



## **PASTORAL LETTER - MARCH 29, 2020**

Dear friends,

It is understandable if our faith is wavering in the face of the horrific pandemic virus afflicting the world. We are facing a health crisis more threatening than any in our lifetimes.

So, more than ever we need faith. Faith can help us cope with the health crisis we are facing in a myriad of ways. I am, however, just going to suggest two ways in which faith can aid us.

First, faith can serve as an antidote to the sobering fear gripping us. Faith neither naïvely wishes for the impossible nor unrealistically ignores the fact that tragedy can happen. Faith allows us to remain centered even when everything around us is chaotic and imploding. Faith allows us to join Paul in saying, "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me"(Philippians 4:13).

Second, faith is, however, more than confidence in God and God's biblical promises. Faith motivates us to take calculated risks and to serve others based on our confidence in God. One of the ways in which we can add legs to our faith and make our faith action-oriented is by praying for those who are ill, praying for those who are working in health care, praying for those developing a vaccine, and praying for our elected and health officials. An action-oriented faith also leads us to help the economically disadvantaged and to stay in touch with those who may be lonely in times of enforced isolation. It is a call "to work for the good of all" (Gal 6:10).

So, how does faith work? To answer this question, we should turn to the healing story found in the Gospel of John 5. It is a story about a man who lay by the pool at Bethesda for thirty-eight years. The man had an attitudinal problem as well as a physical problem. You know how that pool worked. Every so often the waters would be stirred, and they believed that an angel stirred the waters. And the first one into the water after stirring the water would be healed of whatever

disease or ailment they might have had. This man, unfortunately, was there and never could get in the water first. He became discouraged.

When Jesus went to the place and approached the man, He said to him, “Do you want to get well?”

The man said, “Yes.”

And Jesus said, “Stand up. Pick up your pallet and walk.” And the man did. And Jesus said to him, and I paraphrase, “Your faith is what did it. Your faith has made you whole.”

Jesus was really saying to this man by the pool, and saying to us today, is that we have within us a tremendous presence, an enormous resource known as faith. One of the ways in which faith works is by motivating us to take steps in the direction of our goal. In the case of the man in our gospel story, it was in the direction of the pool so that he could attain healing, a goal which had been elusive for 38 years. How about you? Where is your faith-walk leading you?

Let us remember that we have within us the opportunity of phenomenal power, power that we really don't know that we have, and this power is related to faith. Faith does remarkable things. Faith strengthens. Faith empowers. Faith stabilizes. Faith elevates. Faith heals. And faith renews. It gives new life. It restores.

So, my friends, remember Jesus' impactful phrase to the man by the pool: Your faith, your faith, makes you whole. As the adage goes, “Keep the faith!”

We don't know the future, but we do now that faith in God leads to us salvation and to serving others in ways which will make life meaningful and purposeful for the glory of God!

Your pastor, brother-in-Christ, and your friend!

Pastor Luis