COVID-19: Reflections/Prayers in the time of COVID-19

April 6, 2020

A Prayer by Sisters of IHM, Scranton, PA – During a Pandemic
Loving God, Holy One,

Your desire is for our wholeness and well-being.
We hold in tenderness and prayer the collective suffering of our world at this time.
We grieve precious lives lost and vulnerable lives threatened.
We ache for ourselves and our neighbors, standing before an uncertain future.
We pray: May love, not fear, go viral.

Inspire our leaders to discern and choose wisely, aligned with the common good.

Help us to practice social distancing and reveal to us new and creative ways to come together in spirit and in solidarity.

Call us to profound trust in your faithful presence. You, the God who does not abandon. You, the Holy One, breathing within us, breathing among us, breathing around us in our beautiful yet wounded world.

A Prayer by Catholic Health Association – Intercessions in Time of Pandemic
Leader: Our response is: God, protect them.

For all in direct patient care; give them strength for their service and strength to ask for help when they are in need.
All: God, protect them.

Leader: For the sick; bring them to full health and restore them to those who love them.
All: God, protect them.

Leader: For all those isolated in their homes; sustain them in joy and peace.
All: God, protect them.

Leader: For all those who have died and for those who grieve their loss in isolation; comfort them in their sorrow.
All: God, protect them.

Leader: For decision-makers at all levels; send them your wisdom and good counsel to serve their communities.
All: God, protect them.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

A Prayer by Catholic Health Association – God’s Protection of Caregivers
Opening: Let us be still in the presence of God and one another.

God calls each of us to a specific work; to make a contribution that only we can make. We pray today for the courage, skill and sacrifice of all caregivers serving in this time.

Reading: Pillar of Cloud and Fire, Exodus 13: 21-22

The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Closing: God who traveled before and behind the Israelites in their journey from slavery to freedom, surround and support the men and women working in your healing ministry today. Never leave them, comfort them, and keep them well. Give them the strength to care for those who are sick and dying as well as the strength to receive help from others.

Be with the families of all who serve. Send your peace for their anxieties, joy for their fears, hope for their despair, and light for their darkness. We pray in the confidence of your love. Amen.

A Prayer by Sr. Deborah Troillett, RSM – To Easy Anxiety (Adapted)
O God, during these days of our Lenten season, uncertainty, anxiety and fear threaten to overtake our lives. In the spirit of Catherine McAuley’s own plea, we pray “Take from my heart all painful anxiety.”

May we “fast” from over-anxious thoughts and paralyzing fears. May our faith deepen so that we may more confidently entrust our loved ones and ourselves to your care.

Continue to calm our minds and strengthen our hearts that we may respond with love rather than react with fear; that we may deepen our compassionate connection with those who are most suffering and those who are most vulnerable.

May your holy presence shelter us all and transform us so that we may be instruments of your peace and healing for those entrusted to our immediate care.

Amen.

A Prayer by Catholic Health Association – “God is Close: A Reminder in the Midst of a Global Pandemic”
God of silence and stillness, we trust you are with us in this time of noise and chaos. We pray for an end to this pandemic. Whisper your words of comfort, encouragement and hope to all who need them in these days of fear. Draw close to those who are sick and all those who risk illness, caring for them, protecting and uplifting them. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Blessing for the Sick by Catholic Health Association
May you be held in love.
May tenderness carry you.
May the pain you know
Too Well
Be lifted from you.

May your heart’s heaviness
Be lightened by grace,
May hope abound for you.

May those who serve you
Care for you.
May their expertise help you,
Their compassion sustain you.

May you know you are not
Alone
But always loved by God.

May you see miracles
And know you are one.
May your courage give us courage.
May your love hold us tenderly.

And may you dwell in peace
In the midst
The depth
The breadth of
Your being.
Amen
A Reflection by Donna Ashworth

History will remember when the world stopped
And the flight stayed on the ground
And the cars parked in the street
And the trains didn’t run.

History will remember when the schools closed
And the children stayed indoors
And the medical staff walked towards the fire
And they didn’t run.

History will remember when the people snag
On their balconies, in isolation
But so very much together
In courage and song.

History will remember when the people fought
For their old and their weak
Protected by the vulnerable
By doing nothing at all.

History will remember when the virus left
And the houses opened
And the people came out
And hugged and kissed

And started again
Kinder than before.

A Reflection – Author Unknown, Incident Command Call

God is saying to you today, “You held on during the toughest of times. I gave you strength to endure that at times you did not even know it was Me. When things changed for you many left you and wrote you off. But not only did you endure the storm, you grew in the storm. You are different. I did not create you to fit in. I created you to stand out. Now I am about to bless your faithfulness. I am about to ask you to levels you never even thought were possible. Receive it in My name.”

