people. Instead of proclaiming the Gospel first like Billy Graham, I intend to pray first for the needs of people moved by the New Thing that God promised. If their needs are met their ears will be open to my witness.

Important notice

Due of the current circumstances,
the Raffle has been extended
until January 2021.

If you have tickets, please hold onto to
them until the circumstances improve
for your selling of them.

The Pilgrimage has been postponed
until May 2021.

A WORD... FROM MIRIAM

By MIRIAM MARKIS



In these uncertain times I would hazard a guess that many are wondering what is around the corner that might surprise us next. A topic that is often discussed in the media during these times of enforced isolation and distancing in place due to the COVID-19 has been about mental health and the likelihood of long-term effects on young and old alike. Many are struggling.

During times of quiet and reflection I have sometimes thought of prisoners in their cells and their enforced isolation. How do they cope? Whether their sentences be short or long, they survive as best they can. We also have refugees stuck in detention for months and even years. By contrast, the media reports that many of those in our society who are in enforced detention for 14 days or so in ships, hotels or their own homes, have reported feeling like they are in prison, albeit not behind steel bars.

In all the above cases suffering is endured, and in these days, suffering appears to be affecting all of mankind in one way or another, be they rich or poor, young or old. No-one is exempt. What is our response in the face of suffering? I recall recently reading a short poem written by St Teresa of Avila that is known as "Teresa's Bookmark":

*Let nothing disturb you.
Let nothing upset you.
Everything changes.
God alone is unchanging.
With patience all things are possible.
Whoever has God lacks nothing.
God alone is enough.*

It was found in Teresa's prayer book after her death. She certainly suffered during her life and perhaps the poem was penned from her own experience and was kept in her prayer book as a constant reminder so that she would look beyond the present moment, whether suffering or not, to help her keep her eyes on God and His Divine Will.

If you and I can hold onto these words in Teresa's poem, then we too can try and stay focused on God and His plans for you and I and indeed for the whole world. *Psalms 91:9-10*: 'If you make the Most High your dwelling, even the Lord, who is my refuge, then no harm will befall

you, no disaster come near your tent.' This is a promise of the Lord.

I try and envisage the hands of Christ holding all things together. The song "He's got the whole World in His hands" portrays this beautifully. *Isaiah 49:6* 'Behold, I have engraved you on the palm on my hands,' May your hearts and minds remain focused on God and may the good Lord bless you and keep you; may He make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you; may He reveal His countenance to you and grant you His peace (*Numbers 6: 24-26*).



Dear friends of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal from all over the world,

You all know that we are experiencing an unprecedented crisis in our world today with the coronavirus epidemic. The situation is so serious that in some countries, such as Korea or Italy, religious gatherings, including masses, can no longer take place. Many of you are certainly already carrying all this in your prayers, but we would like to widen the circle of prayer to all the members of the Renewal throughout the world. Let us all together raise our prayer to heaven!

Jesus healed the sick by the power of the Holy Spirit. We propose that we turn to this same Holy Spirit to ask for the end of the epidemic, the healing of the sick and the salvation of the souls of those who die from it.

For this, we propose that you pray every day until the end of the epidemic, the sequence of Pentecost in which the Church prays for the healing of the sick, followed by three Hail Marys. Let us ask with faith that the Holy Spirit may descend upon our wounded world and manifest the Father's tenderness for those who suffer. Let us ask Mary to spread her maternal mantle of protection over all men.

Thank you to all those who will join us in this campaign of intercession.

In union of prayer

Jean-Luc Moens
Moderator of CHARIS

Sequence to the Holy Spirit

*Come, Holy Spirit, send forth the heavenly radiance of your light.
Come, father of the poor, come, giver of gifts, come, light of the heart.
Greatest comforter, sweet guest of the soul, sweet consolation.
In labour, rest, in heat, temperance, in tears, solace.
O most blessed light fill the inmost heart of your faithful.
Without your grace, there is nothing in us, nothing that is not harmful.
Cleanse that which is unclean, water that which is dry, heal that which is wounded.
Bend that which is inflexible, fire that which is chilled, correct what goes astray.
Give to your faithful, those who trust in you, the sevenfold gifts.
Grant the reward of virtue, grant the deliverance of salvation, grant eternal joy.*

Amen



MARK YOUR DIARIES...

Renewal Day

An opportunity for fellowship with others and growth through teachings.

Dates for 2020: Saturdays 16 May, 15 August and 21 November.

Our Lady Help of Christians Hall, 49 Nicholson Street, East Brunswick.

NO PARKING IN SCHOOL GROUNDS. Public transport: train to Parliament station, then tram no.96 along Nicholson St to stop no.22.

Ladies Day

2 July 2020

Save the date. Ladies Day is an opportunity to grow as women of God, strong in trust and faith.

More details later.

Can't make it to a Healing Prayer Centre during 2020?

You are invited to...

**ALL PAUSED UNTIL COVID-19
RESTRICTIONS ARE LIFTED**

	6.00pm Mass, followed by Prayer Ministry	St Marks, Fawkner
First Monday	7.00pm Praise, 7.30pm Mass	St Joseph's, Springvale
First Friday	8.00pm	St Anthony's Glenhuntly, Cnr Neerim Road & Grange Road, Glenhuntly
	8.15pm	St Peter's, Clayton
Third Wednesday	7.30pm	St Mary's, Castlemaine
Third Thursday	7.30pm	St Thomas the Apostle, 251 Diamond Creek Rd, Greensborough North
Third Friday	7.00pm	707 Holy Cross Parish, Caulfield South. Mass, Adoration and Devotions to the Holy Cross
Third Sunday	5.30pm	St Francis Xavier, Frankston
	5.30pm Praise, 6.00pm Mass	Good Samaritan Chapel, 1-29 Southern Cross Drive, Roxburgh Park
Fourth Tuesday	10.00am	St Joseph's, Chelsea
St Peter's, East Bentleigh - Healing Mass: Monday 23 November at 8pm. Celebrant will be Fr. Wahid		