

Column

As contagious as the Coronavirus may be there is another disease that far exceeds it in ferocity, terror and malignancy. I am thinking of fear. This disease is not only contagious: it is deadly, psychologically, spiritually and perhaps even physically.

In his first inaugural address in 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt described it as: “Nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”

How does one contract this disease? In today’s world, the answer would surely include watching too much news. Arming oneself with the facts regarding the current plague is surely right and necessary, but staying glued to round-the-clock news stations almost certainly leads to paralyzing fear and depression.

What are some alternatives? Here are a few:

--Pull back the curtains and discover the sun is still coming up. So far, the Coronavirus has not been able to put it out! Also, notice the signs of spring, flowering trees and blooming bulbs

--If you are able, go outside and start preparing the ground for a garden. It may be too early to put in some plants or to sow seed, but at least you can get started.

--Turn off the television and your computer and read a book of the Bible, perhaps beginning with one of the Gospels. If forced to stay at home, practice wise time management.

--Use devotional resources available online. For example, a person can join with Christians around the globe in praying Morning and Evening Prayer. One such site is: www.commonprayer.org/offices/morpry_n.cfm

--Make a list of others in your church and in the larger community who may need some extra encouragement or reassurance. Call them. Be a voice of calm and hope. Get creative.

--Some, especially who work in professions providing essential services, may even be called to put themselves in harm’s way in the service of others. Don’t seek out martyrdom, but “Where duty calls, or danger, Be never wanting there” (George Duffield).

Difficult times call for courage and faith; not cowardice and fear. Stay calm, wash your hands and carry on!

O MOST loving Father, who willest us to give thanks for all things, to dread nothing but the loss of thee, and to cast all our care on thee, who carest for us; Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, and grant that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal, and which thou hast manifested unto us in thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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