A Reflection by Pierre Tielhard de Chardin, SJ – Patient Trust

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress that is made by passing through some stages of instability and that it may take a very long time.
And so, I think it is with you; your ideas mature gradually – let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don’t try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow.
Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

A Poem by Kathleen O’Meara, Relevant to Today’s Times
Kathleen O’Meara (1839-1888), pen name Grace Ramsay, was an Irish-French Catholic writer and biographer during the late Victorian era. She was the Paris correspondent of The Tablet, still a leading British Catholic magazine. This poem appeared in her second novel, Iza’s Story, about the struggle of Polish patriots against Russian, Austrian and German occupation. The book compares the Polish-Russian situation to the Irish-British situation and praises the revolt of a small nation against a powerful neighbor.

And people stayed home
And read books and listened
And rested and exercised
And made art and played

And learned new ways of being
And stopped
And listened deeper

Someone meditated
Someone prayed
Someone danced
Someone met their shadow

And people began to think differently
And people healed
And in the absence of people who lived in ignorant ways,
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,
Even the earth began to heal

And when the danger ended
And people found each other
Grieved for the dead people
And they made new choices
And dreamed of new visions
And created new ways of life
And healed the earth completely
Just as they were healed themselves.

A Reflection by Jan Richardson from “Circle of Grace” – Blessing When the World is Ending
Look, the world is always ending somewhere.
Somewhere the sun has come crashing down.
Somewhere it has gone completely dark.
Somewhere it has ended with the gun, the knife, the fist.
Somewhere it has ended with the slammed door, the shattered hope.
Somewhere it has ended with the utter quiet that follows the news from the phone, the television, the hospital room.
Somewhere it has ended with a tenderness that will break your heart.
But, listen, this blessing means to be anything but morose.
It has not come to cause despair.
It is simply here because there is nothing a blessing is better suited for than an ending, nothing that cries out more for a blessing than when a world is falling apart.
This blessing will not fix you, will not mend you, will not give you false comfort; it will not talk to you about one door opening when another closes.
It will simply sit itself beside you among the shards and gently turn your face toward the direction from which the light will come, gathering itself about you as the world begins again.

A Reflection by Greg Sterling, Reverend Henry L. Slack Dean and Lilian Claus Professor of New Testament, Yale Divinity School

When I was a ministerial intern, the senior minister struggled with pancreatic cancer. One morning he arrived at the church but soon left because he became ill. His wife called to tell me that he had slipped into a coma and was rushed to the hospital, where I quickly joined her. A blood test determined that he had slipped into a diabetic coma as a result of his cancer-damaged pancreas; an insulin shot brought him back to consciousness. As I entered his hospital room that evening, he spoke to me, quoting the Psalter: “This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD, and was saved from every trouble” (34:6). I will never forget that moment. He was a person of great faith, a faith that shaped his outlook on life, on illness, and on death.

We are facing a pandemic that is more threatening than any in our lifetimes, although there have certainly been others that were horrific; e.g., AIDS. All of us are concerned for the welfare of our families, ourselves, our communities, and our world. Does faith matter in such a time, and, if so, how? Let me suggest two ways.

Faith enables us to face the uncertain with equanimity. Faith neither naively wishes for the impossible nor unrealistically ignores the fact that tragedy can happen to me and my family. Faith neither panics nor shuts its eyes to reality. Faith neither neglects its moral responsibilities nor acts with foolhardy abandon in the face of danger. Faith is the quiet confidence that no matter what we face, God will give us strength to face it. It is serenity in circumstance that lend themselves to stampedes. It is the calm to look for answers when others can only formulate questions. The longer I have lived, the more the statement of Paul has meant to me: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39). I hold on to this with increasing confidence.

Faith is, however, more than confidence in God and God’s love; it is a life motivated to serve on the basis of that confidence. It is praying for those who are ill, praying for those who are working in health care, praying for those developing a vaccine, and praying for those around the world who are making decisions that impact all of us. It is taking steps to help the economically disadvantaged whose challenging circumstances will be made worse by this crisis. It is self-sacrifice in a time of crisis rather than self-advancement. It is doing all that we can to keep ourselves healthy and out of the hospitals that will be overcrowded with the ill. It is curtailing our own plans so that we do not endanger others. It is staying in touch with those in our ambit of acquaintances who may be lonely in times of enforced isolation. It is a call “to work for the good of all” (Gal 6:10).

Only when we don’t know the future do we really know if we have faith. This crisis will test our faith. It will reveal our confidence in God and God’s love. It will reveal our love for one another, and for those we know and those we do not know. I am confident that, like the senior minister with whom I worked, faith will shape our outlooks on life, on illness, and on death. May God’s peace be with you.
Reflection…Qarrtsiluni: Sitting Together in the Dark
Contributed by Julie Carter, St. Mary’s Athens

Yesterday I stumbled across this word and I couldn’t get it out of my mind: “Qarrtsiluni”. It is an Inuit word that means “sitting together in the dark, waiting for something to happen.” I kept trying to imagine the culture in which people are sitting together in the dark waiting for something to happen so often that they needed a special word for it!

