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# Walking Out of The Upper Room

2020



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## Walking Out of The Upper Room

COVID-19 has been the unprecedented challenge in the life of humanity. Real or surreal, humanity's life has been shattered by the invisible enemy. The fear of death has dominated a great number of people's lives. Certainly, to many, the lockdown has become the bridge leading our lives to God. A time of solitude and reflection on the perception that we now are living in a new world.

With this booklet, I present to you a handful of reflections which in many ways offer a glimpse into my thoughts and feelings but equally highlight the struggles and turmoil of the spiritual life of humanity.

## Days of Spiritual Stimulus in our Faith Life

I can certainly tell that all we are experiencing is a time of transformation in every sense. The whole world has been challenged by the spread of coronavirus. The shutting down of almost every place including houses of prayer and worship brings us all closer to God. I would sincerely say that the days are crazy for the people of the world. As all people I too struggle to stay focused to make sure that I have not deviated from my path to fulfill the mission to serve God and my people. And truly God leads us all to turn these days into a time of spiritual stimulus in our faith life. This is a time of spiritual transformation, a time to grow in God, to value the precious gift of life and render respect for humanity and care for the creation. Undoubtedly, once all the turmoil settles down, we can no longer adapt the old ways of life behavior.

In a recent interview, I shared a genuine thought that the world in which we live today is not what God has graced us with. Thus, we have a responsibility to recover the lost beauty of the world and sanctity of life. It is my wish and fervent prayer that we all turn those most challenging days into days of spiritual stimulus in our faith life. And when we restart our community life, we all ought to make sure that the pattern of our life is changed. Humanity cannot live the life without bearing God in the self. Spirituality needs to be embracing in such a way that greed must be uprooted from the life of the world family to secure peace and the beauty of nature. There is much to be learned from innocence of children, who in these days of despair inspire us all with joy and humility. The purity of their heart will cure the physical and spiritual disease which has flared up and spreading rapidly. I would kindly ask all people to listen to the prayer recited by their heart. Let us humble ourselves and love God our Lord with words of thanksgiving and glorifying the Holy name of the Almighty.

Dear God, bless the world, and guide us all to uphold firm in our hearts your love and wisdom to live a meaningful life. Let these days lead us to set a new journey of life in Your hands so that we may fulfill Your golden rules to secure the peace of the world and the spiritual rebirth of humanity which is created in Your All Merciful image. Amen.

*March 25, 2020*

## “The Accessible Church”

In a matter of few days and weeks, the whole world has changed and humanity is now almost accustomed to a pattern of new life. We all are adopting to new measures of lifestyle – social distancing. However, the vision of the church’s mission is relived in new methods and the pastors are looking for ways to introduce “the accessible Church” in the spirituality of humanity. We have often heard the saying “Where there is a will, there is a way.” Catholicos Karekin I, of blessed memory, gave us all a new version of this statement: Where there is a will, there are thousands of ways.”

Certainly, live-streaming and many other methods of spreading the Word of God and fulfilling our pastoral duties and responsibilities is most commendable. Our faith in God is the undying ingredient within our own being.

It can constantly sprout when we pray and secure our close relationship with God. Faith is the master key to endure all kinds of tribulations but above all, our faith deepens within us divine strength and wisdom to count our blessings.

The coronavirus pandemic which in many ways has driven the whole world to the verge of collapse, has to be trodden. The socio-economic life has been disrupted, humanity has been challenged to regain and reclaim spiritual and moral values. The world family is experiencing an unprecedented moment of solitude and transformation. In these uncertain times, we are sharing our personal prayer life with our community. I feel in the depth of my heart and soul the message of Christ, our Lord.

“Give the account of your stewardship.” God is calling on us all to protect the sanctity of the gift of life graced upon us. We cannot abuse God’s most precious gift. Life is not granted for lab-experimental studies. Life should reflect the image of God. Let’s cherish this beautiful gift of life. Let the love of God dominate the entire world. And this message empowers us all to have the vision of “The Accessible Church”.

*March 26, 2020*



## **Boosting our inner spiritual mechanism**

I trust that a human being is the most durable entity both physically and more so, spiritually. What the world is going through is unthinkable yet it is incredible to see and witness that people are seeking ways to boost their inner spiritual mechanism. Children and adults as well as the elderly are becoming more creative to fight the “invisible enemy” and are able to change their spiritual lives and mechanism.

What amazes me so much nowadays is that wherever we go we see people are able to be accustomed to the new set of rules and life, as in addition to being remarkably creative to stand tall and strong.

