

03/27

We have reached the end of the second week since we closed our campus and moved to online delivery of our courses. Faculty and Staff have worked assiduously to make this transition as smooth as possible and from what I have heard most are adjusting well despite some occasional glitches. Students I hear are also working hard to complete their assignments and adjust to the new format. Hopefully next week will be even smoother and everyone will get the hang of what to do and how to do it. Thank you to all involved, especially Dr. Patrick Russell and Julie O'Connor of the Intellectual Formation Department as well as Mary Grieger and Logan Gajewski of the IT Department and other individuals from various departments. (A separate email is forthcoming giving their names and our thanks).

Administrative work has also continued. At times I feel that I have been busier working behind closed doors in my office than I was when everyone was on campus! Today the President's Council had its very first webex meeting and I must say it worked pretty well! It doesn't replace face to face communication but it was nice seeing the faces of those who were able to connect via video. I'm happy to report that everyone was well and in good spirits. Personally communication with various entities and following up on projects underway have taken up much of my time but we are moving ahead toward the end of the semester successfully. Gratefully, I have a deep sense of serenity despite the situation and its fluid nature. That's because I have clearly seen who is in charge. Thank God for his help. I am very grateful for the commitment and dedication of everyone.

I'm also grateful to know that everyone is taking the coronavirus outbreak seriously and working at keeping healthy. Although information on the steps each of us can take is repeated regularly in various mass media outlets, it is good to review these occasionally. You can visit our website www.shsst.edu to access the information.

The COVID-19 outbreak has caused much distress around the world. Today at noon CDT, I had the privilege of watching the transmission of the extraordinary Urbi et Orbi prayer/message of His Holiness Pope Francis. It was very inspiring and consoling in the face of this outbreak, especially to see just how aware he is of the great suffering it is causing. He reflected on Mk 4:35-41 (The calming of the sea). Below is an excerpt that I hope will inspire and console you too.

Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying "We are perishing" (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this.

It is easy to recognize ourselves in this story. What is harder to understand is Jesus' attitude. While his disciples are quite naturally alarmed and desperate, he stands in the stern, in the part of the boat that sinks first. And what does he do? In spite of the tempest, he sleeps soundly, trusting in the Father; this is the only time in the Gospels we see Jesus sleeping. When he wakes up, after calming the wind and the waters, he turns to the disciples in a reproaching voice: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (v. 40).

The entire text is worth reflecting on. It is available at:

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/27/0188/00417.html#en>

Count on my continued prayers and best wishes for you. Please try to relax a bit this weekend.

In the heart of Christ,
Fr. Raúl

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