



THE Aquinas Way

Greetings, Theological Reflections and Spiritual Resources
during the COVID-19 Pandemic

"Contemplata aliis tradere"

MOTTO OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS

Bulletin V - April 20, 2020

Greetings from Harry Bryne, OP
Professor Emeritus, Aquinas Institute of Theology

April 20, 2020

Dear Members of the Aquinas Community,

As a member of the Order of Preachers for over fifty years I have been pursuing one of the goals of Dominican spirituality with mixed results. Our spirituality rooted in our motto, *Contemplata aliis tradere*, is to hand on to others the fruits of our contemplation. I have tried to do this over the years in preaching and teaching and in more



recent days by offering spiritual direction.



But to take time to contemplate is no easy task in our busy daily lives with its many distractions and demanding schedules. So these days of staying at home in order to not spread the coronavirus has been for me a time to engage more directly into a spirit of contemplative prayer. It has offered the quiet and solitude of a cloister or retreat setting and at the same time has not totally closed off what is going on in the world around me for being a source of words and images to bring into contemplation, my shelter in place time with God. It seems that now God is inviting us into a space to more deeply and fully share ourselves with that community of the Trinity and to speak and listen to our caring Father, the loving Son and the wise guiding Spirit.

In a recent interview in *Commonweal* magazine, Pope Francis encourages us to enter into a contemplative way of life these days with the hope that each of us might eventually be able to hand on to others the fruit of our time alone.

“The creativity of the Christian needs to show forth in opening up new horizons, opening windows, opening transcendence toward God and toward people, and in creating new ways of being at home. It’s not easy to be confined to your house. What comes to my mind is a verse from the *Aeneid* in the midst of defeat: the counsel is not to give up, but save yourself for better times, for in those times remembering what has happened will help us. Take care of yourselves for a future that will come. And remembering in that future what has happened will do you good. Take care of the now, for the sake of tomorrow. Always creatively, with a simple creativity, capable of inventing something new each day. Inside the home that’s not hard to discover, but don’t run away, don’t take refuge in escapism, which in this time is of no use to you.” (An excerpt from Austin Ivereigh’s interview with Pope Francis is published below.)

Francis’ message suggests that the fruits of our contemplation, perhaps now like being in a field lying fallow, can help us to eventually bring a message of hope to all whom we encounter in the days ahead. We believe that the Easter season is a time of hope even in the midst of fear and uncertainty. However, even now the young and the old can find their own way through contemplation to participate in the light breaking through the darkness. We trust that someday soon we will all be able to share with one another that something new is happening by the grace of God, something that will take us beyond the darkness and isolation of our present situation. It will be an Easter morning once again because we will not have tried to escape from the reality of our situation but instead have been truly creative “with a simple creativity.”

In St. Dominic,

Harry Bryne, OP

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Pope Francis on Living with COVID-19 'A Time of Great Uncertainty'

April 8, 2020
by Austin Ivereigh

Toward the end of March I suggested to Pope Francis that this might be a good moment to address the English-speaking world: the pandemic that had so affected Italy and Spain was now reaching the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. Without promising anything, he asked me to send some questions. I picked six themes, each one with a series of questions he could answer or not as he saw fit. A week later, I received a communication that he had recorded some reflections in response to the questions. The interview was conducted in Spanish; the translation is my own.

—Austen Ivereigh

To read the entire interview with Pope Francis, please visit *Commonweal Magazine*.

<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/time-great-uncertainty>

The first question was about how Pope Francis was experiencing the pandemic and lockdown, both in the Santa Marta residence and the Vatican administration (“the curia”) more widely, both practically and spiritually.

Pope Francis: The Curia is trying to carry on its work, and to live normally, organizing in shifts so that not everyone is present at the same time. It’s been well thought out. We are sticking to the measures ordered by the health authorities. Here in the Santa Marta residence we now have two shifts for meals, which helps a lot to alleviate the impact. Everyone works in his office or from his room, using technology. Everyone is working; there are no idlers here.

