

+ Meditation for a Time of Pestilence  
Abbot Philip Anderson  
Palm Sunday, 2020

It would be the understatement of the millennium to suggest that, perhaps, something is awry in the world at present and that a global health crisis has sadly impacted the way we live as Catholic Christians. Not only are we witnesses to the spectacle of so many people growing ill and even dying, but the very Bread of Life entrusted to us from Heaven has been locked up in such a manner that the great number of the faithful is unable to receive this vital spiritual nourishment. I blame no one in particular.

Pandemic need not become *Pandæmonium*. After all, the Holy Trinity is still supreme in Heaven; the choirs of Angels still hold together in perfect order; the stars continue to follow their perpetual track; the birds are already busy building nests; and, as has been famously said, the “snail’s on the thorn”. We still have (quite intact) the faith along with all the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The grace of God is operating now as ever. While some may not be able to assist in person at the Holy Sacrifice of Mass and receive Our Lord in Communion, we are free to visit in spirit all the tabernacles of the world, where the real presence reigns in humble and silent majesty. All may still receive Holy Communion in a spiritual manner. What did the Lord tell us? “But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.”<sup>1</sup> Who cannot do this even now? We must all become contemplatives for a time.

While I well appreciate that the phenomenon of live streaming enables many faithful to participate in some manner in the celebration of Mass, I worry that some will be under the impression that their television or computer screen has become their only hope, the only contact with God that is left to them. What folly! In various times and places throughout the centuries Christians have found themselves unable for a time to receive the sacraments. Some of the first holy hermits lived so far away in the desert as never to be able to receive the Holy Eucharist. As Our Blessed Father Saint Benedict teaches us, “Let [the monk] consider that he is always beheld from heaven by God, and that his actions are everywhere seen by the eye of the Divine Majesty, and are every hour reported to Him by His angels.”<sup>2</sup> Each one can be creative in living the faith in this dramatic circumstance.

Who is responsible for the novel corona virus outbreak? You and I. In a time when thousands upon thousands of the unborn are legally deprived of life across the globe and when the sacred institution of marriage has been flouted and ridiculed in so many places, there should be no surprise that God would allow a microbe to bring mankind to its knees. So, what must be done? The entire world is wondering.

The Governor of Texas, it seems, has signed an executive order prohibiting counties and cities in his State from banning religious services during the coronavirus crisis. Such services will be considered essential in Texas. Now there is an Abbott after my heart: he may not be a

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<sup>1</sup> Mt. 6:6.

<sup>2</sup> *Rule*, Chapter 7.

Benedictine, but he is one courageous Abbott! Would that his wise and very practical advice be widely appreciated and taken into consideration.

We monks, the sons of Our Lady, will celebrate this year, possibly as never before, the great liturgical ceremonies of the Sacred Triduum. We will do this with you and for you (although attendance at public masses remains suspended), wherever you may be. “But the hour cometh,” said Christ to the Samaritan woman, “and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore him.”<sup>3</sup> Above all, with you and for you, we will live in the joy of belonging to God of Whom no virus can deprive us. Soon the Son of God will triumph over the darkness of death. Soon the global health crisis will subside and disappear, even if more patience be needed. May our hearts be found faithful and full of that hope and love that give the supernatural measure of the great endeavor we are engaged in as Christians. “And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jn. 4:23.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. 13:13.