Last night, I went grocery shopping at Whole Foods and I have to say to my admiration, most people were cheerful and more respectful to one another. What I also have noticed is that people have been most considerate. This aspect is inspiring and uplifting and truly a major step which helps us all boost our inner spiritual mechanism. The one word which we can all use is resilience for all situations. That means that the human person has some kind of hidden storage in the layers of the spirituality which at the right time pumps up energy to boost our inner strength and continue to live a meaningful life.

O God, you are the source of true life. Guide us all to rebound our lives to focus our prayers and thoughts on the things which are pleasing to Your will. These are days of solitude for us to stand alone in Your presence and rethink of the call You have graced on us all. Let Your life-giving Word enlighten the darkened corners of my soul so that Your gift of life is once again reflected in my actions and faith life. With You alone I set the beginning of a new life's journey. Blessed is Your holy name. Amen.

*March 27, 2020*

## A Healthy Immune System A Healthy Economy

A healthy immune system and a healthy economy are of great concern in the most challenging days. I cannot believe that the world community has ever experienced the extent of the disparity as the COVID 19 pandemic. People are most concerned and devastated due to the present situation which has affected the health of humanity and the global economy.

The question which is put forward needs to be addressed by humanity. Can we overcome this tsunamic wave of fear? I would say “yes.” The people of the world have the wisdom to defeat the upheaval of COVID-19. Leaders from all sectors of the communities have been dispatching all kinds of directives, rules and regulations to avoid the unthinkable and the “invisible enemy” which has shattered the world family. “Stay home – stay safe” pursues the noble cause to stop the spread of the deadly disease in order that we may once again reclaim our healthier immune system and a stronger economy.

Ignorance is not acceptable. Respect for the well-being of human life is vital and it can be applied if only when the necessary steps we take together reflect the ultimate understanding of our behavior. It can be summarized in one word – Respect. The more careful we are for the gift of life and the world, the sooner we regain the healthy state of our humanity and the economy.

Humanity must have experienced similar pandemics and has fought fiercely to stop the spreading of viruses. The COVID-19 is a pandemic which requires the collective efforts of the world community. Being extra cautious and responsible certainly should be considered as an act of our faith in God.

O God, our Lord, keep the world in peace and prosperity. Enlighten the spiritual lives of Your children with Your divine love and wisdom. You have sent Your Only Begotten Son into the world for our salvation. He has sacrificed His life so that we may all follow the path leading us to the Truth in God alone.

*March 28, 2020*

## Life on eggshells

As we all look at our surroundings, we then clearly see that people are living a life “on eggshells.” The reason for this new reality is obviously the uncontrolled spread of COVID19, which has threatened the lives of humanity. The acceleration of the new behavior of lifestyle will certainly impact the perception of life in general. What I also have witnessed is that under the circumstances not taking into account the exceptions, most people are turning to God and adopting a new approach toward life.

“Life on eggshells.” Is this a pattern of life justified? I would say that in one way being cautious and following the directives of both civic and religious leaders is vital, yet on the other hand, I would hope and expect that whence we are no longer threatened by the COVID 19, we continue to live “a life on eggshells.” What I mean in saying so, is that we set a new journey of life abandoning all acts which harm the beauty of the world and reclaiming the God-pleasing conduct of life.

God has graced us all with the free will. However, God never meant to abuse the trust which the Almighty put in us. I believe firmly that this time of stay home should be plateau of spiritual transformation. Generations will then read one of the darkest pages of human history, yet the same history with radiate the spark of New life with God.

Almighty God, each time I utter words of prayer, I relieve the journey of New Life. As I walk with You, my life is luminous and peaceful, but above all, I am graced with spiritual rebirth. As I look at people and into the depth of their hearts, I see Your divine image, the journey of Your sacrificial life. Then I make the commitment to attain humility in my spiritual being.

*March 30, 2020*

## The emergence of spiritual rebirth into the life of humanity

Certainly, the world is witnessing an unprecedented spiritual rebirth as the COVID-19 coronavirus challenges the world family. I would say that the spirituality of humanity which has been in a rapid decline has now rebounded and people have not only reclaimed their faith in God, but an enriching and an empowering behavior in human relationship is now most visible. If for many years neighbors living on the same street were unaware of the presence of each other, they are now greeting one another with a smile and a gentle wave, despite the much-needed social distancing.

I would say that a “tsunami” of a new and gentle life behavior is now spreading in the layers of humanity. Civic leaders, physicians, social workers and I would say most people from all sectors of the communities around the world have been working harder to save lives and bring hope and joy into the lives of humanity.

This new aspect can certainly be seen as the reawakening of spirituality, the rebirth of faith life emerging into the life of humanity. The world was advancing and rapidly progressing in science and technology, yet humanity was losing the sense of morality, the basis of the beauty of the world.

