

“Behold I am with you always, until the end of the age”

HOPE and COURAGE

We live in interesting times. In a few short weeks the whole world has changed. It seems like order has gone away and chaos has taken its place. By all accounts we face an uncertain future and anxiety has crept into our daily lives; and if we are not careful, we are in danger of losing hope for us personally and for the world. But we must not surrender to despair. God has given us a path forward that in the end brings hope and joy.

Let me first offer a couple of thoughts. In mid March I was in Colorado for family celebrations. My oldest granddaughter had her 24th birthday on the 13th and her younger sister having finished her high school year had a new job and career perspective that was bringing her a lot of excitement and hope for her future. In the midst of the celebrations we were aware that there was trouble brewing with rumors of a shutdown coming due to the virus epidemic. Clearly this got some people worried but I didn't think that much of it. At the family gathering we were awkwardly practicing elbow bumps in place of hugs. But the celebration was moved from a restaurant to the home which I thought was very cautious.

The next day I traveled back to White Rock and stopped at Smith's to pick up some food items. When I got into the store I was truly shocked at what I saw. Row upon row of empty shelves that used to hold paper products and meat, and eggs and even milk. I didn't dream this could happen in Los Alamos; I didn't believe that people here would panic to such an extent. So as the days went by I found myself in denial. I didn't think this would last for long. But as it turned out the supply chain consisting of warehouses and trucks were overwhelmed. This led to prolonged period of shortages and the empty shelves continued. As we know then came the shutdown with schools closing, churches closing, restaurants closed. And we were

ordered to stay home and self quarantine. It did feel really serious and there was a lot of fear.

But we believe in a loving God so we know that this is not the end. We hear Jesus ask his disciples and thus to ask us, “Do you believe now? Behold the hour is coming and has arrived when each of you will be scattered to his own home and you will leave me alone. But I am not alone because the Father is with me. I have told you this that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble but take courage, I have conquered the world.”(Jn16:32-33) We need to hear this now just as much as the disciples needed to hear it as they lived the events of Jesus’ life of suffering, and dying and resurrection and ascension.

The disciples went through a lot of emotional turmoil; as the events took place. From the despair and fear that as Jesus died they would be next in line. Then the joy and elation of hearing and witnessing the resurrection of Jesus to be again living among them. Then the new anxiety of having him leave them alone with his ascension to the Father. Then the joy of the coming of the Holy Spirit giving life to the Church as the presence of Jesus among us. Pope St. Leo the Great comments, “Our redeemer’s visible presence has passed into the Sacraments.” What are the Sacraments? They are the supply chain of grace bestowed upon us by God the Father. Grace is the power coming from God into our lives. The Church is the custodian and minister of the Sacraments. Jesus tells his disciples, “I will not leave you orphaned. I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me but you will see me, because I live and you will live.” (Jn14:18-19) Thus as we remain in the Church, we are assured that the supply chain of grace will keep our shelves full until the end of time. St. Paul tells us, “May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe.”

This as we connect with God through Jesus present in his Church, we have a powerful hope that our spiritual shelves will not be empty which sets us free from all our anxieties about our present and our future. HN share this with us: “Hope sets us free from the need to predict the future and allows us to live in the present, with the deep trust that God will never leave us alone but will fulfill the deepest desires of our heart.” This allows us to live joyful lives even in the midst of the turmoil of a pandemic. HN “Joy is the fruit of hope. When I trust deeply that today God is truly with me and holds me safe in a divine embrace, guiding every one of my steps, I can let go of an anxious need to know how tomorrow will look or what will happen next month or next year. I can be fully where I am and pay attention to the many signs of God’s love within and around me.” “When we trust profoundly that today is the day of the Lord and that tomorrow is safely hidden in God’s love our faces can relax and we can smile back (even under our masks) at the One who smiles at us.”

This tells me that to keep this hope and joy real, we must love our brothers and sisters who are on our journey. We can concretely show this love by reaching out and helping or thanking those who give of themselves to keep us safe and help those who are striving to keep our shelves full. As Jesus reminds us again, “I have told us this so that you may have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.” (Jn16:33)