



Make Your Weeks Ahead Holy

Sisters and Brothers, may the Lord grant you peace!

Countless millions of us are ordered to “stay-at-home,” not to go to work, not to go to school, and to practice safe and social distancing when venturing out of doors for specific purposes. Religious services and events are being cancelled while religious leaders are asking that church doors be locked. Let faith and reason prevail, and let us not curse the darkness of this pandemic hovering over us. We have truly realized that we are a “domestic church.” And, *we are brothers and sisters of penance.*

As we follow these directives to “painfully” stay at home, I spy a blessing in disguise. Let us, Secular Franciscans, join with the many contemplative religious orders of women and men in prayer, study and reflection. Let St Clare, our mother and teacher, inspire us to “*gaze, consider, contemplate and imitate*” Christ Jesus, crucified and risen. For Mother Clare speaks:

*“If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him,
weeping with Him, you will rejoice with Him,
dying on the cross of tribulation with Him,
you will possess heavenly mansions with Him
among the splendor of the saints and in the Book of Life
your name will be called glorious among the peoples.”* (1 Letter to Agnes, #21)

Let us pray for the grace needed to endure the days and weeks ahead. Activate those calling lists of fraternity members. Be a source of strength to our sisters and brothers especially to those who are elderly and vulnerable, those “home alone” in extended care facilities whose visitors and family members are restricted. With words of comfort and calm, sing joy into joyless hearts of neighbors known only to you. Pray God to grant us ways to order human life.

Sometime during the day, with your beverage of choice, make an effort to re-connect with the Rule and Constitutions, studying and reflecting, actively contemplating on what you professed to be and do. You gotta stay bright to be the light of the world. May the Lord make us partners in our living, increasing our compassion as messengers of faith.

“The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?” (Psalm 27). Let me share a reflection by Philip Andrews: “There is dignity here—we will exalt it. There is courage here—we will support it. There is humanity here—we will enjoy it. There is a universe in every child—we will share in it. There is a voice calling through the chaos of our times; there is a spirit moving across the waters of our world; there is a movement, a light, a promise of hope. Let them that have ears to hear—hear. But look not for the end of the world. Behold, we bring you tidings of great joy: the incarnation.”¹

Let faith and reason prevail. Peace and All Good.

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¹Philip Andrew, “The Song of the Magi,” in *Suffering and Hope*, Ron O’Grady and Lee Soo Jin, ed., Christian Conference in Asia, 1976.