Later in the day, I learned that folks in the community drove to Sacred Heart Hospital Wednesday night, encircling the front with their headlights, and from their cars they prayed for the patients and colleagues inside.

If this pandemic is our “dark”, we are not waiting for something to happen. We are sitting together in the dark and wrapping each other in prayers – from COVID-19 appropriate distances. We are sewing masks, checking in on each other, sharing resources, bringing food to the elderly, and showing up for each other in countless ways. We don’t have a single word for this, we have many words for this. Love. Solidarity. Generosity. Perseverance. Courage. Selflessness. Faith. Hope. And though this darkness may seem impenetrable right now, when together we throw enough of these words at the darkness, the light will once again take over.

The God We Bring

An important question to ask, as we approach those entrusted to our care, is “Who is the God I bring with me?” Consider the God we know in Catholic health care. There we find a God who enters willingly into the chaos of our world, who chooses to make a home in the midst of woundedness, confusion and darkness — and who finds beauty and blessing there…. We know the wisdom that can emerge from struggle, and the sacred power that can be found in the midst of seeming chaos. Our health as individuals and communities depends upon our willingness to enter into the fray, time and again, with and for one another. Today, make a choice to engage with someone who is struggling. Enter in. Be the presence of mercy that is needed. Do so with the expectancy that God will accompany you and that there may be creativity, compassion, friendship and other blessings to discover. And trust — wherever there is both chaos and mercy, always, always, there is God.

Reflect today on where the chaos in the lives of those around you may invite your presence. Make a commitment to enter in with mercy, whether through a loving conversation, a shared meal or a listening ear. You can expect that the experience may be messy, awkward and perhaps even a little frightening. But as you willingly face the chaos experienced by another, you can do so with a spirit of trust and expectancy. You can look for the potential, the beauty and the creative, restorative power in even the most difficult situations. Because where there is both vulnerability and tenderness, we know that God shows up.

A Blessing for Health Care Workers in Time of Pandemic

Blessed are the ones who cannot be isolated.
Blessed are all the healthcare workers.
Blessed are the hands that are raw from scrubbing and sanitizing, and the hands for healing, comforting, and supporting.
Blessed are the shoulders that carry the weight of life and death.
Blessed are the feet that are aching from standing at the bedside, running between rooms, and answering phones.
Blessed are the hearts that are frightened and breaking.
Blessed are the mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, sisters and brothers, partners and friends, who cannot go home. 
Blessed are the families who become isolated from each other, the ones who sacrifice their own comfort so that others need not be alone in their suffering. 
Blessed are the sick and the dying, those who bear the image of God before us. 
Blessed are those who look upon their work as sacred as and as gift at this time of overwhelming demand. 
Blessed are those who lack the space to process all what lies ahead and may others bear their burden with them. 
Blessed are the ones who are found weeping in corners of our emergency rooms, our hospitals, our primary cares, our outpatient centers so that we might see a strong face to greet our need. Blessed are those who weep openly with us, so that even our tears have companions.  
Blessed are you, O God: quietly holding each of us along the way. Come quickly, abide unceasingly. Love us while we see the worst, and give us the hope to do our best and continue our mission with compassionate care.  

Amen. 

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**Lockdown**  
Bro. Richard Hendrick, OFM  

Yes, there is fear. Yes, there is isolation. Yes, there is panic buying. Yes, there is sickness. Yes, there is even death. 

But, they say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise you can hear the birds again. They say that after just a few weeks of quiet the sky is no longer thick with fumes but blue and grey and clear. They say that in the streets of Assisi people are singing to each other across the empty squares, keeping their windows open so that those who are alone may hear the sounds of family around them. They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.  

Today a young woman I know is busy spreading flyers with her number through the neighborhood so that the elders may have someone to call on. Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples are preparing to welcome and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary. All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting. All over the world people are looking at their neighbors in a new way. All over the world people are waking up to a new reality. To how big we really are. To how little control we really have. To what really matters. To love.  

So, we pray, and we remember that yes, there is fear, but there does not have to be hate. Yes, there is isolation, but there does not have to be loneliness. Yes, there is panic buying, but there does not have to be meanness. Yes, there is sickness, but there does not have to be disease of the soul Yes, there is even death, but there can always be a rebirth of love. Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now. Today, breathe. Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic the birds are singing again. The sky is clearing, Spring is coming, and we are always encompassed by Love. Open the windows of your soul and though you may not be able to touch across the empty square, Sing. 