Humanity cannot and should not abandon God and disregard what God has entrusted to us. This beautiful world needs care and respect. God has granted us a most beautiful world for our spiritual comfort and enjoyment, yet humanity continually questioned the very existence of God.

In these most troubling times, we need not lose our faith. Faith is the key ingredient to apply our wisdom in the regaining of our beautiful world. The climax of the beauty of the creation is human relationship, which can be achieved and cultivated through faith in God.

*March 31, 2020*

## **Live-streamed church services have turned our homes into living Churches**

The world in which we live is far different than what it was merely a month ago. It is almost unbelievable to witness that the world has changed overnight and humanity has adopted new methods of living, despite the disruption of the order of living and the sharp fall of the economy. Time will heal the fear we all are filled with. I believe in the depth of my heart in the wake of this new order of life will once again embrace the miracles and deeds of good nature.

I dare to say that the creation story is setting a new dawn in the life of humanity. God has taken over the lead. Sometimes, it feels as though we have become “prisoners” in our own homes. But we thank God and honor the wise people who have created the tools to be used for a better purpose. Technology has given us the tools to live-stream church services and convey the Word of God to those who yearn for spiritual nourishment. Thus, our homes have turned into living churches.

People have understood that life and the human culture can be attained virtually. The latter should not be a means of abandoning the true level of human relationship. The pause should only be a time of purpose-driven solitude, a time to grow in God and fulfill the divine messages radiating from the Holy Bible.

*April 1, 2020*

**“A waltz a day keeps the doctor away.”**

**André Rieu**

In these most difficult days, people share with one another astonishing clips and stories. I am no different. One of the most fascinating clips that I enjoy is a musical performance conducted by André Rieu. In one performance, he calls on a hundred and five-year-old lady Sister Leona, a fan of the waltz dance. And the most captivating moment was when André Rieu invites her to a dance. Thousands of emotional people honor them with a rousing standing ovation.

To me, the world family should live these beautiful moments. This should be the choice for the right way of a noble life which leads us to create the beautiful and inspires us to come closer to God and the people of God.

As the waltz ended with Sister Leona, André Rieu went up on stage and made the following statement: “A waltz a day keeps the doctor away.”

My short reflections are the prayers of my hearts. In times of solitude, these are my dialogues with God as many of them end with a prayer from my heart to God.

Almighty God, my life journey has been with You and I have to thank You for always guiding my steps on the path to the truth. Though at times, I have stumbled, You have always lifted me up and protected me from going astray. In your Holy Hands, I put my entire life. Amen.

*April 2, 2020*

## A Children's Prayer Book for Holy Week

For the first time on Palm Sunday, the church sanctuary was empty. Christ's triumphant entry into the Holy City was celebrated without the luminous children's procession. I vividly remember my childhood years when me and my brothers dressed up in white clothes and with candles holding palm and olive branches rushed to the nearby church to be in traditional procession. These memorable moments will always stay with me and with most of us.

This year's Palm Sunday celebration felt quite extraordinary. Children stayed in their homes and were deprived of participating in the Palm Sunday procession. It is truly sad, yet I would ask from all parents to encourage your children to lead a prayerful life. Teach them to pray, to cross themselves, for it is our collective responsibility to teach our children the way leading to God through recitation of prayers.

Therefore, I have a gift for all children. It is a prayer book, selected prayers from my heart which I have compiled. I have been sharing them on Facebook and eventually the twelve prayers and the songs will be made available on our Diocesan Facebook page.

Dear parents, you are the guardians of your children. Instruct them the Word of God and inspire them with the life of Christ, our Lord and with the faith of our forefathers.

My beloved children, we missed you greatly on Palm Sunday. It is painful for us all to close the doors of our churches to stop the spread of the coronavirus and keep you all at your homes. Yet remember that what keeps us together is prayer. When we pray, we are the invisible procession led by Jesus. I will be praying for the children of the world family and will be waiting for your prayers.

*April 2, 2020*

## Out of sight but present in mind

In these days of quarantine, as priests, we are inclined to hold church services through live-stream media platforms. However, I would like to assure our faithful that though they may be out of our immediate sight, yet present in our minds. I would even say that in these most difficult times, in times of solitude, we certainly remember our faithful members fondly and feel a sense of deep gratitude for their engagement in the life of the church community.

The beauty of the church life is reflected in the presence of the faithful as they pray, work, and build together.

With this note, I would like to extend a simple message to all by saying that even in these most challenging days, as we try to adopt to the new lifestyle, we pause to cherish our moments with God as we open up our hearts and converse with the Almighty, making the promise to initiate a new dawn in our lives.

