

FATHER ANTON'S WORDS OF WISDOM: Romans 15: 1-7

“My brothers and sisters: We who are strong in faith should be patient with the scruples of those whose faith is weak; we must not be selfish. Each should please their neighbour so as to do them good by building up their spirit. This in accordance with the Scriptures, Christ did not please Himself. “The reproaches they uttered against you fell on me.” Everything written before our time was written for our instruction, that we might derive hope from the lessons of patience and encouragement, enable you to live in perfect harmony with one another in the spirit of Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and with one voice you may glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, as Christ accepts you, for the Glory of God.”

Dear friends; these are trying times that we are experiencing and many live day to day in panic and in fear. Our Lord taught us that “fear is useless, what you need is trust.” In other words we certainly must exercise caution and adhere to the recommendations of local health authorities; while at the same time trusting in God. I think it is important to remember and to instill in our hearts and our minds that God is not the author of Human Sufferings. He promised in the Old Testament after the *flood* “*Never again will I doom the earth because of man, since the desires of men’s heart are evil from the start; nor will I ever again strike down all living beings, as I have done. As long as the earth lasts, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*” While God does not send these illnesses or plagues, wars or disaster, He does speak to us through them.

Our current crisis of Covid-19 that has become a pandemic is taking over our lives right now. It is necessary to try to keep as calm as possible, to act responsibly, and not like my late Grandmother would say “to have more faith than brains.” God is speaking to us through our civil authorities and health care professionals. Jesus can be seen ministering to us through the doctors and nurses and support staff that on the front lines unselfishly caring for our needs. God is present and with us!

Perhaps God is calling us to take time to retreat from the world. To embrace the silence and there we can hear Him. Perhaps He is calling on us to re-evaluate our lives, to reset our priorities, to spend more time with family and get back to simpler things. Our lives are so fast paced, rushing everywhere, with everything, all the time and we lose our way. We have forgotten that life is not about how much we can produce or how many hours a week we can work, or how many things we can accumulate. Life is not a race, nor a contest.

We have an opportunity to draw ourselves closer to Christ, who brings peace to troubled souls. He calms our fears and leads us into the quiet where we can be with Him and feel His embrace. Take solace in the promise of God in Genesis. He knows our human nature is weak and He knows all of us seek a life of contentment and peace. He sent Christ into the world precisely because of this. Robed in our human nature our Saviour embraced His humanity while keeping His divinity. Jesus walked among us, felt our pain and confusion and was not a stranger to our experiences. As a child He was dependant on His parents. As a man He was subject to temptation. He knew anger and expressed it. He knew desperation and called out to His Father. He knew grief at the loss of His friend Lazarus. He knew doubt when He hung on the cross: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me.” And He knew victory through perseverance.

During this time of uncertainty there is one thing we can be certain of, and that is that our God is a faithful God. That Jesus fulfills His promises, “And know that I am with you, even unto the end of the World. So,

while our Churches are closed for public worship, remember without you they are bricks and mortar. So even though you can't go to Church, YOU CAN BE THE CHURCH! Pray at home, check in on your neighbour with a phone call. Offer to assist our seniors with groceries and anything they may need from the pharmacy, help others stay calm by staying calm yourself, be kind to one another, be less judgemental, be more compassionate and understanding, read your Bible or your prayer book. You can still go out for a walk and enjoy nature, feel God kiss your cheek with sunlight and caress you with the breeze. Trust in Him, and together through prayer, faith, and understanding we will persevere and rise above this Pandemic, hopefully with lessons learned that will not be forgotten. Here is a fitting prayer that confirms our faith in God, His love for us and the peace we can enjoy if we share our life with His.

PSALM 23

The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want.
In green pastures He gives me repose.
He leads me beside still waters; He refreshes my soul.
He guides me in the right paths for His name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil;
For You are with me.
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the sight of my foes;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Only goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord, forever.

May God be with you, and assured that my love and prayers are with all of you.

Much love and peace to you in Christ, Father Anton.