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Dear Friends

We seem to be caught in the middle of a 'triple whammy' at the moment. Firstly, the pandemic seems to have reached its worst point, judging by the virtual closure of whole societies across the globe. Secondly, the news media are producing almost exclusively bad and disturbing news, whether about the impact of the pandemic, the economy or the political crisis in the United States. Thirdly, the weather is simply miserable.

In more normal times, we might have some better news, greater freedoms and more resilience. But not now. So are we condemned to another miserable year of uncertainty, which takes away the little resilience we have left? Are there any bright spots?

Well, the first bright spot is the vaccine. Despite the best efforts of news outlets to tell us of yet another variant of the virus that has been thrown into the mix, the number of people being vaccinated is steadily growing. Quite apart from the near miracle of developing a vaccine in such a short time, we can watch with gratitude as it begins to make an impact. A greater bright spot is surely history itself. It teaches us that crises come and go. This one will be no different. Seeing the bigger picture is always better and more helpful for us.

But we need more. Big pictures, history and vaccines are reassuring, but we need something more concrete to hold on to day to day. Each of us is aware that we occupy only a small space in this big world. We feel our vulnerability more in the frightening events that are taking place around us. Not only that, but this crisis has had a very real impact on our mental health, on our coping strategies. There are some who felt fragile before the pandemic, and others have been shocked by the realisation that they are not as strong or resilient as they thought. The grand total of all these elements is fear. And let us be clear. Fear is our enemy.

How do we begin to recover some control and bring some stability to our lives? We can only begin in the here and now. Today. When we think about it, we find it difficult to live in the here and now. Just take a look at the questions that are taking up space in our minds; where is this all going? What will tomorrow bring? Will any of the things I enjoyed and loved return? Will I survive this? What will happen to my loved ones? Crucial questions, but no answers. No answers are possible. But the questions intensify and begin to make us more anxious.

It has been said that the past is gone and has been committed to the mercy of God, that the future is not yet here and cannot be known. We only have today. So let us begin here. How am I going to use this day, how am I going to live it? Do we have a daily routine that brings a little reassurance? A time for getting up, a time to eat, a time for a little exercise, a time to call friends?



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Roman Catholic Archdiocesan Trustees In. Reg. Charity No: 232709



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Do we have some flexibility in our day to do something different, calling someone we haven't spoken to for a long time, reading something different? If we are unable to leave the house, is there a little job I can do to improve my home, or sorting through papers, photos, memorabilia. There is always something. Can I control the amount of media information coming into my home? Despite my curiosity, can I limit the TV a little in the day and give myself some breathing space?

Then there is the larger frame that we fit our daily routine into, that holds it together. For us as Christians, it is the presence of the God who became flesh which is our daily reference point. His presence touches even the most menial and ordinary everyday tasks. There is no part of our daily life in which we cannot find Him. When we think of how often we look forward to our conversations with close friends, to sharing information and all our joys and sorrows, of how often we just want to hear their voice and be reassured. It is no different in our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Our daily conversations with Him should bring us the same joy and uplift, the same reassurance. The more ordinary the conversation with Him, the better. It is a conversation that brings warmth and encouragement, a sense of being cared for and loved, of being safe and less vulnerable. He wants to reassure us, not once but many times, that we rest in the palm of His hand, and that He will never walk away from us or abandon us. He is with us until the end.

We now have a vaccine against the coronavirus. Now we need an antidote, a vaccine against our fear, our anxiety and vulnerability. Participating in our live streamed Masses, listening carefully to the word of God, spending time in conversation with Him, arranging our day, reaching out to friends, calling those who need to hear a friendly voice, limiting the volume of bad news coming into our homes, taking one day at a time, thanking God for the blessings we still enjoy. All of these things build up our immunity to fear and despair, and open the way for peace and light.

So in the days that lie ahead, let us embrace the 'one day at a time' mindset. Leaving the past where it belongs. Not trying to guess the future. Just today. That is enough and by making space for God in our day, we will surely receive that warmth of love and reassurance that all of us need so much at this time.

May God bless you and your loved ones.

**Father John**



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