Here is another though I wish to share. God, though invisible, is ever-present. It is not necessary to see God with our physical eyes. The beauty and the depth of our faith emerges in the way we feel and see God in our souls.

I would like to end my reflection with the assurance given to my faithful that in these difficult times, you were all in my prayers, and I also felt the warmth of your prayers, which strengthened my faith in God.

*April 6, 2020*



## **“Social Distancing? I would say it is physical distancing.”**

On Friday night, April 3, during a Zoom call meeting with an ACYO Central Council members and close to thirty ACYO participants, Fr. Sarkis Petoyan, the pastor of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church of Pasadena, joined the meeting with his daughter Grace and made an interesting comment. “I don’t agree with the term social distancing. I would rather say it is physical distancing.” I immediately caught the moment and decided to share the same statement with my reader.

Certainly, we should all agree with Fr. Sarkis and continue our dialogue through various lines of communication. Our fight has to show the strong resilience and commitment. We all can and should fight this “invisible enemy.” Faith is the ultimate spiritual tool. In addition, we need to exercise the gift of wisdom graced on us by God.

Now going back to the Zoom meeting, I have to say very sincerely that it was such a joy to be with the youth. Their spiritual energy and willingness to be active in the life of the church is most commendable. During the meeting, amongst many other issues, the most important item of discussion was the establishment of virtual classes for the youth. This alone shows their bond to the Church and their eagerness to live the Christian Faith.

God, bless our youth and empower them constantly with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Give them all your protection and lead their steps to the sanctity of a God-pleasing life.

*April 6, 2020*

## God – The Destiny of Our Lives

“We do not know what to do but our eyes are on you” (2 Chronicles 20:12).

“Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's” (2 Chronicles 20:15).

In these most trying times, the Word of God continues to be the sole source of comfort and peace. I am not certain if I will be able to truly express my inner thoughts and feelings as to how my relationship with God is established. Certainly, it is the state of mind and soul which has grown within me throughout the years and continues to direct my thoughts towards God.

“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

The Church Fathers and amongst them St. Augustine has developed a unique relationship with God and in Him alone, the saint found his refuge and the ultimate destiny of the God-given life.

Tonight, as I have been walking around the Diocesan Headquarters, special thoughts rushed into my head, yet I never lost my focus on God. And as I have been doing this mini type of retreat walking at nights during the lockdown, I pray God to grant us all the strength to stay firm and strong in our faith, allowing us to grow in patience and gain a deeper understanding of God's wondrous gift of life. This is the time to differentiate material values from spiritual ones. Spiritual values have been trodden and materialism has not only distanced us from God but equally from one another.

This is the time to surrender our lives into the hands of the Almighty God and heed to the divine words - “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's.”

*May 4, 2020*

## **“Remember the marvels the Lord has done!”**

*(Psalm 105:5)*

These words radiating from the Holy Bible reawaken within us a moment of spiritual rebirth to look at life with courage and revisit the history of the creation and humanity. During these trying times of COVID-19, we need to focus our prayers on God alone and lead our thoughts into the depths of history of humanity to remember the marvels the Lord has done. God never abandoned humanity. And God will bring new marvels into our distress and tribulations. Having been created in the image of God, we ought to look into the depths of our souls and exercise our faith as the key element of spiritual gift to regain our wisdom and continue our journey with God.

I chose these words from the Psalms and found hope and light in them. Humanity needs to see the marvels the Lord has done. This moment of searching needs to be applied not only individually but collectively, as the people of God. God did not bring the COVID-19 pandemic nor other pandemics into this world. I hope and pray that during these troublesome times of isolation, we will be reawakening within our spirituality the closeness with God and above all the inner desire to reclaim the everlasting wisdom to become co-creators with Lord to bring back what we have lost.

As I look at the Creation, I then see that even the nature is regaining its original divine beauty and people are cultivating within their hearts a new move towards life and people in general.

I firmly believe that as we adopt to the new way of life, we will then be the living marvel the Lord is pouring into our hearts. It will be the marvel which will be remembered by future generations.

May 10, 2020

**“With God life never dies.”**

*Pope Francis*

Life graced upon us all is a journey with no end. The words of Pope Francis speaks to us with the full commitment lived through the greatest tool of faith. The world is in a panic, as humanity is threatened with the fear of death due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As Christians, we need to grasp the truth: With God life never dies. Life dies when our faith no longer is the inner movement of our spirituality. We ought to live a life imitating Christ, for Christ refused the notion of dying and trampled over death. His Resurrection turned into the doorway of new life; a life continued in God. Our entire life is the journey of “pandemic.” How do we respond to the countless viruses surrounding our everyday life? Thus, if we are wise and strong in our faith life, as true Christians, we will turn our lives into an everlasting journey.

