

Encouragement Encouragement



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'Mass' Media

THE HOST APOSTOLATE

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During this time of the global pandemic there have been many things to ponder and pray about. There have been many deaths and people are grieving loved ones that in some cases, they have not even been allowed to bury. There has been the loss of contact with family and friends and loneliness and isolation felt by all. People are fearful of the loss of work and income. In other places there is increased hunger and poverty. Emotionally, physically and practically people are suffering. Many are fearful of leaving their homes or venturing out and some fearful of the future. There is great anxiety on many levels. But perhaps for many the greatest loss is that of community and especially the church community and more especially being able to attend and pray in church. Although churches in many places are now open there are still restrictions and this has varied enormously from place to place and country to country leaving people more frustrated.

One of the advantages of our times is that it is possible to find out a little about different situations. There are so many points of access to news and media. While this is of benefit it has the disadvantage of comparison and observation leading to more questions. Many people felt bereft at such a difficult time, of praying together or even, if out of habit, gathering together. Now clearly prayer can continue outside of the context of 'home and palace' churches or buildings. Prayer is a lifting up of the mind and heart to God and perhaps some, for the first time realised that prayer was indeed possible and very helpful. Did Jesus Himself not tell us to go into our own room and shutting the door pray in private. Did He not also say that where two or three are gathered in His name He is in their midst. Some families discovered the importance of Family prayer. I was very moved by an incident at the start of the Pandemic when a senior doctor called his staff and they stood in prayer before going on duty. He realised that only prayer would keep them going. Those who did not believe stood respectfully by too.

The closure of churches has varied as have the opening up and lifting of restrictions. Some places and countries lifted restriction sooner than others. While this has been difficult for believers there has been one major advantage and that is that people have had to search the Internet for where there were services available. Sometimes this has resulted in new experiences and a wide range of teaching. Indeed it has made some aware of the universality of the Body of Christ. At first it was a balm for sickened spirits but then came other issues. Church leaders have had to learn how to 'live stream' and some could not or were unable to do so. Secondly, Internet access is variable in stability and sometimes worship was truncated by an internet blip. However in general watching a service or Mass became the norm whether daily or weekly. This also applied to various films on spiritual matters, biographies or documentaries, if only, maybe, to fill time while at home. Sacred Music came into the fore too. This was a bonus and helped enormously.

Yet it was not easy at all times to pray during a screened Mass. The transition from watching for pleasure, the usual reason for viewing on whatever medium, or for information, made the transition quite difficult. We were certainly encouraged to do so, failing actual attendance, but many found it somehow unreal. Some said that they were distracted by all the other things that were going on certainly for a busy mother or father this would be so. Some found that telephones still rang, and doorbell went, and their ability to actually pray proved difficult. I personally found that it was essential to find a Mass in *one place* that I could take part in on a daily basis. Consistency was important. While changing the pattern during Holy Week to be united to the universality of the Church, especially moving at this time as one body with the Chief Shepherd, in general I stuck with one source. That may be because it was available three times a day but mostly because of the reverence and dutifulness of the four priests there.

Man should tremble, the world should quake, all Heaven should be deeply moved when the Son of God appears on the altar in the hands of the priest." St. Francis of Assisi

In 'Walsingham' I found my niche, the Mother had drawn me in. But I still found it difficult. At first there was a degree of frustration too, and maybe a little resentment and anger not to mention deep sadness, that there were no churches open at this time. I knew that I had to let go of that and try to pray and take part as best I could. As I live alone, it is a little easier in this regard.

Slowly but surely I found it became easier and I started to look forward to that daily Mass. I will never say that it was easy, far from it. I also learnt that following the 'readings' on paper helped me greatly. I also found that doing the responses out loud helped me, too. Most of all I found that the homilies, either long or short gave me food for thought. It is amazing how much help we can get if we keep going and not give up. Spiritual Communion had to suffice of course, but by that point in the Mass I had already welcomed Jesus. In exchanges with many people, also struggling, the story was the same, especially the sermons, which were varied and interesting. Being a part of the service required conscientious effort and of course, it cannot be the same as participating in person. But I would have to say that essentially being present, took/takes part as an *act of will*. In all things we have choices and we can walk away and say... it is too difficult, or put the blame on others, or try our best to use all the opportunities that are being offered

Clearly this is a time of trial for all of us. The future has no certainties and indeed may yet make many more demands on us spiritually and socially. We are blessed at least, not to have to deal with the poverty and hunger experienced by many, though hard times are coming.

It has also been made clear to me that presence matters. We are 'animals' that congregate. We look for contact with others. We like to see each other and touch one another, even with a smile or handshake. All these things have been difficult and we yearn for that contact. It struck me very forcibly that this is why the Incarnation of Jesus had to take place not just for our Redemption but so that we could learn to love one another as belonging to one body and a shared humanity. God had revealed Himself before that clearly in the Old Testament but He knew that showing Himself as real, in the flesh would be both

tangible and memorable. He walked, slept, ate and rejoiced. The Father knew that actual presence, tangible and real would bring people to Jesus.

Hopefully we will not have to endure another period when our churches are locked. But should that happen we can learn from past experience that The Lord does not abandon us and provides us with means to sustain us. It requires a leap of faith to 'be present' in those times and to encompass the whole world in our prayer but we can be blessed and brought into His Presence. Let us pray with all those who experience hardship at those times and for our Priests who make Mass available to us in any way that is possible.

Halina Holman

Pope Francis

"Today is a day of memory that takes us back to our roots. It is also a day of hope. It reminds us of what we can expect: the hope of encountering the love of the Father. Memory, hope, and lights help us along the road of life. There is a path we need to follow, and we cannot take the wrong path. The Beatitudes, which Jesus taught us, show us the right road to take. To be pure in heart, poor in Spirit – these are the lights that help us not to take the wrong road, prayer that we may never lose our memories as a family, a people. May we never lose hope, always contemplating the horizon, always looking ahead. May God grant us the grace to recognize the lights that accompany us to where He awaits us with so much love.

Feast of All Souls, Rome Cemetery 2nd Nov 2018



Feast Days in November

1st All Saints' 31st Sun.

2nd All Souls' Day

3rd St. Martin de Porres, 4th St. Charles Borromeo

8th Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

9th Dedication of The Lateran Basilica

10th St. Pope Leo the Great

11th St. Martin of Tours. **Armistice Day**, 12th St. Josaphat

15th Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

16th St. Margaret of Scotland

17th St. Hilda, St. Elizabeth of Hungary

18th Dedication of the Basilica of Ss. Peter & Paul

21st Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

22nd Our Lord Jesus Christ the King 34th Sun.

24th Ss. Andrew Dung-Lac & Companions

27th St. Catherine Labouré

29th First Sunday of Advent Year B

30th St. Andrew, Apostle