

April 2, 2020

Dear Brothers and other members of our Dehonian family,

I find myself, as most of us do, living in a time of uncertainty and fear and I am thinking of my religious community, my family and friends. COVID-19 has certainly changed our lives and, I believe, how many of us perceive the new world in which we live. It certainly hasn't been easy for any of us. This "Staying at Home" and "Social Distancing" is challenging.

In some ways, I feel that I might have been a little more prepared for the coronavirus than most. I have pretty much been living a "stay at home" order for more than a year and eight months. For me, July 20, 2018, began my physical ordeal with the first of my many surgeries on my feet and legs. I have lived at Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake and worked at the Provincial Offices for most of that time. I did have a few "away" visits, in the fall of 2019 to Pinellas Park, FL; St. Joseph's Indian School, Chamberlain, SD; Nesbit, MS; and Rome for the Major Superiors' Meeting. In all of these trips I relied on the use of a wheelchair and the kindness of the local SCJ communities to get around. I have not, however, been able to visit my family in the Buffalo, NY, area.

As I now reflect on the coronavirus, this Lenten season naturally helps us to reflect on the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus. During this difficult time of illness and death in our country and world, I am amazed at the trust Jesus has in his father as so many were turning against him. Jesus acted with trust and courage that God, who was the very core of his being, would uphold him, even in death. During this pandemic, we need to have this same trust and courage in a God who loved us so much that he sent his only begotten Son to love us, to heal us, to grieve with us and to ultimately show us the way from darkness into light.

As I get closer to Good Friday, the day when my leg will be casted and my foot molded, I pray for that same trust and courage. Ten days later, on or around the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, I will begin the process of walking again. I have recently remarked, in the face of COVID-19, that, I may be able to walk but I'll have nowhere to go. There is some irony in that reality. Yet I know that Jesus will lead and guide me.

A friend of mine wrote to me recently and said *"I remember reading one of your letters to the province in which you told everyone about your bad news. I remember being struck deeply when you said that while this is not at all what you wanted, you were going to do your best to be a living oblation to God's will for you."*

My friend went on to reflect, *"Your service to the community seems to be in witnessing how to try to be an oblation in God's loving hands. It isn't easy and you won't do it perfectly. The province and all of us who love you will be praying for and with you. But ultimately, it's you who has to trust and let go and "be weak so that you can grow strong in Christ".*

It seems to me that in this global pandemic of COVID-19, God has mysteriously asked us for this sacrifice so that ultimately it may bring us closer to Him. And in our willingness to put it all on the line, this time will be partially spent being in need of others' help at a socially acceptable distance. We may grow weaker so that Christ can grow stronger. When given the chance, let us be truly appreciative of those on the front lines of the pandemic: doctors, nurses, medical staff of all kinds, and even prosthetists!

I think, in trying to make sense out of this experience, I realize that it's all tied up with Fiat and Ecce Venio.

Today, this is my prayer for you: that you trust deeply in the mercy of our loving Father, just as Jesus did. I know that this is difficult; we are human, and we are afraid. But we are in this together, as one Dehonian family, one people of God.

You are in my prayers and heart. Be safe!

I love you all,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ed Kilianski, SCJ".

Fr. Edward Kilianski, SCJ  
Provincial Superior  
US Province, Priests of the Sacred Heart