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**The Long View**  
Ken Untener, Bishop of Saginaw, 1979  

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.  
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work.  
Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the Church’s mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything. 

This is what we are about:  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.  

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.  
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.  
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.  

We may never see the end results,  
But that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future not our own. 

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**For Peace in Anxiety during the Coronavirus Pandemic**  
*Catholic Health Association*

Loving God, we come to you full of anxiety about what may happen in the coming days and weeks.  
Shower us with the peace Jesus promised to his disciples and make us into steady pillars for those around us. In this time of uncertainty and epidemic, wake us up to the reminder that we are not alone.  

Even as we are asked to keep our distance from others, help us to find ways to reach out to those who need our support. We pray especially for those whose incomes and livelihoods are threatened. For the children who will miss meals due to school closures. For those already isolated, lonely and scared. Loving God, give them your peace, and through our hands ensure they have what they need.  

Sustain, strengthen and protect all caregivers. Bless them as they offer compassionate care and show selfless courage in the face of risk.  

Remind us, each time we wash our hands, that in our baptism you call us to let go of our fears and live in joy, peace, and hope.  

Amen. 

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**By Laura Kelly Fanucci**

When this is over, may we never take for granted:  
A handshake with a stranger  
Full shelves at the store  
Conversations with neighbors  
A crowded theater
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.
When this ends, may we find that we have become more like the people we wanted to be, we were called to be, we hoped to be; and may we stay that way – better for each other because of the worst.

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**For Peace and Fortitude in Worry**
Prayer for the NACC by Elizabeth (Lisa) Ecks, Sacramento, Calif.

In this age of anxiety & stress, we ask for your Presence to be made clearly amongst us. Be with us as we confront illnesses that leave many of us in a state of worry for our families, our friends, our colleagues, our communities, our nation and our world.

As hospitals and health care providers seek to continue the healing ministry of You, may they have fortitude for the road ahead, knowing that you are walking this journey with them with your mighty Hand. Remind them of both their strength and Your strength.

We ask for Your comfort upon those who have already lost loved ones during the time of viruses. And, may healing be upon those who are physically suffering and spiritually suffering through this season. May the wilderness of this time & the uncertainty we may feel, strengthen our resolve to lean on your word, abide in your presence, and be guided by your enduring and powerful Spirit. You have been with us in every age and will remain a refuge — to take solace, to recollect our thoughts, to remember that all things of this world are fleeting, and this too shall pass.

Let us recall the calming of the storm by your Hand. Let us today and tomorrow and the days ahead lean on Your fortitude, and resolve to care for each other and support each other each through this difficult journey before us in our lives both collectively and individually.

Amidst the darkness, the confusion and the storm of worry, may your Presence be made abundantly revealed so that Your light, Your hand and Your strength, gives us steadiness, refuge, clarity of purpose, and hope.

Amen.

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**A Blessing for Health Care Workers in Time of Pandemic**

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Blessed are all the healthcare workers.
Blessed are the hands that are raw from scrubbing and sanitizing, and the hands for healing, comforting, and supporting.
Blessed are the shoulders that carry the weight of life and death.
Blessed are the feet that are aching from standing at the bedside, running between rooms, and answering phones.
Blessed are the hearts that are frightened and breaking.
Blessed are the mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, sisters and brothers, partners and friends, who cannot go home.
Blessed are the families who become isolated from each other, the ones who sacrifice their own comfort so that others need not be alone in their suffering.

Blessed are the sick and the dying, those who bear the image of God before us.
Blessed are those who look upon their work as sacred as and as gift at this time of overwhelming demand.
Blessed are those who lack the space to process all what lies ahead and may others bear their burden with them.
Blessed are the ones who are found weeping in corners of our emergency rooms, our hospitals, our primary cares, our outpatient centers so that we might see a strong face to greet our need. Blessed are those who weep openly with us, so that even our tears have companions.
Blessed are you, O God: quietly holding each of us along the way. Come quickly, abide unceasingly. Love us while we see the worst, and give us the hope to do our best and continue our mission with compassionate care.
Amen.

By Mary Ann Brussat

God of Mercy, be with the tens of thousands of people who have contracted the coronavirus around the world. Comfort those whose loved ones have died. Bring peace to those living with uncertainty after perhaps being exposed to the virus. Give patience to those who are quarantined and unable to move freely in their communities.

Wise and Faithful Guide, watch over and protect other people from catching this deadly virus. Strengthen those who are risking their own lives to care for sick patients.

May we all be filled with compassion for those who are suffering.

Blessing for Caregivers
Catholic Health Association

May you see with tender eyes
The wounds of those before you.
May you hear with well-tuned ears
The unspoken needs of those whose voices are muted.
May you hold with gentle hands
The bodies and the spirits of those you care for.

