

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we enter October, we enter into the month associated with Our Lady's Holy Rosary because the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary is on October 7th. This feast day is so named because in 1571, a combined naval fleet of Venice, Spain and the Papal States, were able to defeat the much larger and stronger navy of the Ottoman Empire, which was threatening to take over the city of Rome and much of Europe. This was fought against all odds and was attributed to the intercession of Our Lady and Catholics all over Europe saying the Rosary for victory.

Venerable Sister Lucia of Fatima, one of the children who saw Our Lady at Fatima in 1917, once stated years later that there was no problem, however great, that could not be overcome by the praying of the Rosary, if done with devotion and trust.

We need to trust in the power of the rosary, which Venerable Sister Lucia said has been given greater power in these times after Our Lady's appearance at Fatima. Our ongoing situation with COVID-19 is no exception.

I know we continue to live with various restrictions in our society because of COVID. The worst restriction is the paralyzing fear that results from this whole situation. However, we must keep following our current precautions that are in place in church. I know this is not fun, but we are not in a position to get rid of them at this time or ignore them. Bishop Lucia, our spiritual father, has asked us to keep these precautions in place. We must trust him and follow them out of trust in his office as bishop.

St. Thomas Aquinas says: *"obedience deserves praise because it proceeds from charity: for [Saint] Gregory says (Moral. xxxv) that 'obedience should be practiced, not out of servile fear, but from a sense of charity, not through fear of punishment, but through love of justice. Therefore charity is a greater virtue than obedience.'"*

When we go to the store and wear a mask, it could very well be out of fear of the secular authority. When we do so in church, it could, if we interiorly intend it, be done out of filial (not servile) fear and filial piety, that is charity, which is love of God, by obedience to our spiritual father, the bishop.

"See that you all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God." (Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr, *Epistle to the Smyrneans*, 8) The Catechism of the Catholic Church on obedience to authority: "1900 The duty of obedience requires all to give due honor to authority and to treat those who are charged to exercise it with respect, and, insofar as it is deserved, with gratitude and good-will." Saint Luke tells us: "And he [Jesus] went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart." (Luke 2:51)

Only in a case where what is asked by legitimate authority contradicts the Divine Law, faith or morals do we have a duty to go contrary to what is asked, as St. Thomas also teaches.

Just to reiterate again we have been asked to do the following:

- **Please wear a face mask while in church**

- Only sit in every other pew unless it is clear there are several rows of pews open.
 - Each person or family please sit six feet from the next person or family.
 - Please sign in when entering the church (so if someone had COVID we know who might have had contact to stop the spread)
 - If you receive Our Lord on the tongue please wait to come up last. This might sound discriminatory, but please try not think of it that way. *(You cannot be denied this right to receive on the tongue, to show love for God in this way is laudable. No, you are not singled out or looked down upon...at least not by this priest,)*
- I do not know if these restrictions are exaggerated, but I am not in a position to make that determination, and we are doing so because our bishop, who has the grace of the office of bishop, asked it of us and we must trust that. None of these things are pleasant to live with nor is it fun having to reiterate these precautions, but we have to follow them. Thank you for your cooperation.

Finally, however, lest we become so preoccupied with sanitizing our hands and environment that we forget about cleanness of soul, let us think about the following as we do these things:

- Ever time you have to put on a face mask, consider those who have no voice – the unborn, pray for an end to abortion.
- Every time we follow these precautions, intend to do so in obedience to the bishop, our spiritual father, and through this obedience out of charity for God.
- Every time you clean your hands with hand sanitizer, consider how our souls must be clean of grave sin and in a state of grace before receiving Our Lord in the Eucharist. The sacrament of confession cleans us spiritually.
- Ever time we have to sign in, think of the Book of Life in Book of Revelation 21:22,27 – “And I [John] saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb... But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.” Remember the eleventh promise Jesus made to those devoted to His Sacred Heart: “Those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart.”

Pray for this to end, pray for Mary's Immaculate Heart to triumph in our world.
In the Hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Fr. Lyons

