Lent 2 B

MDP of God

If God is for us – who can be against us? Words from our 2nd reading that fit in so well with our parish theme this Lent---“Jesus, I trust in you”

That line from today’s second reading from St Paul – is from a section of Romans that speaks about suffering

The section began in Romans 8 :15ff- “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear- , but you received a spirit of adoption , through which we cry “abba” – Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs- heirs of God- and joint heirs with Christ, **if only we suffer** **with him** *so we may also be glorified with Him”*

It sounded great up until that suffering stuff- didn’t it?- Heirs of God- joint heirs with Christ--- but then he adds- if only we suffer with Him

Then Paul goes on to talk about how the whole world is designed for suffering

He says, “creation was made subject to futility… all creation is groaning --in labor pains until now…we groan within ourselves…In the same way we don’t know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings [ever see someone in incredible pain and all they can do is groan- Paul is saying that’s the Spirit praying with them in their pain]

But then he goes on to say – “**God makes all things work for the good of those who love Him**… we are to be conformed to the image of His Son” {Point to crucifix} – *there’s the image of His Son- Jesus suffered*

My friends-I bring that up--because this past year our country—*the world* has suffered greatly

With the situation with the Covid-19 virus---*there’s a lot of fear*—a lot of confusion—and there’s been so much loss---**and so much division**

Certainly there have been a lot of deaths—a lot of people have been seriously ill

*A lot of people have lost loved ones*

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But there’s also people who have lost their jobs—others who have lost businesses—many people have been in isolation

I know my heart in a particular way breaks for the people who have been in nursing homes—who can’t have visitors—who have for months on end locked in their rooms

A lot of people haven’t left their homes---there’s a lot of grandparents—who haven’t hugged their grandchildren for almost a year

What a terrible loss to both the grandparents and the grandchildren

That shared love between grandparents and grandchildren are one of the greatest blessings in life---and to not be able to give each other a hug—**is tragic**

*Before I go on*—I want to point out that Romans 8 assures us*---no matter what we face*—**that God is going to make all things work for the good for those who love Him—**St Paul says in our 2nd reading, “He who did not spare his own Son  but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?”

When we see all the heartache and pain in our world today---that’s an incredible promise

I also want to point out –that while the Covid-19 virus has caused so much suffering—**that it’s not the only virus out there**

Covid-19 of course---is a physical virus—causing physical sickness- physical death—but it also has spiritual effects

*Many today are living in dire fear*--- but the bible tells us not to live in fear—St Paul in our 2nd reading today said—“If God is for us—who can be against?”

Most of the point of Romans 8—is we shouldn’t live in fear because Jesus has triumphed

Jesus Christ is on the throne---and no matter what happens He will make all things work out right for those who love Him

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And while Covid-19 is a physical virus—*that is also having spiritual effects---*there are other viruses out there---**spiritual viruses that are much more deadly**---*spiritual viruses that kill the life of the soul*---**which is much worse**

The fact is my friends—the bodies we have now---aren’t going to last---our bodies---no matter what age we are—or how healthy we are---our bodies are going to die [no ifs ands or buts about it]

None of us get out of here alive---in the body that is

*But we have this life*—**to get ready for the next life**---*so what really matters is the life of the soul*

*And there are several spiritual viruses that seek to kill the life of the soul*

The first of those viruses---is the media—**especially the News Media**—whether they be on the left or the right---the media encourages us to hate people who disagree with us

They encourage us to hold in contempt people who have different opinions

It’s such a dilemma—because if we’re going to be faithful citizens—we need to know what’s going on---but the media—on the left and the right---doesn’t give us the full picture

It encourages us to hate---*and God doesn’t want us to hate*---**He calls us to love our enemies**—to pray for our persecutors---*to desire the best for everyone*

The media—the news media especially—but also those in entertainment-TV-movies---in music---they have become a deadly viruses that can lead to the death of our souls

TV and movies now often portray seriously sinful behaviors as just alternative lifestyles that are acceptable ways of life—*no big deal*

Encouraging people to live a life of sin which can kill the soul—*I mean it can kill the Divine life that’s in us*—the life of grace that makes heaven possible for us

Folks—I have to warn you---if you spend hours a day immersed in the media—or even hours a week---*you’re probably putting your spiritual life at grave risk*

I know personally I used to listen to talk radio---at the time I would have told you that I enjoyed it

But several years ago—inspired by the children of Fatima---the three children that the Blessed Mother appeared to---*she gave them a glimpse of hell-*--**and it horrified them**---so for the rest of their lives they fasted and prayed for what they called “poor sinners”

*They were so horrified by hell*---**they wanted no one to go there**

So they fasted and prayed for “poor sinners” [Much different than my attitude...]