May the beauty of soul,
The strength of spirit,
The wholeness of being
Lead you, inspire you
And let you know your own
Beauty of soul,
Strength of spirit,
Wholeness of being.

May you know that,
As you care for others, God cares for you, sees you, Holds you tenderly. Amen.

From Morning Huddle
Rev. Crystal Schmalz, M.Div., BCC, ACPE Certified Educator Associate, St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor

Some healthcare workers may feel fear going into work, in addition to their courage for caring for the sick. Most of the healthcare workers I know are committed to providing the best care with compassion and excellence. Yet, it can still feel scary to expose oneself to some amount of risk. Healthcare workers have families, children, and loved ones who might be more vulnerable to Covid19. Healthcare workers are real people who serve: nurses, doctors, chaplains, social workers, patient care techs, environmental services, food and nutrition, pharmacists, security, and administrators. So thank you to everyone who is participating in social distancing and helping to reduce the risk for all. Thank you for caring and thinking about more than yourself. As I walk into the hospital this morning, I’m trusting God and praying for the colleagues, patients, and families I may encounter. May God’s strength be with us. May God’s wisdom help us as we use our own judgment. May God increase our skills and training. May God’s presence go before and with us. May God’s protection and healing be upon us. May God’s peace and comfort abound.

Adapted from "A Prayer for Those Who are Ill"

Spirit of God, we bring before you today those who suffer from illness, for those whose lives are profoundly affected by their illness, and for those caring for them.

When they feel fragile and broken, remind them that you call them by name and hold them in the palm of your hand.

When they feel devalued, remind them that they are made in your image.

When they are reminded of different times in the past, lead them to grow in the faith that you love them today, as they are, in the reality of their lives this day.

When they feel uncertain and fearful about the future, lead them to that perfect love which casts out all fear.

When situations remind them not of what they can do, but of what they cannot do, remind them that love never fails.

May all of us continue to see or respond to the needs of others, especially those who suffer in our midst. May we live with courage to respond to the challenges that each of us faces.

Amen.

A Prayer for the Caregiver
Becky Evans, National Association of Catholic Chaplains

Giver of life, and light,
Healer of all souls, Let my cup overflow with your grace, so that I may bring solace to each soul entrusted to my care.
Let my eyes see your face in each person I meet. Let my ears listen with attention to the stories of anguish, joy, loneliness, fear, or pain. Let your empathy overcome me.

Let my hands be your hands, your consoling hands of peace. Let my feet be anointed to walk with integrity and authenticity.

Divine, healing Caregiver, let gratitude dance in me as I carry your Word of love and hope to each sick or troubled person in this broken, beautiful world.

A Prayer Amid an Epidemic
Kerry Weber, executive editor of America magazine

Jesus Christ, you traveled through towns and villages "curing every disease and illness." At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace.

Jesus Christ, heal us.

Prayer for a Pandemic
Author Unknown

May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors
Remember those most vulnerable.
May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making the rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close, Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips, Remember those that have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market, Remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home, Remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, Let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, Let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God of our neighbors.

Amen.

A prayer for the sick especially those suffering from the coronavirus

Loving God, you sent your son Jesus Christ to heal the sick. We ask you to come to our aid in the midst of the coronavirus crisis that we too may experience your healing love. We ask you to heal those who are sick. Calm those who are living in fear. Be with those who have died and comfort their families. Inspire health professionals to aid them in their healing work. Guide national leaders to lead and make decisions with wisdom. Help us to always be aware of your presence as we place our trust in you. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

Prayer for an end to the coronavirus crisis

Loving God, we come before you in our time of need. We lay before you our concerns and fears over the spread of the coronavirus. We know that you are mightier than all our fears and that the name of Jesus is the name above all other names. We ask, in the name of Jesus, that you stop the spread of the coronavirus. In your mercy, heal those who are sick and lead those who have died into your heavenly kingdom. We ask this in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

A Prayer for Uncertain Times
Sr. Cynthia Serjak, RSM

God of infinite mercy, hear our prayer!

In this time of bewilderment and fear, we ask you to give us the courage to take care of one another as Jesus did. For those who are ill, especially those who are frightened and alone, for those who cannot access healthcare, for those who are homeless and lost, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our sadness and grief, we ask you to give us words to comfort one another. For those who are dying, and for those who have already died from this virus, for those who tend them and for those with no one to tend them, hear our prayer!
In the midst of our own anxiety we ask you to give us the courage to support one another as you would. For those who are unexpectedly unemployed, for employers who share what they can, for our government and financial institutions and those who lead them, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our struggle to ensure a healthy future for all who live on this planet, we ask you to give us the hope that surpasses our current understanding. For healthcare workers, spiritual leaders and our faith communities, for artists and poets, for prophets and teachers, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our growing awareness that all life on Earth is connected, we ask for the heart to respect and cherish all life. That all peoples recognize that we are all your children, hear our prayer!