The COVID-19 coronavirus, an unseen enemy, cannot and should not shatter our lives. We need to apply the rules and regulations of physical and social distancing and exercise solitude for a period. Additionally, we ought to adopt a new lifestyle which requires armoring our lives with the messages radiating from the gospels and the life of our Lord.

With God life never dies.

Therefore, let us all surrender our entire life into the hands of God, and cultivate a life safer and pleasing to the Lord.

May 10, 2020

## **“Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?”**

*(Mark 4:40)*

The life of a human being is always entangled in storms and turbulent waters. The journey of our life is challenged with all kinds of hurdles. And fear dominates our lives when we tend to exercise our faith and reveal within us the strength God has graced on us all. We often feel abandoned by God, yet we tend to forget to put our faith in action.

When Christ, our Lord, addressed His disciples as they were sailing together in stormy weather, He equally addresses us all with the same words: “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?”

Christ, our Lord is reminding us to put off the dust accumulated on our faith. Furthermore, He challenges us all to live the faith, the most important ingredient to illuminate our spiritual life. Thus, each of us need to respond to Christ with courage and fight the challenges and hurdles pounding on us in life and live our life with the Master.

Let us trust the Lord our God and thus faith will lead us all to stand tall and strong against all the odds of the present times.

*May 10, 2020*

## Sense of Meekness

*“There is no land more beautiful than the heart of others, there is no land more beautiful to gain than the peace found with a brother. And that is the land to inherit with meekness.”*

*Pope Francis*

When we have lost the sense of meekness, we then find ourselves in the state of ruining our relationship with God. And the world we live in today is witnessing this reality: losing the sense of meekness. This state of mind and soul dominates our life when we turn away God and refuge to follow the life of Christ, our Lord. As Christians, we ought to make the promise to imitate Christ. This must be the calling of all those who are baptized in the name of Christ, our Lord and have chosen the path designed by Christ. And the promise to walk with Christ becomes real when we pray unceasingly and tirelessly. This is the journey which leads our lives to holiness. We are not born as saints; however, having been created in the image of the Almighty, we have been graced with the divine gifts, tools which and when used and lived we then inherit meekness. This is the virtue which brings us all closer to God and to all.

May 11, 2020

## In honor of doctors and nurses

*“Our role isn’t just to provide outstanding care clinically and scientifically with treatments and cures, but also to do in a highly compassionate setting, which includes providing for the spiritual support for families.”*

*Paul Viviano*

I have known Paul Viviano personally and can certainly adhere to the sincerity of his words. His words come from the heart. He has inspired me with the dedication he has shown for children and their families at the Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.

As I write these words, I lift up my heart and pray for all doctors and nurses, whose lives have become a blessing for all people who suffer of illness. And I agree with Paul Viviano, that whatever the care doctors and nurses offer is vital. However, more visible than their professionalism is their spiritual touch and support for sick people and their families. Often people are looking for miracles, yet are forego those miracles that accompany us. I have never doubted that doctors and nurses dedicate their lives without the living faith. Their willingness to sacrifice speaks volumes of their faith in God. They respond to God’s call with dignity and bring joy and hope into the hearts of sick people. Ultimately, their passion and respect for human life is worthy of honor. Paul Viviano is a compassionate human being who cares for the people of God.

May 11, 2020

## The Church needs to be part of our lives

Life without the Church cannot be the same. I speak with all honesty and wish wholeheartedly that all people had the same inner spiritual ingredient in themselves. The Church has been part of my life and I could not have imagined living without its continual presence. It is true that the Church has been an inseparable part of my life since childhood. As an adult and then as a priest, I have appreciated the immense impact the Church has left on me. And I sincerely believe that people who have distanced themselves from the Church are surely lacking something precious. These are people who most of the time are goodhearted and yet one can tell that God is not speaking to us through their hearts. God is with them and in them obviously. And what the Church does to them is reminding them that God is the source of our lives.

Therefore, let the Church be part of your life. We are not choosing the Church because of the priest, who has been supportive to us, helping and teaching us to pray. We need to be part of the Church and make the need to be part of our life, so that we may exercise God's will in the life of our friends.

*May 11, 2020*



## The Upper Room

This may sound strange to many, yet to me personally, and most likely to many of us, this time of lockdown and physically social distancing is the time in the “Upper Room” in our lives. This is the time of testing of faith in God, the time to meet Christ and walk out of the lockdown as a new person is ready to go out into the world with new visions and aspirations.

