

I'm so glad to have 95 of you here with the Deacon and me this evening. A few brave souls, or maybe a few people who have in advance or read or listened to the first reading today from the book of Exodus, where it finishes up with the whole challenge that the people were facing there in the desert for lack of water, and Moses finishing up by saying, "Is God in our midst, or not?"

Well, we're obviously in society today facing a major challenge, and whether we like it or not, we're going to respond to it in one way, shape or form. Bishop Konzen sent a letter out this past week saying that he was acting to lift the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday, which is fine and good. It's perfectly acceptable in these kinds of circumstances. Actually, it's fairly smart. The one problem was he didn't ask my help in drafting the statement, because I would have said, and added a little bit to it where it said the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday is lifted for the next couple of weeks, but the obligation to send in your contribution still exists!

But you know, I mean, if you look at... I was talking to a guy about it yesterday morning who talked about the fact that his head was spinning because there's so much about this coronavirus stuff going on. I sent a novena out to St. Roch, who happens to be the patron saint, going back to about the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the patron saint for societies or people who are challenged with communicable diseases of one sort or another. He got his start with the bubonic plague, which would be a heck of a lot more significant than we're facing currently. And so I do encourage you to take a look at that and perhaps say that novena prayer. A novena typically is 9 days asking, in this case, St. Roch to intervene with God for us and for our society. But there's more to it than that, also.

There's an old saying that God gave the squirrels acorns, but he didn't put them in the nests. They have to go out and get them. They actually have to go out and work for them. So that means to apply that to our current situation, that it's perfectly appropriate for us to pray to God, or invoke the intercession of St. Roch that God will intervene in our world and make this stuff go away. But it carries with it also the obligation to do the things that are necessary to do, and therefore to not be stupid. I mean, you'd have to have something wrong in the head to jump on a plane today and go to Wuhan in China. Well, actually their numbers are going down. But the truth of the matter is the normal medical recommendations: wash the hands, we're doing, we have the stuff there for the priest and the deacon and then over there for the extraordinary ministers. Right before we start giving communion we're going to do that. You know that all of the medical authorities are saying wash your hands 20 seconds; sing "Happy Birthday, dear me." See, that's 20 seconds. You sing it to yourself while washing your hands. And all of the other kinds of things. I mean, let's face it, part of the reason why Bishop Konzen did what he did was to comply with the idea of people who are in vulnerable situations would avoid getting themselves into situations where they might end up contracting this particular virus.

But Kim is going to send out for me tonight an email to people asking you to stay in contact with your neighbors, particularly elderly friends, neighbors, family, and find out make sure they're ok. We have a group of people in the parish who are willing to go out and do the shopping, as long as it's not for toilet paper. They're will to do the shopping and bring to the people who may not advisedly go outside their home during the height of this whole thing. So, the bottom line is this

is manageable. What has happened, unfortunately, is that the media has created such a frenzy here that people's minds are just frazzled. And it's not necessary. So I'm going to suggest on a practical basis, unless you're pretty unusual, don't look at more than one newscast a day, or don't read more than one newspaper a day. It's not going to do a blessed bit of good. I heard a guy on the radio yesterday morning talking about the stock market, and he made the point that Delta stock has gone from \$126 a share a month ago, to \$63 a share Thursday. And his question was, Thursday, is Delta worth half today what it was a month ago? And of course, the answer is no.

Now, we pray, obviously. That should be always our first line of defense. We ask God to intervene and to see things our way and get rid of this curse that's striking our society. But we also have to do the things that are necessary ourselves, that are within our control, in order to make sure that we don't contribute to the spread of it, and that we do whatever we can to ensure that we actually work to stop the spread or reduce the spread. And that we go back to the reality that existed up to about the year 120 in the Church.

There's a sociologist whose name is Stark, who wrote about that particular era, and he maintains that the main reason Catholicism, well it was Christianity then because there was only Christianity at that time, there were no splits in the Church. But that it spread primarily because the Christian people at the time took care of their own when they were confronted with diseases of one sort or another. The rest of society, the pagans, shoved a person off in a room with some water and some food, locked the door, kept them in there, and most of them died, obviously if they didn't die of anything else, they died of starvation or dehydration. But the Christians didn't do that. They took care one another. They fed the person, kept him clean, gave him water, whatever little bit of medicine they had, and they survived those crises in exceptional numbers.

Well, we're in the same kind of situation to some extent today. We can help one another. I saw the governor today or yesterday, talking about this run on bread. Now, I don't think there is actually a run on bread, but he suggested that if you go into a grocery store and buy some bread, and there are 5 loaves on the shelves, take 4, leave one for the next person along the line. Well, that's fair enough, but there's a guy who said, a member of the parish actually who started a new business, a pub up in Sandy Springs, he was going to advertise last night that with every pint you buy, you get 8 squares of toilet paper. Now nobody has come up with the notion of why there's this run on toilet paper. Maybe Adolph can explain it to us; I'm not sure he can. But the truth of the matter is, a lot of the reaction we have to this is just off the wall. It makes no sense. You cannot make any sense of it. We need to not add to the panic that exists.

Now, yes, we need to pray. Yes, we need to do the things that the medical people are suggesting that we do. The hand washing, a certain element of isolation, all of those things that are practical that we can and should do. And one could argue the fact that if God is in our midst, which we know He is, we have to cooperate with Him. He expects us to cooperate with Him and do the ordinary things that we should be doing so that we don't add to the problem. Then we take care of ourselves by making sure that we don't add to the panic or paranoia or whatever term you want to use to describe what is going on in our society today. So stay away from the non-stop

news broadcast. They have to fill the air some way, and they might as well not be filling our heads while they're at it.