We trust in you and your power working in us. Please hear and answer our prayers.

Amen! Amen!

**Pandemic**  
Lynn Ungar

What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath – the most sacred of times? Cease from travel. Cease from buying and selling. Give up, just for now, on trying to make the world different than it is. Sing. Pray. Touch only those to whom you commit your life. Center down.

And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart. Know that we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful. (You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives are in one another’s hands. (Surely that has come clear.) Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart. Reach out your words. Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love – for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, so long as we shall live.

**This Can Be Our Finest Hour – But We Need All of You**  
Gretchen Schmelzer

For the vast majority of people nationwide and worldwide, this virus is not about you. This is one of those times in life, in history, when your actions are about something bigger. They are about someone else. They are about something greater, a greater good that you may not ever witness. A person you will save who you will never meet.

You may be healthy, and your kids may be healthy. You parents may be healthy. Everyone around you seems fine. And all the things you planned and the 2020 spring you thought you were going to have has been completely undone. You have to work from home. Your conference is cancelled. Your semester is over. Your work is cancelled. It all seems fast, and out-of-proportion and disorienting. You look at each action and think—but it would be okay if I did that. It’s not so big. We worked so hard. They would be so disappointed.

Your losses are real. Your disappointments are real. Your hardships are real. I don’t mean to make light or to minimize the difficulty ahead for you, your family or community.

But this isn’t like other illnesses and we don’t get to act like it is. It’s more contagious, it’s more fatal—and most importantly, even if it can be managed. It can’t be managed at a massive scale—anywhere. We need this thing to move slowly enough for our collective national and worldwide medical systems to hold the very
ill so that all of the very ill can get taken care of. Because at this time of severe virus there are also all of the other things that require care. There is still cancer, there are still heart attacks, there are still car accidents, there are still complicated births. And we need our medical systems to be able to hold us. And we need to be responsible because our medical systems are made up of people and these amazing healthcare workers are a precious and limited resource. They will rise to this occasion. They will work to help you heal. They will work to save your mother or father or sister or baby. But in order for that to happen we have very important work to do. ALL OF US.

So what is our work? Yes, you need to wash your hands and stay home if you are sick. But the biggest work you can do is expand your heart and your mind to see yourself and see your family as part of a much bigger community that can have a massive—hugely massive—impact on the lives of other people. I remember the feeling of helplessness after 9/11 and after Hurricane Sandy. I remember how much people wanted to help. I remember how much generosity of spirit there was about wanting to give, wanting to be helpful, wanting to save lives. And many of you have had experiences since then—whether it was a mass shooting, or the wildfires, or floods. There have been times you have looked on and wondered how you could help. And now we ALL have that chance.

You can help by canceling anything that requires a group gathering. You can help by not using the medical system unless it is urgent. You can help by staying home if you are sick. You can help by cooking or shopping or doing errands for a friend who needs to stay home. You can help by watching someone’s kid if they need to cover for someone else at work. You can help by ordering take-out from your local restaurants. Eat the food yourself or find someone who needs it. You can help by offering to help bring someone’s college student home or house out-of-town students if you have extra rooms. You can help by asking yourself, “What can I and my family do to help?” “What can we offer?” You can help by seeing yourself as part of something bigger than yourself.

When the Apollo 13 oxygen tank failed and the lunar module was in danger of not returning to earth, Gene Kranz, the lead flight director overheard people saying that this could be the worst disaster NASA had ever experienced—to which he is rumored to have responded, “With all due respect, I believe this is going to be our finest hour.”

Imagine if we could make our response to this crisis our finest hour. Imagine if a year or two from now we looked back on this and told the stories of how we came together as a team in our community, in our state, in our nation and across the world. Your contribution to the finest hour may seem small, invisible, inconsequential—but every small act of ‘not doing’ what you were going to do, and ‘doing’ an act of kindness or support will add up exponentially. These acts can and will save lives. The Apollo 13 crew made it their finest hour by letting go of the word “I” and embracing the word “we.” And that’s the task required of us. It can only be our finest hour if we work together. You are all on the team. And we need all of you to shine in whatever way you can.

By Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky
B'nai David-Judea Congregation, a Modern Orthodox synagogue in Los Angeles

One of the brand new terms that has entered our daily conversation is "social distancing." It is shorthand, as we know very well, for the practical physical precautions that we all need to and must take in order to protect ourselves and others. I'd humbly suggest though, that we use the term itself sparingly, if at all. Language is a powerful shaper of thinking. And the very last thing we need right now, is a mindset of mutual distancing.