The disciples of Christ, our Lord, who were gathered in the Upper Room, had a time of solitude and prayer, and as they have walked out of the Upper Room, they carried in their hearts the living example of their Master. The lockdown which has spanned over a number of weeks has become a time to grow spiritually, to mature in God alone and embrace the spirit of love and meekness in my heart.

Therefore, let us put aside all the temptations we all have experienced and put on us Christ as the true path to follow. Certainly, many of us have felt in the Upper Room and have made exciting promises to ourselves. Many have said often the pandemic life will not be the same. Let us look at the life from a positive perspective. The lockdown has taught us to be closer to God, to our families and nature. We all have witnessed the most inspiring moments of families spending precious time together walking together. As for the elders who have stayed at their homes alone, even though the lockdown must have been a difficult time for them, yet their prayers were heard loud and clear, keeping us strong and committed. And remember, when you open the doors of your home to restart your life, you will be met with God. Therefore, let the journey of your life continue with God.

*May 11, 2020*

## A Zoom Call with God

Have you ever experienced a Zoom call with God? I would have never realized that God will meet us through a Zoom call. What matters is the heart will to open up to a dialogue with God. What I have recently experienced that even through Zoom calls, God's love radiates through the hearts of people of all ages. As long as we seek God in our lives, God will always be there for us.

Zoom calls have helped us all to establish bridges with our siblings, friends and with people at our workplaces. And whenever we are engaged in dialogue with them, God is always there to deepen our faith and brighten up our day with His divine wisdom and above all, with the hope of a new dawn in our lives.

Dear friends, take the zoom call from God and the people of God, for these calls defeat the "coronavirus" which currently troubles the minds and souls of humanity.

Zoom calls from heart to hearts of the people of God have long existed. And when you leave the zoom meeting, please do not abort your spiritual ties with God and the people of God. For this is what God is expecting from us.

*May 12, 2020*

## ՄԻՐՏՍ ՔԵՉ ԲԱՑԻ

*«ՏԷ՛ր, եթէ գշրթունս իմ բանաս,  
Բերան իմ երգեսցէ զօրհնութիւնս Զ»:*

Կիրակի, 17 Մայիսի 2020-ի առաւօտն է: Աղօթքս կատարեցի եւ խաղաղ սրտով կը պատրաստուիմ մասնակցիլ ս. պատարագին: Արդէն երրորդ ամիսն է, համաճարակի մեկուսացման շրջանին գուցէ աւարտին ենք հասած: Իւրովի խորհրդածութիւններս ինձ մտածել կու տան, թէ ինչպէ՞ս կարելի եղաւ տոկալ կեանքի այս տարօրինակ իրավիճակին, որն եւ պարտադրուեցաւ ողջ աշխարհի վրայ զգուշաւորութիւն դրսեւորելու ու համաճարակի տարածումը կասեցնելու համար: Պատասխանն այն է, որ Աստուած բոլորիս մէջ աւելցուց գիտակցութեան ու համբերութեան չափը եւ ի մասնաւորի աղօթքով զօրացած դիմագրաւելու այս փորձութիւնը եւս:

Աստուած ամենակարող, Զեզի կու գամ այս առաւօտ եւ աղօթքի այս բառերով կը սկսիմ կիրակին: «ՏԷ՛ր, եթէ գշրթունս իմ բանամ, բերան իմ երգեսցէ զօրհնութիւնս Զ»:

Իրօք երանելի է այն մարդը, որ օրը կը սկսի Աստուծոյ հետ, աղօթքով առաջնորդուած կեանքի խոստումով: Որովհետեւ երբ կեանքը կ'ապրինք Աստուծոյ հետ եւ այն կը խմորենք աղօթքի ապրումներով, ապա այդ կեանքը խաղաղ է ու շնորհաբաշխ:

Այս Կիրակի, գուցէ առաջին անգամն ըլլալով, ես ինձ հարց կու տամ, թէ ինչու՞ համար եւ ինչպէ՞ս է, որ մարդիկ չարին դերակատարողը կը դառնան եւ պատուհարտով կողմէ ուղղորդուած կը միտին արատաւորել մարդուն կեանքը առանց հիմնաւորումի: Բնական է՝ այդպիսիք ոչ միայն անհատին կրնան կամ կը փորձեն նեղութիւն պատճառել, բայց առաւել եւս խանգարել նաեւ համայնքին կեանքը: Այդպիսիք կը յաջողին ժամանակի մը համար,

