

In this time, I along with my peers, family, friends, and indeed all of my brothers and sisters, are facing uncertainty, fear, isolation, and a pain of the heart that I have never felt so keenly before. It all started with the outbreak of COVID 19. Our leaders and our citizens, myself and those I love have all been affected. The entire world was taken aback by this disease, it was almost as if we, as the human race, had forgotten that we are mortal and susceptible to illness and will all die and be taken back to the bosom of our Lord. In this time, we have faced multiple challenges, ranging from social isolation and quarantine, to the hardest decision of all, the dispensation of the Mass and Sacraments. All of us have heard the depressing and fearful news that has been reported ever since the outbreak back in March, and we have let this fear of moving forward, this fear of dare I say, our mortality, sink its claws so deep into our hearts and minds that we have become swept away in all of the darkness, despair, depression.

We have forgotten who we are, we have forgotten that there is still good in this world, and that it's worth fighting for. Have we stumbled so far away from our Lord that we have forgotten that we are His? That He called us by name before we were even conceived in our mothers' womb and that He has plans not to harm us, but to prosper us? Oh! How alike are we to our ancestors the Israelites who doubted and forgot the great, amazing, and awesome works of our Lord God! Have we like them entered into the wilderness? Do we, like them, still have faith and trust that He will deliver us safely into the Promised Land?

I pray and hope that we do, though I myself have been swept away in this despair, I will challenge myself to trust in the Lord our God who has never not been present with us. He has fought and stayed by our side, who is to say that He will not this time? In this time when His children are crying out to Him, He hears us. How do I know? I know because I have felt Him, I know because I have received Him into the very fiber and heart of my being, I know because at every mass He offers Himself to me. I know because I have been like the woman caught in adultery, surrounded by darkness, pain, and hurt. And though I thought I could fight them on my own, these voices knocked me down every time and brought me to my knees in pain and fear. Yet it was when I cried out that I heard a still small voice whisper in my heart, that I am His and that even after everything I have done, He still loves me. The immense power and love behind these words brought tears of regret and joy to my eyes, and as I knelt before His mother in the twilight of the evening, I felt His arms around me as He slowly lifted me back to my feet and whispered my name as no other has. You ask how I know that we will be victorious over these forces of evil that are at work in our world, and in truth I can't say what is to come in these future days, but I can say with a certainty and clarity of mind and heart that He will help us to rise above it. For He has already conquered the world and death, and with Him all things are possible.

I'm uncertain as to what trials this time will bring, and yes, I too worry and am frightened, but it is in times like these that I also know that our cries to our Lord do not go unheard. Though there will be dark days and trying times ahead, I challenge everyone, myself

included, to strive to see the good in this world. To see the joy, beauty, and happiness that is all around us, and in doing so, to see our Lord through His creations and through those in your life. As the character Aragorn put it in the Two Towers, "There is always hope." Hold onto this hope, hold onto our Lord and trust in Him. Let Him make us into instruments of His love, and let us be brave enough to answer His call. May the Lord guide and protect us, all the days of our lives. Through His Son, Jesus Christ, Amen.