

Lenten Letters from Father Jonathan

March 26, 2020

Dear St Peter's family,

I am thankfully feeling better, my scratchy throat did not develop into anything but because of the directive I will be working from home until next Thursday, April 2nd. I want to thank Fr Arjay and all of the St. Peter's staff for their team work during these days and look forward to joining them all again next Thursday.

Today I have been thinking of Psalm 139. The poetry of the opening verses of the prayer is particularly apt in our current situation. For here David prays:

O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, (the place of the dead), you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Let only darkness cover me, and the light about me be night." even the darkness is not dark to you, the night is bright as the day;

Perhaps you have been feeling anxiety in these days. I admit that this has been my experience. To have David talk about the encroaching darkness overwhelming him allows him to also affirm that there is light even in the midst of the darkness.

Father Henri Nouwen,, who wrestled with darkness in his own life, reflects on how Jesus wants to meet us in that dark place. He writes:

Jesus came to open my ears to another voice that says, "I am your God, I have molded you with my own hands, and I love what I have made. I love you with a love that has no limits, because I love you as I am loved. Do not run away from me. Come back to me—not once, not twice, but always again. You are my child. . . . I am your God—the God of mercy and compassion, the God of pardon and love, the God of tenderness and care. Please do not say that I have given up on you. It is not true. I so much want you to be with me. I so much want you to be close to me. I know all your thoughts. I hear all your words. I see all your actions. And I love you because you are beautiful, made in my own image, an expression of my most intimate love. Do not judge yourself. Do not condemn yourself. Do not reject yourself. Let my love touch the deepest, most hidden corners of your heart and reveal to you your own beauty, a beauty that you have lost sight of, but that will become visible to you again in the light of my mercy. Come, come, let me wipe your tears, and let my mouth come close to your ear and say to you, 'I love you, I love you, I love you.' (Excerpted from "The Road to Daybreak)

I find these words so reassuring, when the news is so dark and I am tempted to give into the enemy's attack where thoughts of worry, and even despair, can so unsettle me.

I walk with you through these days inviting us to hear Jesus voice say to us: "I discern all of your thoughts and there is nowhere you can go in your interior life where I do not accompany you."

Jesus, be close to us and help us to know we are loved.

In His grace,

Fr Jonathan