



The world we have trusted is vanishing before our eyes. Walter Bruggeman

‘As we celebrate the Feast of St Joseph, we remember the gift he is to our Congregation, our Church and our world. Joseph lived in a time of upheaval, of struggle, of uncertainty. We can only imagine how he wrestled to make decisions about fleeing to

Egypt and the questions that kept him awake at night; like what to expect when he arrived in Egypt, and how he would provide for his young wife and newborn son. Joseph was a man of faith and when faced with trials and difficulties chose to surrender over fear and openness over panic. In the messiness of his reality he trusted in God’s love. In this time of unprecedented change, as fear of Covid 19 spreads, we too are invited to live with openness and to trust in God’s love.

Figure 1 Flight Into Egypt, by Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1923

As I write this letter, the coronavirus has claimed over 7,000 lives worldwide. A growing number of countries are on lockdown, many Churches are empty, people are panic buying and we are to be practising ‘social distancing’. We are changing our way of doing things, greeting with an ‘elbow bump’, avoiding large gatherings, using hand sanitizer regularly. Like St Joseph our normal way of being has been interrupted and we are living with uncertainty. I’m sure you like me have a great sense of solidarity with our brothers and sisters who live with uncertainty daily. As Joseph was attentive to God’s call, we too are being called to be attentive to the small voice of God in our midst today ... is it the low wage earner feeling anxious about an impending recession, is it the fearful parent worried about their children, is it the fragile in our own communities concerned for her and others health? Perhaps we can reflect personally or communally during this time of crisis: Whose needs am I being invited to be attentive to? How can I, like Joseph, witness to openness and trust rather than panic and fear?’



Figure 2 Georges de La Tour: Joseph the Carpenter

Lockdown – A Reflection by Brother Richard Hendrick OFM Cap

Yes there is fear.
Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying.
Yes there is sickness.
Yes there is even death.

But,
They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
You can hear the birds again.
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.
Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading fliers with her number
through the neighbourhood
So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary
All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their
neighbours in a new way
All over the world people are waking up to a new reality

To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.

Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing.

Brother Richard Hendrick, 13 March 2020