We actually need to be thinking in the exact opposite way. Every hand that we don't shake must become a phone call that we place. Every embrace that we avoid must become a verbal expression of warmth and concern. Every inch and every foot that we physically place between ourselves and another, must become a thought as to how we might be of help to that other, should the need arise. It is obvious that "distancing", if misplaced or misunderstood, will take its toll not only upon our community's strength and resiliency, but
upon the very integrity and meaning of our spiritual commitment... Let's stay safe. And let's draw one another closer in a way that we've never done before.

From the Letter of James 2:14-17

“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

Let us pray...

Divine Healer,

We find ourselves in a time of immediate need for many in our community and in our world. May our action today and everyday be a witness to our faith in your mercy, your compassion, and your profound love for each one of us and those whom we serve.

Guide our action so that we may be a beacon of hope in this time of fear and a community of support to each other.

From the Prophet Isaiah 58:6-8

Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose:

Releasing those bound unjustly,

Untying the thongs of the yoke;

Setting free the oppressed,
Breaking off every yoke?
Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry,

Bringing the afflicted and homeless into your house;

Clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own flesh?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn.

And your wound shall quickly be healed;

Your vindication shall go before you,
And the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

God of Justice,

Your prophet Isaiah reminds us how expansive your love is. As we respond to the needs of our patients today and to the needs of our community in the midst of the coronavirus, give us the grace and the wisdom to make decisions with the most vulnerable and the most marginalized in our hearts.

As always, may your expansive love bind us together in the sacred work we do today and guide our every interaction with each other.
From John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

God of Hope,

In this time of crisis, it is easy to cling to fear. A fear that closes us off to you and to our community. Instead of fear, let us cling to your word. Let our hearts not be afraid, but open to your call to compassionate care. Renew us with your peace and fill us with the hope that can only come from you.

Living our Values

Our core values of reverence, commitment to those who are poor, justice, stewardship, integrity, and safety call us to a higher path in all times. Seeing ourselves as a ministry, bringing the love of God to those we care for in tangible ways can be difficult in any time.

It is, however, in times like these where we discover who we are as individuals and as an organization. Living our values when it is hard, being a Catholic healthcare ministry when it is hard, is when we are called to live it more deeply.

Merciful and loving God,

You have called us to a ministry of service. We are in a time of deep need and preparation for what is to come. Give us the resolve to be who you have called us to be and the grace to love more deeply.

As always, bind us together as a community of healers and may the way we communicate and support each other be a witness of hope and love to our community.

On our Interdependence

A contagious outbreak acts as a visible sign of how connected we are as one human family. So many of our hopes and fears are shared universally around the world. This shared experience is a reminder to us of the immense good we can do with simple actions. Connecting to those who are isolated, showing compassion to all around us, and praying for those around the world who need our prayers.

God, Creator of the Universe,

You call us to solidarity. To act in ways that recognize the way your one human family are interdependent on each other and dependent on you. Guide us during this time to choose kindness in the face of difficulty and faith when tempted to dispar.

May our acts of solidarity bring us closer to each other and to your vision for our ministry.

Praying as a Global Community
On Sunday, March 22, Pope Francis said “We wish to respond to the pandemic of the virus with the universality of prayer, of compassion and tenderness. Let us remain united. Let us make our closeness felt to those who are along and to those who are most stricken. Let us also express our closeness to doctors, to health workers, nurses, volunteers and to authorities that have to take hard measures, but ones that are for our good.”

God of all humanity,

Hear our prayer today. May it unite us with the whole world as we grapple with this pandemic. Hear our prayer and fashion us into a people more committed to love and service of each other.

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**Finding Hope to Move Forward by Looking Back**

Our coordinated efforts during this pandemic rely on good communication, clear and decisive plans, and collecting good data. We also rely on hope. Let the legacy of our founders be a source of our hope. They have responded, throughout history to health crises all over the world, often with little to no resources. Their faith and hope in the future has brought us to this moment in history. We stand on their shoulders as we move forward in hope.

Loving God,

Your gift of hope has the power to raise our head when we feel discouraged and calm us when we are overwhelmed. Grant us the wisdom of our founders so we may be hope for each other and our teams now. May our hope carry forward in all we do as we care for the community of people you have called to serve.

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**Practicing Stewardship**

One aspect of stewardship that we don’t speak about enough is how we care for one another. Good stewardship includes the proper maintenance of our working relationships. Looking out for one another and helping one another in difficult moments are simple ways for us to live our value of stewardship. Perhaps today is a good day to take a look around your team and ask what they need. What do they need, beyond masks and schedules? What do they need at a deep level or a spiritual level to keep doing the important work that they do?

God of Abundance, our preparation for this pandemic heightens our awareness of what we have and what we do not have. Remind us that we have all that we need to be in relationship with you. You have given us all we need to care for each other. As we work to be good stewards, give us eyes to see each other and our relationships as gifts to be cared for. As always, bind us together as we work to serve your people.

