



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

OF PENANCE & CHRISTIAN CHARITY SACRED HEART PROVINCE

March 22, 2020

Dear Sisters, Associates, and Friends,

What is your temperature? This is the question we are asking of all our Marian Residence sisters and staff daily? A temperature of 100 or more is one of the most indicative signs of the coronavirus. There are lists and lists of symptoms, but this is one I encourage everyone receiving this letter to be aware of each day.

Of course, we are not just physical beings but also emotional and spiritual ones. At this time, there is great awareness of loss and grieving. There is the experience of vulnerability and human frailty, that accompanies loss. There is the loss of normal human contacts . . . work, conferences, social gatherings—a movie, a meal out, window shopping, golfing . . . instead staying home for the sake of all—decreasing our social arena extremely. Many people are experiencing lost income with all the closures. There are limited supplies of many items at the grocery store (TP being a new favorite topic of conversation). And there is the loss of life of many. Very real loss . . .

At the same time our spiritual spheres have been diminished by no masses, no prayer gatherings in person, a feeling of solitude and/or loneliness. All of this takes a toll. We are grieving sadness and tears, anger, denial, acceptance in fits and starts, and recycling back through all of these emotions over and over. It is a time for gentleness with us and others as we embrace this process. We hold all in prayer for the grace each needs currently, with trust in God's goodness, and hope in all the good that is possible.

A certainty as we are surrounded by this "surreal" event is being in solidarity with our families, neighbors, our nation and the world in something that effects all of us in a way that nothing else in recent memory has. This solidarity is real—not respective of wealth, borders, or age (the aged most vulnerable, but everyone can be a carrier). Those who feel most immune—such as, the teenager who says he will just be with a friend and then they decide to go to 24-hour fitness, the college students crowding the Florida beaches--are at great risk of carrying the virus to the more vulnerable population. We continue to pray for our health care providers on the forefront, many with limited resources and testing return-times too lengthy to be effective.

We know God has a way of bringing good to anything. This is not as clear as it will be a year from now. But already there are goods that are happening. The cancellation of flights and limiting travel is lowering our carbon footprint every day (a boost in our battle for a healthier planet). Family interactions have increased as families help children with homework, share a movie or book together, again find ways that children and teens can entertain themselves at home. At this time we have become aware that none of our sisters has a valid Five Wishes (medical power of attorney); they are being updated now. Nearly everyone is finding the blessings of technology--

phones and computers helping in a myriad of ways to stay in touch and conduct business from home.

AND it is Lent. Spring is breaking through with greenness, joyful bird songs, tulips and daffodils sporting their vibrant colors, longer days—more hours of light. There are spring showers—rain and snow—encouraging the earth to burst forth with new life. And on this Fourth Sunday of Lent, we are reminded in the mass readings that “we are light.” May we relish that reality amongst ourselves and with others!

Peace, grace, hope, and all good,

Sr. Sarah Manchester
Vicar