

Garden Grove, March 19, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are entering into the Holy Season of Lent, a season of passion, calling to mind the Passion of our Lord Jesus. During this time in previous Lenten Seasons, we prepared ourselves spiritually and liturgically for Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter Celebration. Communities, choirs, organizations, and even the catechumens were excited to celebrate Christ's Resurrection.

For this Lenten Season, we are experiencing the indescribable fear and sorrows. Every day we hear news about the pandemic spreading everywhere in the world, and now right here in the United States, in our state, city, and even at home. Wherever we go we hear from TV, radio, and YouTube about the pandemic Coronavirus from Wuhan which has scared us and shaken up our life. We are facing a challenge which we have never before experienced. We are shocked and uncomfortable because our daily routine has been interrupted. Here and there we feel our material values collapsed which we have invested and saved for a long time.

However, it is very fortunate for us who believe in God. We believe in his abundant love. As we read his word in the Scriptures, we are reminded that, "I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:33). And in the Book of Joshua, he tells us, "I command you: be strong and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD, your God, is with you wherever you go" (Jos 1:9).

Dear brothers and sisters, let us be strong and courageous because God Himself is journeying with us to the hill of Calvary. We should spend time in these days with our family to share our joy, sadness, and concerns. As we share our meals lovingly, let us recommit our love for one another. Reach out to our loved ones and friends whom we do not get to talk to regularly because of our busy life of work and responsibilities. Spend time to pray with our family in this precious time.

Finally, come to God in the livestream Masses to seek peace, to pray, and to experience his love, or to come to church to adore His presence in the Blessed Sacrament. If you need the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), your parish priests are available to assist you. Please join me to pray for the entire world, for the United States, and for our beloved country Vietnam. In particular, let us pray for the patients who are fighting this deadly disease and especially for doctors, nurses and health workers who work days and nights against dangers. Pray that they are blessed with good health and patience to overcome this challenge.

May God bless us and grant peace to our heart and body. May Our Lady of La Vang deliver us from this pandemic.

In Christ and Our Lady of La Vang,

Thanh Thai Nguyen

Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Orange