How am I living this spiritually? I’m praying more, because I feel I should. And I think of people. That’s what concerns me: people. Thinking of people anoints me, it does me good, it takes me out of my self-preoccupation. Of course I have my areas of selfishness. On Tuesdays, my confessor comes, and I take care of things there.

I’m thinking of my responsibilities now, and what will come afterwards. What will be my service as Bishop of Rome, as head of the church, in the aftermath? That aftermath has already begun to be revealed as tragic and painful, which is why we must be thinking about it now. The Vatican’s Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development has been working on this, and meeting with me.

My major concern—at least what comes through my prayer—is how to accompany and be closer to the people of God. Hence the livestreaming of the 7 a.m. Mass [I celebrate each morning] which many people follow and appreciate, as well as the addresses I’ve given, and the March 27 event in St. Peter’s Square. Hence, too, the step-up in activities of the office of papal charities, attending to the sick and hungry. I’m living this as a time of great uncertainty. It’s a time for inventing, for creativity.

(continued)



Pope Francis leads a prayer service in an empty St. Peter's Square at the Vatican March 27, 2020. At the conclusion of the service the pope held the Eucharist as he gave an extraordinary blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world). The service was livestreamed in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

'A Time of Great Uncertainty' *(continued)*

*In my second question, I referred to a nineteenth-century novel very dear to Pope Francis which he has mentioned recently: Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* (The Betrothed). The novel's drama centers on the Milan plague of 1630. There are various priestly characters: the cowardly curé Don Abbondio, the holy cardinal archbishop Borromeo, and the Capuchin friars who serve the *lazzaretto*, a kind of field hospital where the infected are rigorously separated from the healthy. In the light of the novel, how did Pope Francis see the mission of the church in the context of COVID-19?*

Pope Francis: Cardinal Federigo [Borromeo] really is a hero of the Milan plague. Yet in one of the chapters he goes to greet a village but with the window of his carriage closed to protect himself. This did not go down well with the people. The people of God need their pastor to be close to them, not to overprotect himself. The people of God need their pastors to be self-sacrificing, like the Capuchins, who stayed close.

The creativity of the Christian needs to show forth in opening up new horizons, opening windows, opening transcendence toward God and toward people, and in creating new ways of being at home. It's not easy to be confined to your house. What comes to my mind is a verse from the Aeneid in the midst of defeat: the counsel is not to give up, but save yourself for better times, for in those times remembering what has happened will help us. Take care of yourselves for a future that will come. And remembering in that future what has happened will do you good.

Take care of the now, for the sake of tomorrow. Always creatively, with a simple creativity, capable of inventing something new each day. Inside the home that's not hard to discover, but don't run away, don't take refuge in escapism, which in this time is of no use to you.

"My major concern—at least what comes through my prayer—is how to accompany and be closer to the people of God."

-Pope Francis



My fifth question centered on the effects on the church of the crisis, and the need to rethink our ways of operating. Does he see emerging from this a church that is more missionary, more creative, less attached to institutions? Are we seeing a new kind of "home church"?

Pope Francis: Less attached to institutions? I'd say less attached to certain ways of thinking. Because the church is institution. The temptation is to dream of a deinstitutionalized church, a gnostic church without institutions, or one that is subject to fixed institutions, which would be a Pelagian church. The one who makes the church is the Holy Spirit, who is neither gnostic nor Pelagian. It is the Holy Spirit who institutionalizes the church, in an alternative, complementary way, because the Holy Spirit provokes disorder through the charisms, but then out of that disorder creates harmony.

A church that is free is not an anarchic church. because freedom is God's gift. An institutional church

means a church institutionalized by the Holy Spirit.

