

Column030721

Companions on the Journey

March 7, 2021

Dear Friends,

In my conversations with a variety of people over the past four or five weeks, it has become clear to me that people have hit a wall when it comes to covid-19. “I’ve had it up to here,” is a not uncommon expression in the air. Tired of the uncertainty, the confusion, the not knowing, the not being able to be sure of what I am hearing or experiencing, of being cooped up inside. Tired of the unsociality of this disease. Tired of the not being able to give someone a hug or comfort them or encourage them. Tired, at root, of being afraid. People are really tired of being fearful and having that fearfulness dictate decisions.

I am not advocating that people are starting to act recklessly. But that weariness of being fearful is a sign that a new attitude is going to be born. If not in everyone at least in many. We have many issues that divide us in this country. Not every disagreement need lead to a moment of condemnation or judgment of the person who holds an opposing viewpoint. But I do think there is agreement that there is a malaise that has begun to set in in the lives of people and a growing exasperation of being afraid—afraid to step out and do things that we have been doing all our lives. Now, we are afraid to go out. I have even had children confess in the Sacrament of Reconciliation the sin of “not going outside.” What kind of sin is that? Well, when your mom tells you to go outside for a while and play and get some fresh air and you just want to stay inside with your games, then that is disobedience. But it was the way these children confessed it. A real reticence to do something as simple as going outside to play, which kids love to do, tells you that this is not a good place for us to be.

Overcoming the fearfulness and pushing back against the fear of contact with anyone out of fear of contamination has to come. We have to start living again and not just surviving. “We’re surviving the pandemic.” Are we? I have said on a number of occasions that the good Lord did not send this pandemic to us but He is allowing it to endure for a time because there are important lessons we have to learn and things we have lost sight of in our lives. We need each other. We have to stop choosing to be “at” each other all the time, attacking those who hold different views of life in this great country. We have to stop the name-calling and the finger-pointing. Why? Well because all of that is counterproductive and does not take us anywhere good. But more importantly, because none of that comes from what Jesus revealed to us.

We have some decisions to make. And soon. We are going to have to step out boldly. Not fool-heartedly. But yes, boldly. Not timorously or with tepidity. The very Spirit of God indwells our souls. The gift of fortitude is there in abundance. It is for us to claim the gift and to begin to live it again. How many times did Jesus say to those near and far, “Do not be afraid?” Well, he is telling us the same right now. Put your faith in me and take your precautions but do not any longer give in to the fears that can be heard everywhere these days. Listen for my voice. And I will lead you. Yes. He will.

In the Peace of Christ,

Msgr. McHenry