

Sisters and Brothers, may the approaching Easter joy empower us.

3/28/2021

### Covenant Life

- Today we will have an in-person Community Gathering at 4pm in the MSM gym. We will follow CDC guidelines to ensure a safe space.
  - Social distancing of 6 ft with those outside your family is recommended.
  - Chairs will be pre-set, but please feel free to move them to accommodate your group.
  - Please wear masks when inside the building.
  - Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes will be available for your use.
  - Hugging may be uncomfortable for those not vaccinated so please ask.
- Your ongoing financial support is sincerely appreciated. Please donate online [here](#) or mail your donations to P.O. Box 225008 Dallas, Tx 75222.

**Reflection** - Last week I reflected on the North American Network (NAN) conference held last month in Augusta GA and rejoiced in John Wagner's service and Chase and Laura Dorsey's testimony. Today I would like to reflect on the first day of the conference and the two talks given by Dr. Dan Keating, professor of Theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary and fellow faculty member with Dr. Mary Healy. These talks are available online on the NAN webpage [here](#) and I encourage you to listen to them.

In his first talk "Alert, Awake, but not Alarmed", Dan challenges us to not cower from hard times but rather that we were made for such times...even to thrive in such times! He uses that passage in Mark 13 that could be described as Jesus' message for hard times to make three points:

- v5-8: Be aware, let no one mislead us, do not be alarmed...this is not the end;
- v9-13: Be on your guard as the Gospel must be proclaimed to all the nations and the Holy Spirit will provide us the words;
- v33-37: Stay awake and be on our guard.

These are important words for anytime but especially in tough times as we are experiencing these days. We never know God's ultimate purpose for trials and suffering (i.e. Job and Jesus in today's Gospel). God might be using challenges and disruptions to help us honestly see ourselves and get ready for what He is calling us to in order to fulfill His divine plan. The point is to follow Jesus' example and

stay awake in prayer rather than sleeping as His disciples did in the readings today.

Dan teaches us how to respond by examining Mathew 7:24-27 encouraging us to be DOers of the Word as it is not a question of, if there will be a storm in our lives, but when it will come. Each of us must prepare and be constantly preparing. The obvious key to weathering any storm is to not look within ourselves but to Jesus, who is our Rock, and see that we have been grafted into Him as our strength. Dan reminds us that our strength flows not just from Jesus but also from the spiritual connection that we have in one another in Community as the Body of Christ. He ends his first talk warning us that it is too late to prepare once the storm starts.

There is a tie into the first reading as "for such a time as this" are we called. In Is 50:4 *"The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them"* is encouragement for us to be DOers of the Word and have the courage to seize this time of storms to be courageous proclaimers of His Word.

I particularly enjoyed his closing where he quotes Rod Dreher's book "Live Not By Lies" listing three actions to prepare that tie very well into our CCGD Covenant:

- 1) Deepen our roots through personal prayer
- 2) Cultivate essential core practices that bind us together in Community, and
- 3) Draw strength from leaders, family, and small groups.

In his second talk entitled "From Christendom to Apostolic Mission" Dan notes that many people are waking up today regarding the need for Community. Our 48 year history (Yes, we celebrate this week our 48<sup>th</sup> year as a Community 😊) attests to the strong power and resource that Community is for us. Those who have persevered will witness the strong connections that are often tighter than even familial bonds. But we know building Community is not easy and it is being attacked from all sides. Therefore, we each need to commit (re-commit) to active Community building (recall Bobbie's teachings on Nehemiah rebuilding the wall). Dan speculates that the future might be larger number of smaller Communities which ties into our experience of bringing our Pastoral Areas

together and to the importance of us all being in small groups. He concludes with the assurances of Psalm 27:1 "Whom should I fear?" and Paul in 2 Cor 4:7 regarding the "surpassing power from God".

*Let us pray "Jesus, for the times I have fallen asleep when You have asked me to pray...I am sorry. It is my intention to always be alert and awake and attentive to Your Holy Spirit. Help me to deepen my roots in You through a consistent daily personal prayer time. Help me to actively build covenant community and love my sisters and brothers. Help me to trust and draw strength from my family, from my small group, and from community leaders. I desire to surrender myself to You and trust that You will take care of everything. Amen."*

God bless,

David