

Column071220

Companions on the Journey

July 12, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ

So, how are you praying? How are you praying during this time of the coronavirus? I have spoken with any number of people and the reaction to that simple question has varied greatly. Some have said that they are praying better and actually able to spend a little more time in prayer even including more time praying in the family. Some others have said that they are struggling. Flailing a bit. Moved to pray at times. Lethargic in prayer at others.

There is some guilt too. I feel a little bit guilty that I haven't been able to pray any better in these months than in the past. I thought that because of my own awareness of the reality of the pandemic that I would up my game and pray more diligently. Instead I have found myself at times actually more emotionally fatigued. In pondering the why of that experience it occurs to me that the emotional draining of not knowing—not knowing how things will turn out, when things will return to normal, how will we be able to cope, what new things will emerge and need to be coped with or handled—all of that takes its toll. And part of that toll is in the area of attentiveness. And lacking attentiveness works against my praying better.

As I realize this, I have to make little adjustments in my praying. The need to make sure that I am not distracted by any of my social media tools is very important. I am still pretty easily distracted, even from prayer. The old Benedictine Latin expression *Age quod agis*. Do what you are doing. Seems to be applicable right now. I am not always doing what I am doing when I carve out prayer time. But when I do remove the social media my prayer is better. Even limiting the amount of exposure I allow myself to the media, especially on cable television, is beneficial. I As a pastor I do need to know what is going on in the world but I do not need to be exposed to a steady diet of the negative news that drones on daily from the TV.

Another thing which works against the efficacy of my prayer is when I allow myself to become much more emotionally involved in the politics of the moment. It is a fine line. How do I make sure that I am standing up for the virtues and truth of my faith and yet not drawn into the mud-slinging that goes on daily in the media—from Twitter to Cable News to FaceBook to YouTube to Instagram to IM and on and on. For me some of those things are actually occasions of sin for me. They can easily rob me of my peace of mind and heart. The vitriol and accusations and criticisms and condemnations that are so easily available everywhere all serve to drain the peace of mind and heart right out of me. I cannot allow that to happen.

My friends, it is very clear to me that Our Lord wants us to be spending more time with Him right now, more time in his company, more time in conversation and communion with Him in prayer. The Lord is extending an invitation to us in this moment. We cannot squander it and then justify our sloth by saying that I got distracted. It is time to rise to the occasion, time to step up. Time to exert the necessary discipline and time to make the necessary sacrifices to get this prayer thing in a better place. Please read the above as a strong encouragement not to give up hope, not to give up trying.

Peace,

Monsignor McHenry