



The current spread of the novel Coronavirus is quite disturbing. There is a sense of the unknown. How bad will this get? Will it affect me? How will it further change our way of life? Just as we try to calm down and remind ourselves not to worry beyond the facts, the next day's news reveals something more shocking. Fear is a very unsettling emotion. It can paralyze us and take away our abilities to remain balanced and reasonable and to discern the right choices before us.

On one level it is critical that we follow good sound advice from the medical community and do what we can to prevent ourselves from getting the virus or from spreading it to others. But, on a far deeper level, we need to turn to prayer, to our relationship with God, to find comfort and peace that we need the most. This is a time to place ourselves in the Lord's hands and to ask for the grace to trust.

We certainly can pray that the epidemic will come to an end soon, and that people who contract the virus will receive the care they need. And, we can pray for those who are suffering, for the most vulnerable all over the world, and we can pray with those who are grieving the loss of loved ones.

Letting our Lord comfort us with a peace that nothing else in the world can give is to pray at another level. It begins with our reminding ourselves that we are loved by God. In the Christian tradition, we can remind ourselves of the Good News itself. We are saved from the power of sin and death through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Many other religious traditions offer us hope and consolation in God's love and presence with us.

How do we find that peace in the midst of so much anxiety and worry about the future? We can take precautions and be prudent, but we don't have to worry about what we can't control. We can trust that by turning to our God, we can rely on God's love and presence. We can take courage from a sense that we are not alone. And, we can let go of the anxieties and be brought deeper into that relationship which feels "at home" and reminds us of our truest self.

Most of all, faith and trust can help us replace our anxiety with our mission – the mission each of us has to love as we have been loved. When we ask for help, - in our relationship with our God – to grow in compassion and care for those around us, a new level of purpose is given to us. We can feel the grace of being sent – missioned – to be for and with others in crisis. We can comfort others and help calm their fears. We can be a source of strength for others who are struggling. Our charity and the ways we reach out to others will transform our hearts. And, we can make a real difference. Perhaps someone I know, who is quarantined at home, needs a call every day, or perhaps a quick trip to the store for necessities. The possibilities will come to us as we let our hearts be calmed and be filled with compassion. Gratitude leads to generosity and courage lets our hearts move from being fearful to being bold.

*Most loving God, Creator of us all, we turn to you to care for your people in need.
We thank you for your presence among us and the peace you offer us.
Send us your Spirit to fill us with courage and hope,
so that we might be your instruments of love and assistance for others in need.
Through this crisis, may we come together,
as people of faith in a crisis so often do by your grace,
and may we come out of it more united and more determined
to care for those most in need.
Thank you for your fidelity and the graces we need these days. Amen.*



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