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**A Prayer for Uncertain Times**

Sr. Cynthia Serjack, RSM

God of infinite mercy, hear our prayer!

In this time of bewilderment and fear, we ask you to give us the courage to take care of one another as Jesus did. For those who are ill, especially those who are frightened and alone, for those who cannot access health care, for those who are homeless and lost, hear our prayer!
In the midst of our sadness and grief, we ask you to give us words to comfort one another. For those who are dying, and for those who have already died from this virus, for those who tend to them and for those with no one to tend to them, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our own anxiety we ask you to give us the courage to support one another as you would. For those who are unexpectedly unemployed, for employers who share what they can, for our government and financial institutions and for those who lead them, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our struggle to ensure a healthy future for all who live on this planet, we ask you to give us the hope that surpasses our current understanding. For health care workers, spiritual leaders and our faith communities, for artists and poets, for prophets and teachers, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our growing awareness that all life on Earth is connected we ask for the heart to respect and cherish all life. That all peoples recognize that we are all your children, hear our prayer!

We trust in you and your power working in us. Please hear and answer our prayers.

Amen! Amen!

**Reflection on Solidarity and Mental Toughness**

Scott Opperman, Director of Mission Integration, Mercy Heath St. Mary’s

On March 15, 2020, the award-winning columnist Mitch Albom shared that his physician asked him a favor during a recent medical appointment. She requested, “Can you tell everyone to stay calm? To be kind to each other, and not panic? People in your position can make a difference.”

In his column, Albom shared: “[A] dark national mood is dangerous. For society. For the economy. For the future…it will lead to more panic. More anger. More people grabbing every roll of toilet paper for themselves…As much as we need to control the spread of the virus, we need to control the spread of hopelessness. It is every bit as debilitating…[M]isinformation can lead to fear, and…fear can lead to cruelty…How we handle ourselves the next few months will determine what our nation looks like for the next few years. The dangers of the virus should never be ignored. But neither should the hopefulness of surviving it. I have learned, through decades writing about the subject, that most people can’t really envision death. But they react mightily to the threat of it. Fear and depression quickly rise. Anger. Isolation. Doing and saying things they never did before.”

It’d be easy for our mood to become dark. To panic. To anger. To be hopeless. To fear. And, unfortunately, to become cruel. If we did, however, we’d lose our soul as a health care ministry that pledges to serve together in the Spirit of the Gospel. Our culture, which is based upon being true to our Mission, living our Values, and excelling in all we do, would erode. Let’s promise one another that we’re not going to let that happen.

I have two asks of everyone, based on my past service as chaplain-coach for a college football team. In my role, I constantly asked the players and staff in huddles and team meetings to focus on two behaviors:

1. **Solidarity.** They needed to value, care for and work together with all teammates, regardless if they liked one another, were second string, were walk-ons, hurt one another in the past, were freshman – whatever. They needed to love one another as brothers if they wanted to win a national championship.

2. **Mental toughness.** They needed to be focused on winning games together. I asked them not to be distracted by referees, opposing fans, past failures, recent successes, romantic relationships, or anything else. The players claimed they won back-to-back national NAIA championships while I was there because of their solidarity and mental toughness. They always had the talent.
Like the football team, Trinity Health has the most talented colleagues. What I think we need right now is solidarity and mental toughness to be true to our Mission, live our Values and excel in all we do. Solidarity and mental toughness.

**There are some things you learn best in calm, and some in storm.**

Willa Cather

Our life, like our planet’s life, knows both calm and storm. We experience times when our lake is placid and our sky cloudless. We also encounter days of howling winds and turbulent seas. We live many days in the in-between.

In all times, we can learn to deepen trust.

In times of calm, learning to trust is nuanced. When we are surrounded by tranquility, we can look closely at our environment. We can absorb detail – noticing subtle differences, grasping vital distinctions. We can understand relationships between things and in turn, our relationships to things. With insight, trust can become more practical.

In times of storm, learning to trust is sharpened. In the midst of a crisis, we discover what is most basic. Urgency demands our full attention and a shedding of all that is secondary. We learn what matters most; we respond to what we know to be essential. We scan our resources, drawing upon those skills that are needed for immediate safety. We act with our abilities; we rely on our faith; we hope. With focus, trust can become more functional.

In times of storm, learning to trust is inventive. When faced with difficulty, assurance can become dislodged. Uncertainty challenges our confidence and requires us to reach out – to loved ones, to God, to our communities, to those things that have helped us cope in the past. We build pathways back to those sanctuaries or we imagine and create new ways of attaching to those anchors that most deeply secure us. With creative effort, trust can be restored.

All of our circumstances can be a chance to grow in trust that ultimately, we will find our way.

*What has carried me through storms of the past? How can I trust that refuge today?*