բայց կը մոռնան, որ արդարութիւնը թերեւս կ'ուշանայ, բայց ի վերջոյ կը հասնի: Եւ գուցէ Աստուած առիթ կ'ընծայէ, որ չարանեւզ խորհուրդներով առաջնորդուած մարդիկ ունենան անդրադարձումի ու զոջումի պահը, եւ եթէ այդ տեղի չ'ունենար, արդէն Աստուած կը կատարէ դատաստանը: Ահա Նոյն փորձառութեան մէջէն կ'անցնիմ Նաեւ ես, եւ մամոնայի ծառաներ, որպէսզի ծածկեն իրենց անիրաւութիւնները, կը փորձեն եւ շատ դառն հարուածներով կ'աշխատին արատաւորելինձ, մոռնալով սակայն, որ ի տարբերութիւն իրենց կեանքի ճանապարհին իմ կեանքը մութ չէ եւ ոչ ալ հանգուցաւորուած տարիներու վրայ բարդուած անիրաւութիւններով ու խարդախութիւններով: Եւ փառք Աստուծոյ, խաղաղ Է հոգիս ու խիղճս, եւ այդ Է Նաեւ պատճառը, որ անհիմն ժայռակերտ քարեր չեն կրնար կործանել ինձ: Անշուշտ կը ցաւիմ, եւ սակայն հաւատքս իր արմատն Է գտած Աստուծոյ մէջ եւ Նոյն հաւատքով աղօթքս կը բարձրացնեմ առ Աստուած աղօթքի այս բառերով, որոնց մէջ գտած եմ ի մանկութենէ եւ այսօր ուղիս իմ կեանքին. «Տէ՛ր, եթէ գշրթունս իմ բանաս, բերան իմ երգեսցէ զօրհնութիւնս Քո»:

Տէր իմ Աստուած, Դուն ես քննողը մարդկանց սիրտերուն: Քու Աջին զօրութիւնով ամրացուց զիս գիշեր ու ցերեկ: Պիտի շարունակեմ քայլել Քու ուղեգծած ճանապարհէն եւ Քու խօսքերը պիտի դարձնեմ լոյսը իմ կեանքին: Ինչքան փորձութիւններ կը շրջապատեն ինձ, այնքան կ'առատացնես իմ մէջ համբերութեան չափը եւ աւելին հաւատքս կը դարձնես անդրդուելի:

17 Մայիս, 2020

## ԴՌՆԲԱՑԷՔԻ ԱՐԱՐՈՂՈՒԹԻՒՆ

**«Եկեղեցին անարատ Մայր է եւ անկէ կը ծնինք լոյսի եւ ճշմարտութեան զաւակներ, եւ ան մեզի համար կեանքի լոյս է եւ անով կը գտնենք հոգիի փրկութիւնը, եւ ան մեզի համար արդարութեան ճամբայ է եւ անով կ'ելլենք մեր Երկնաւոր Յօր Քրիստոսի մօտ»:**

Դռնբացեքի արարողակարգէն քաղուած այս հաստատումը արդարեւ կը խօսի եկեղեցւոյ առաքելութեան մասին: Ս. Մկրտութեամբ հոգեւորապէս կը վերածնինք, որպէս որդեգիր զաւակներ Աստուծոյ, որպէս «լոյսի եւ ճշմարտութեան զաւակներ»:

«Լոյսի եւ ճշմարտութեան զաւակներ» կը դառնանք, երբ կը հետեւինք Քրիստոսի ու Անոր Աւետարանին: Եկեղեցին աղբիւրն է լոյսի, քանզի եկեղեցւոյ մէջ դեմ յանդիման ենք Աստուծոյ, ու Անոր ներկայութիւնը մեզ կը ներշնչէ հոգւոյ փրկութիւնը ու մեր առջեւ կը բանայ ճանապարհը արդարութեան, որ եւ մեզ կ'առաջնորդէ դէպի Երկնաւոր Յօր:

Եկեղեցին կամուրջն է Աստուծոյ եւ մարդուն միջեւ, եկեղեցւոյ մէջ ըլլալ կը նշանակէ բարձրանալ առ Աստուած: Եւ մարդուն եւ այս պարագային քրիստոնեայի կեանքին նշանաբանը պիտի ըլլայ ընտրել դէպի Աստուած տանող ճանապարհը:

Քորոնավիրուսի համաճարակի մեկուսացման օրերը անտարակոյս իւրաքանչիւրիս կեանքը այլակերպեց ու լուսաւորեց առաւել Աստուածգիտութեամբ՝ ունենալու ինքնաճանաչման գիտակցութեան մնայուն անդրադարձումը մեր ապրած կեանքի ընթացքին, որպէսզի մեր մէջ չնուազի Աստուծոյ սերը, եւ հոգւոյ շնորհներով ապրելու կամքն ու ոգին:

