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**Companions on the Journey**

**November 14, 2021**

Dear Friends in Christ,

In the New Testament Saint Paul wrote a boatload of letters. There are a couple from Saint Peter. One from Saint James. Another from Saint Jude. There is the Epistle to the Hebrews which may not actually be a letter as much as an early sermon that has come down to us as part of Sacred Scripture. There are also three relatively short letters attributed. In the first one of these, in the fourth chapter of the letter in verse 18 we read these words: “There is no fear in love but perfect love drives out fear.”

Just sit with that sentence for a few minutes. Apply it’s meaning to your own life, to your own experience of life. This whole pandemic has been a time of extraordinary fear and that fear has gotten into everyone’s life in some fashion. Fear has been a driving force for many. Fear of getting the corona-virus. Fear of dying of it. Fear of experiencing some of its long lasting effects. Fear of passing it on to someone else especially someone that we love a great deal. For some of us this has already happened and we just don’t want it to happen again.

For some just going out has become a fearsome reality. Not for everyone, of course, but for a good number of people. There are plenty of faces that I have not seen—at all—in over a year and a half. Faces that were familiar on a weekly basis. No one wants to bring the virus home to infect a loved one. And there are plenty of people still at risk. Just today I learned that I was at the Seminary Board of Trustees meeting on November 4, the Feast of Saint Charles Borromeo. Today, Monday, I learned that one of the participants who attended has since been tested positive for the Covid. That means that all of us who were in that room for a couple of hours were at risk. SO I was tested today and the results came back negative. I will test again in 36 hours. I don’t have any symptoms but I want to be sure I am not a carrier of the Covid. I am in contact with a great many people.

But here’s the thing. As serious as this disease is, we cannot keep living in such fear. It twists us and we cannot live the best way we know how to live. We cower inwardly. That cannot continue. We have to step out. We have to pray our way out of this debilitating fear. We have to turn to Our Lord. We are to continue to ask for an end of this virus. We are to continue to ask for the grace to jettison those ways of living that are at odds with the gospel of Jesus. The Lord has allowed us to experience the devastating effect of this disease. His hope is that we come to our senses and realize that rejecting the harmony and unity and order that He offers brings us disorder, disharmony and disease both physically and spiritually.

What can we do to be rid of this fear? We can ask for it from Our Lord. And we can step out in love for one another. Love casts out fear. Love does. There is no fear—at all—in the kingdom of heaven. We cannot enter the gates of heaven carrying our fears with us. They are not welcome in God’s kingdom. If we live in fear here below then we have much that will need to be done in us before we can cross the threshold of the heavenly realm. But if we live in love here. And fear has no standing in our lives, then love wins—again. For love won on Calvary and then later on in the resurrection. The triumph is Easter. Perfect love, the kind Jesus had for all of us, casts out every and all fear. Let us go to him to taste his love.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry