

The Best of Times, The Worst of Times

Probably the most famous and most memorable opening lines to any novel are those by Charles Dickens in his "A Tale of Two Cities". These words come to me as I think of our present situation in facing the Corona Virus. The ambiguity of the sentiments, I believe, speaks to the way we can react to the challenges facing us in this most unexpected, and serious global issue.

It is very easy to enunciate the "worst":

The virus itself and the havoc it has brought with illness and death

The enforced isolation of quarantine and sheltering in place

The interruption to our normal routines of work and school

The social, financial and material consequences of behavioral modification

The spiritual deprivations of the sacraments and regular prayer life

All these being said, and patently obvious to us all, I believe we need to turn our focus to those "best" things that emerge from the crisis. First and foremost, there is the generosity and heroism of people seeking to help other. We think of medical professionals in the frontline of the epidemic, and, also, first responders who are having great demands placed upon them. I think of the tremendous efforts quickly initiated by our faculty and staff at Nativity School. In a short period of time they were asked to develop and implement a remote learning environment. New demands were placed on them, as well as parents to "re-form" a pedagogical system we never had a chance to practice.

We all have radically adapted our lives to a new rhythm. Life is less hectic; commuting is practically gone; things are simply quieter! How much less of train horns and airplanes do we hear? We find ourselves sifting out non-essential and focusing on the real necessities. Families are brought together in an unhurried pace. I am struck by the constancy and number of people who, practicing social distancing, are coming to Nativity Church to sit in silent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

While we still face uncertainty as to what will happen with Holy Week and Easter, I encourage all of us to spend the self-imposed discipline of Lent, now over-laid with the imposed discipline of the epidemic, striving to advance ourselves spiritually by accepting the challenges of the present as opportunities to grow in virtue.

Some parishioners have joined regularly in reciting the Rosary at 1pm; some are watching daily Mass as it is available on TV, or our website. We were able to offer successfully the Sacrament of Reconciliation last Saturday to many people in a safe way. To the extent possible, we will continue these things and expand them. I bring your attention to a serious fact that we face as

a parish community with a significant loss of revenue because of no Sunday Mass. About a third of our parishioners have switched to online giving. For those of you who have not, I would prayerfully ask that you consider continuing your donations to the parish. As we all know, bills and financial obligations do not stop in a quarantine.

Please know that you are all in my prayers. It was truly heartbreaking not to be able to celebrate Mass for you this past Sunday, and the days during the week. Such a vacuum in our lives should only highlight for us the great benefit and gift we have in the Eucharist.

Msgr. Steven Otellini