

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Jesus sends the disciples into a storm. We have all experienced a storm this year. The storms in our life can either be destructive, or lead us to what is good and positive.

In the midst of mayhem there are two possibilities. We can, on the one hand, feed off the worry and anxiety that surrounds us. The wind and the waves can be terrifying, and focusing only on them we begin to sink – as St. Peter did in the Gospel as we hear at Mass today.

We can get depressed because of the fallout from COVID-19: fear of getting sick, the lockdown, social distancing, the nonstop fear-mongering news cycles, the riots, economic

worries, uncertainty about schooling or job security, or the political upheaval we are witnessing.

Yet in the wake of a life-shattering global crisis, something surprisingly positive always happens. Author Sari Harrar studied the effects of 9/11. Two months after the World Trade Center terrorist attacks in 2001, a University of Pennsylvania survey of over 4,000 Americans found that they felt more gratitude, hope, kindness and love than they did before 9/11. And the effect wasn't transitory. In a three-year State University of New York at Buffalo study of 1,382 American adults, 58 percent said they continued to see positive consequences emerge from the attacks.

Right now more than one third of Americans say this pandemic is having a serious impact on their mental health.

The good news is that even in the midst of the storm, there is –as Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl called it- 'tragic optimism.' It has been shown, for example, that children with cancer and their families have an emotional resilience, a "positivity," - a mix of realism, hope, and compassion, that is not found in others.

There is an alternative to drowning in fear and worry. This alternative acknowledges the storm, the wind and the waves, but does not focus just on them. In the measure we look at Christ, who is walking upon the water, we do not sink. To look at Christ means, for example, to acknowledge with gratitude the blessings we have been given. It means not to feed our fears and worries.

It also means to live our life in perspective. Isolation, for example, is a blessing which can allow us to reconnect with God. The pandemic can give us the opportunity to be grateful for the small things that we usually take for granted – love of God and love of neighbor, and our common humanity.

Christ Jesus is in the midst of all the storms and uncertainties we experience. We can look to him, and call him. We will experience that instead of sinking we are raised up.

Fr. Sean