A tension between disorder and harmony: this is the church that must come out of the crisis. We have to learn to live in a church that exists in the tension between harmony and disorder provoked by the Holy Spirit. If you ask me which book of theology can best help you understand this, it would be the Acts of the Apostles. There you will see how the Holy Spirit deinstitutionalizes what is no longer of use, and institutionalizes the future of the church. That is the church that needs to come out of the crisis.

About a week ago an Italian bishop, somewhat flustered, called me. He had been going round the hospitals wanting to give absolution to those inside the wards from the hallway of the hospital. But he had spoken to canon lawyers who had told him he couldn't, that absolution could only be given in direct contact. "What do you think, Father?" he had asked me. I told him: "Bishop, fulfill your priestly duty." And the bishop said, "Grazie, ho capito" ("Thank you, I understand"). I found out later that he was giving absolution all around the place.

This is the freedom of the Spirit in the midst of a crisis, not a church closed off in institutions. That doesn't mean that canon law is not important: it is, it helps, and please let's make good use of it, it is for our good. But the final canon says that the whole of canon law is for the salvation of souls, and that's what opens the door for us to go out in times of difficulty to bring the consolation of God.

You ask me about a "home church." We have to respond to our confinement with all our creativity. We can either get depressed and alienated—through media that can take us out of our reality—or we can get creative. At home we need an apostolic creativity, a creativity shorn of so many useless things, but with a yearning to express our faith in community, as the people of God. So: to be in lockdown, but yearning, with that memory that yearns and begets hope—this is what will help us escape our confinement.

SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

The Word

The Word offers [daily homilies](#) from the Order of Preachers.

Easter Season Resources

Resources for families to celebrate the Easter season are available through [Loyola Press](#).

COVID-19 Resources from The Catholic Health Association

The Catholic Health Association of the United States has created a [list of COVID-19 resources](#) which provide information regarding bioethics, palliative care, pastoral care, spiritual resources, and a wealth of credible resources for anyone with questions about this pandemic.

COVID-19 Resources from The US Conference of Catholic Bishops

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops provides a [page of resources](#) for Catholic at home during the COVID-19 crisis.

Free Formational Events

The National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministers has a [collection of one-hour formational events](#) presented free to ministry leaders and volunteers as part of their mission to support and strengthen those who accompany young people as they encounter and follow Jesus Christ.

Family Resources to Pray Together from Home

The United States Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd provides [a wonderful page](#) of resources for parents and families to pray together from home.

Friarly

This project is a [collaborative effort of the Dominican Student Brothers](#) of St. Dominic Priory in St. Louis, Missouri. The COVID-19 resource page offers a number prayer and liturgical resources including the daily preaching by one of the Dominican friars.

Today's Word of Hope

[Daily reflections](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis offered by Fr. James Marchionda, OP, Provincial of the Dominican Central Province of St. Albert the Great.

Reflections from Fr. Cristobal Torres, OP

Fr. Cristobal a graduate of Aquinas Institute of Theology and a friar from the Southern Province of St. Martin de Porres. He serves as University Chaplain at Barry University and offers a short daily reflection on the [Barry University Campus Ministry Facebook page](#).

CHURCH: Catholics Helping Us Reach Catholics at Home

This is a [public Facebook group](#) facilitated by Firebrand+ (created by Aquinas graduate, Jared Bryson, and his business partner, Katie O'Brien Pesh). The CHURCH group is a portal to see how people are sharing our faith in unique ways during this unprecedented time.

“Spirituality for a Time of Scarcity” by Fr. Charles Bouchard, OP

Former Aquinas Institute President, Charles Bouchard, OP is the senior director of theology and ethics at the Catholic Health Association of the United States. This article, [“Spirituality for a Time of Scarcity”](#) was recently published in the National Catholic Reporter.

From Liturgical Press

Complimentary access to the April digital editions of [‘Give Us This Day,’](#) a daily prayer resource with scripture reflections, inspiration from the lives of saints, and simplified morning and evening prayer.

Please share your comments and suggestions with
Erin Hammond at registrar@ai.edu

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. ROMANS 8:38-39