I thought I should do the same—but I knew if I fasted from food---my main motivation would be to lose weight---so I decided to “fast” from talk radio—now when I’m in the car or taking a walk---*I don’t listen to the radio—***I pray the rosary**-------I pray for the country—I pray for the Church—I pray for our parish—I pray for my family—I pray for people who are sick

When I listened to talk radio---I was angry—frustrated--- hateful—*I hated what some people were doing* [especially people in Washington]

So praying the rosary for them—instead of hating them –*is much more in keeping with what God wants us to do*

Another deadly virus that permeates our culture today—is secularism---which of course is a huge part of the media—but resides in a big way on our college campuses---*even many campuses that claim to be Catholic*

**Most college campuses have become havens of anti-God propaganda**

Many professors hold Christian believers in contempt and train their students to do the same

*Many in denying God*---**have become deniers of the nature God gave us—**and in doing so have become deniers of science

Students are taught that *if you have two X chromosomes in every cell of your body-*--**that doesn’t make you a female--NO**---or if you have an x and a y chromosome in every cell of your body---that doesn’t make you a male-----**NO**—they try to convince their students that you can choose whatever gender you want to be—*it’s a denial of reality*

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Again—in denying God the Creator of nature---they deny that human life begins at the moment of conception---and they promote and atmosphere *that anyone who wants to protect innocent human life are haters*---anyone who thinks that God made you a male or a female and that you can’t change that---*well they’re haters [and it’s perfectly okay for you to hate the haters—it’s causing so much division]*

Many on college campuses promote a life of sin and certainly encourage their students to reject the Wisdom of God—especially as that Wisdom comes to us through His holy Church

But the fact is my friends---God’s Wisdom is not only the path to heaven----*and make no mistake* –**it is the path to heaven**

But God’s Wisdom is what leads to joy in this life---when we embrace God’s Wisdom—and live by God’s Wisdom---that’s the way to live a joyful life here and now [Paradox—not easy but best way…]

So what this virus on college campuses is doing--- *it’s leading our young people to a life of misery*

For example---they tell students you can choose your own gender---but they never tell students that people who are transgendered---15 years out from that surgery have a suicide rate that is 20 times the average suicide rate

So their denial of science—their denial of reality---*is leading many into a life of misery*

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The fact is this virus on college campuses is leading to misery not only in this life---*that virus can lead their students to eternal misery*—since their rejection of faith can lead them away from God forever

I have to tell you---if I was a parent—I don’t know what I’d do

After all—you want your kids to get the best education so they can good jobs and support themselves

*And it’s also true* that some faithful Christians go to college---and the contempt and condescending attitude they find directed toward people of faith---*only strengthens their resolve to be faithful to God*---**and God bless those students—because it’s not easy to resist the onslaught**

But there are many others who succumb to this poisonous virus on our campuses---*and the life of their souls is drained out of them*

I don’t know as a parent---if I’d want to take the chance to expose my kids to that virus---*it should certainly be a concern that every faithful-loving parent has-*--and you need to try to arm your children to face an onslaught that can be spiritually deadly

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When I see the steps so many people are taking today to protect themselves against the Covid-19 virus---*which for the most part effects mainly our bodies*---I can’t understand how so many of us expose ourselves and our children to deadly spiritual viruses of the media and college campuses---that can snuff out the life of the soul [*if we take so many precautions to protect our bodies*—shouldn’t we take even more precautions to protect our soils and the souls of our loved ones?]

My friends—following God and His Wisdom isn’t always easy---just ask Abraham in our 1st reading today

St Paul tells us in Romans 8---that suffering will be a part of our lives---that this life isn’t always going to be easy---even for faith filled followers of Christ

But God and God alone gives meaning to our lives---God gives us sure guidance through the minefield of this life

I want to encourage you---*to not live in fear*—because Jesus has won the triumph—but at the same time to protect yourselves and your kids against the deadly viruses that surround us

Be prudent of course in dealing with Covid-19---but even more importantly—take steps to guard yourselves against the deadly viruses of the media and the secularism on our college campuses

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[Padre Pio]