



*Because I live,
ye shall live also.*

JOHN 14:19

THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

My Dear Faithful of Sacred Heart,

This year's Easter Letter to you has been the most challenging ever for me. What can I say to encourage and strengthen you in the face of global crisis? Happily, while responding to an email, words of Thomas Paine came to mind: "*These are the times that try men's souls.*" We've heard them, but do we know their story?

When Paine wrote these words, America's upstart Revolution seemed to be on the brink of coming to a humiliating end in the winter of 1776. George Washington's disheartened troops needed a morale boosting shot in the arm if there was to be any hope for eventual victory. Washington had Paine's words read to his troops on that New Year's Eve of 1776. They roused the troops and led them to cross the Delaware River and to victories over the Hessians at Trenton and the British at Princeton.

I'd like to paraphrase Paine's opening paragraph from his pamphlet, *America in Crisis I*, for you and for everyone feeling ...*tested ...in... these times*. I encourage you to reflect on them this Holy Week and Easter. They are a reminder that in spite of anxiety and uncertainty, it is God's grace that strengthens and gives us courage. It is the gifts of the Spirit that sustains us in hope and faithfulness. It is God who brings us to a joyous conclusion. And so...

These are the times that try men's souls; the summer Catholic and the sunshine Christian will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of Church and parish; but he that stands it now (who remains faithful), deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. The spread of COVID-19, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the trial, the more glorious the triumph.

In these trying times, we need to focus on our LORD -- not fear. Who in human history endured greater trial and challenge to faithfulness in His mission than Jesus Christ? How ironic that all this befalls us at the season when the Church calls us to sacrifice. Some may feel like Mary Magdalen: *...they have taken away my LORD!* But He was there; she didn't recognize Him because her "eyes" lacked the faith to see.

And He is here with us too. He is Emmanuel: God-is-with-us. Like Job we can say: *...I know that my Redeemer lives ...and I will behold him; my own eyes shall see him.* This is our Easter hope and joy. No matter what others say or do, each of us is God's very own child, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Yes, this year's Easter will be very unlike any we have celebrated before. But we must remain confident and full of hope because we are loved by God, and in turn, we love one another as He has loved us. This is why your generosity to the parish this Easter is so very important. We have critical need to quickly recover financially, as do all of us. But if we as a parish are to effectively be the *Light of the World* for others, we need your dedicated support. Help us to continue to claim our future as a vibrant parish of faith. Commit yourself to sharing evermore generously your time, talent and treasure to assure our mission as the Body of Christ, beloved children of the Father. Please! Let the power of the Resurrection shine in you and through you by being especially generous this Easter.

Finally, in all humility, I beseech you to make every effort to visit the church each day of the Triduum to pray. God will greatly bless your sacrifice of prayer. Know that Father Hutta, Deacons Kase and May, our Seminarian James and I hold you in prayer and in our Holy Week and Easter Masses, and I remain

Your humble servant in our victorious Redeemer,

Monsignor J. Santis