

INSTITUTE OF CHRIST THE KING SOVEREIGN PRIEST
SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART

My eyes are ever toward the Lord: for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare. Look upon me, and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor. Ps. 24:15-6, Introit for the Third Sunday of Lent

March 15, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of the Society of the Sacred Heart,

We are nearing the halfway point of a memorable Lent. For many faithful throughout the world, the theme of wandering in the desert figures more prominently than in past years. Three weeks ago, I reminded you that the Sacraments were not just for Easter; Lent is a time for you to be especially close to Our Savior in Confession and Holy Communion. How heavily these words weigh now that many of you are prevented from receiving the Sacraments at all!

It is for this reason that I wish to write to you frequently and remind you as best I can of the importance of continuing to nourish ourselves with the Sacred Liturgy. On the Third Sunday of Lent we are greeted with words from the 24th Psalm. It is one we encounter every Tuesday in the office of Prime, the morning prayer of the Church, and in the dawn of our liturgical year, in the chants of the First Sunday of Advent. *Ad te, Domine, levavi animam meam – to Thee, O Lord, I lift up my soul; let me never be put to shame.* And its words are applied to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to His gentleness towards us in this time of penance: *The Lord is sweet and righteous: therefore He will give a law to sinners in the way.*

On the Third Sunday of Lent we read at Matins of the history of Joseph as recorded in Genesis. Joseph is sent by his father to observe the conduct of his brothers: *Go and see if all things be well with thy brethren* (Gen. 37:14). His brothers, resentful of his dreams and their father's special love for him, cast Joseph into a pit. Sold into slavery in Egypt, Joseph again finds himself cast into the pit of prison when, unwilling to compromise his virtue, he falls prey to the false accusations of Putiphar's wife (Gen. 39). Thus it is Joseph, a type of Christ and of all those who suffer for Christ, whom the Church recalls in the words of today's Introit: *My eyes are ever toward the Lord: for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare. Look upon me, and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor.*

My dear children, my priestly heart goes out to all of you who are unable to attend Mass and receive the Blessed Eucharist! Churches closed throughout the world! For the first time since the faith was preached there by Saints Peter and Paul, Italy has no public Masses! I refrain from offering any political commentary on this situation. But, from a spiritual perspective, what other fate could we expect for a Christian West that has been so unfaithful to its baptismal promises? Do we really need to declare this virus a divine chastisement? When such a chastisement comes, we will have no need of speculation on the subject. Rather, the consequences this illness has produced both within and outside the Church seem more of a gentle shaking on the part of divine providence, a soft whisper heard in Lent 2020: *now is the acceptable time; these are the days of salvation. Seek the Lord while He may be found.*

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I exhort you: do not let this crisis cause you to forget about Lent. This is our Lent! Do not spend all day checking the latest headlines on your phone. This is a forced retreat. Pray. Fast. Give alms. If you still have an open church to go to, cherish every moment you can spend there – go on behalf of those who can no longer go. Pray in your family as often as you can. As restaurants and public entertainment close down and the world begins to resemble the Lent of former ages, stick to the fasts you have already undertaken, and make a priority of family meal time and recreation. As for works of mercy, I suspect we shall all have ample opportunity to practice them. Begin, as I know so many of you have done already, by contacting fellow members of our household of the Faith and offering your support and friendship. May it be said of us in these times, as it was said of the faithful in the age of martyrs, “See how these Christians love one another!”

If you are in need of my help or counsel, do not hesitate to call or email me. I pray that all of us may soon return to our true home in this vale of tears, and sing with the Psalmist that Communion of surpassing beauty which some of us had the grace to hear this Sunday: *The sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtledove a nest where she may lay her young: Thy altars, O Lord of Hosts! Blessed are those who dwell in Thy house; they shall praise Thee forever and ever.*

Sincerely Yours in His Most Sacred Heart,

Canon Aaron B. Huberfeld
National Chaplain