Քորոնավիրուսի համաճարակը աշխարհի կեանքը շատ կտրուկ կերպով նոր ընթացքի մը մէջ դրաւ: Երանի

թէ մարդիկ միշտ մօտիկ մնան Աստուծոյ, հոգեւորը վեր դասէն նիւթական արժէքներէն, որոնք կը պղտորեն մեր միտքն ու հոգին՝ հեռու պահելով մեզ հոգեւոր կոչումէն, որուն գիտակցութեամբ կ'ապրինք իմաստաւորեալ կեանք մը: Քորոնավիրուսի մեկուսացման այս օրերուն մարդկային կարողութեանս ներածին չափով ջանք չինայեցի՝ ունենալու աղօթքի ու ներհայեցողութեան մասնաւոր առիթներ, որոնք իմ մէջ կրկնապատկեցին տոկալու ու համբերելու չափերը: Անկեղծօրէն եղան ժամանակներ, երբ մարդկային տկար եութիւնս յաղթեց, եւ ունեցայ ցրտամի պահեր, բայց փառք Աստուծոյ, շատ արագ հեռու վանեցի ինձմէ այդպիսի պահեր: Եւ անկասկած բոլորս ալ մեր հոգու ծալքերուն մէջ ունինք զօրութիւն, զորս իր ժամին կը բխի ու կը զօրացնէ մեզ:

Փորձութեան այս օրեր շուտով կ'անցնին, եւ երբ դէպի բնական կեանք կը վերադառնանք, հետեւինք Դռնբացէքի արարողութենէն քաղուած պատգամին, որպէսզի մեր մէջ նորոգենք կոչումը քրիստոնէական, ուխտը՝ եկեղեցւոյ ծառայութեան, եւ մեր հոգու հայեացքն ուղղենք առ Աստուած: Այս իմաստով անցնող օրերն ու ամիսները ինձ համար եւ վստահօրէն շատերու համար եւս եղան լուսաւորութեան օրեր:

*24 Մայիսի, 2020*

## A Hidden Pandemic

In an article titled “Counting Lives in a culture of death” authored by Matthew R. Petrussek, Ph.D., we come across the data of deaths due to certain crises in the life of society. In the United States, the lists of the data are shocking and yet hidden from the news media.

- 68,029 – The number of deaths due to overdoses between February 2018 and February 2019, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).
- 48,000 – The number of deaths due to suicide in 2018, according to the CDC.
- 16,214 – The number of deaths due to murder and non-negligent manslaughter in 2018, according to the FBI.
- 1,095,000 – The estimated number of aborted babies in the United States, representing roughly 22% of all pregnancies, according to the numbers from the World Health Organization.

Learning the statistic of the estimated number of aborted babies a year vis a vis the coronavirus, I was deeply pained and concerned. How could this happen in a civilized society? What is the justification by civic leaders? How can the world society hide this alarming crisis? And as I was reading the data provided by the author, I then remembered one of the astounding sermons of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, wherein the influential religious figure noted an alarming statistic of a child passing every 27 seconds of hunger and malnutrition.

This makes me think that the world is suffering from a “hidden” pandemic and that COVID-19 is not the only threat posed to humanity. The whole world is challenged to change.

God is at our doorsteps and it is time to give the account of our stewardship. The stewardship of life graced upon us should not be taken for granted. We are responsible for all of the listed crises above and it is the time to correct our life’s

behavior. Humanity has been locked down for a reason. This has been a time of self-examination. Many have said that life will never be the same after the coronavirus outbreak. I hope and pray that we keep the promise through our prayerful life to reclaim the beauty of life as entrusted to us by God.

*May 25, 2020*



## God is Hurting

One of the greatest gifts the US Constitution guarantees her citizens is the right to a peaceful assembly. Peaceful voices against injustice have been heard for days. However, violence shall lead us nowhere. Moreover, it will further divide us as a nation. As a religious leader in the City of Angels, I will preach the Word of God. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you" (John 14:27). Tonight, we also pray for God's divine wisdom to enter into the minds and hearts of people. It is only through peace and wisdom that we learn, progress and grow. The peaceful fight against injustice must be done with respect for those who are suffering. Racism, hate, and violence have no place in our hearts and do not belong in our communities.

May God's divine wisdom and peace rule the streets of this blessed nation of the United States of America. My plea to all is exercise the noble act of respect for one another. Let prayer lead us in these times of great tribulation. We all have the moral obligation and the calling to become God's architects of peace. When we hurt one another, we hurt God. We must come together as one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty, equality, and justice for all.

*May 31, 2020*