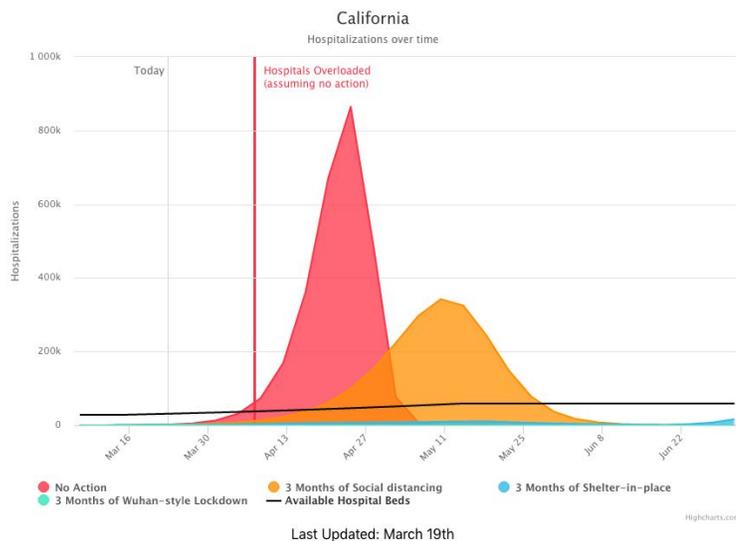


March 23, 2020

Brothers and Sisters,

It is increasingly apparent that the health and well-being of our community - and I mean the broader community, not just here at Lourdes - is facing a situation that is unprecedented on so many different levels. Our best efforts to prepare for and address ourselves to the fundamental truths facing us as a nation, as a people, are beginning to become more into focus. This is not a public health threat that will fade away in a matter of a couple of weeks, or even months. I understand some people struggling to accept the new norms, even going so far as to think them unrealistic or over-the-top. That in itself is a threat to the community's health. This is a time when we are all called upon to make personal sacrifices in the coming weeks. The sacrifices are necessary not only to protect our own lives, but perhaps even more urgently, to protect the lives of the more vulnerable among us.



A healthy person who contracts COVID-19 will very likely survive. However, while they are infected they will go on to infect many others, and some of those others will likely not survive. This is not only a matter, then, of protecting the public health, it is also a matter of morality and justice.

As our health-care system faces into this unequalled challenge, it will need to devote very advanced resource care to about 10% of those who are infected. If the infection spreads too fast, we know that the health-care system will simply be overloaded, and more people will die. This fact is established in science and is borne out by the experience of other countries with health-

Source: <https://covidactnow.org/state/CA> Image captured 3/22/2020

care just as advanced as our own.

Healthcare workers and others certainly stand in the front lines of our efforts to combat this threat to our society. However, it is important for us to remember, I believe, that we are all "first responders" in this situation. We all have an opportunity to hear and to respond to the "marching orders" being given by our public authorities and leading health professionals. It is incumbent upon us as citizens to do our utmost to save lives.

The call to arms in this struggle is clear, and I am convinced that every man, woman and child of faith can rise to answer the call.

We must make it our daily care, now, to pray for those who are ill, for those who are providing health-care, and for those on the front lines of directing our public response to this threat to our community. It is important that we pray, assured of God's faithfulness. But it is also important that we put flesh and blood on our prayers too. We must all do our part to align our actions with our prayers, and each make the sacrifices that are ours to make.

Perhaps it's appropriate to share at this time, that I've been made aware that there is a **serious blood shortage**, as people are naturally fearful of donating in the present circumstances. I am assured that all appropriate precautions are being taken to keep blood donation centers safe. Donating blood is another way we can all take seriously our being "first responders" and help save the life of another.

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that "**grace builds on nature**". I like to think it means that God doesn't intervene to save us from the folly of our own choices. But it really means that God works in us to accomplish far more than we could ever hope to achieve on our own merits. By God's grace, we can rise above and transcend our limitations. In this lies a great hope for us going forward.

Around the parish I notice people stepping up and going out of their own way to be of help. People are cooperating more and they are more attentive to one another. I hear stories of medical professionals, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, medical assistants, etc. all stepping up their efforts, collaborating much more intently, and turning their common focus not on their own welfare, but the welfare of the whole people. This is inherently Christian. If ever the story of the sheep and the goats that Jesus tells as it is recounted in Matthew 25 is to hold relevance and meaning for us in our lifetimes... this is the moment.

We are all called upon to make sacrifices, as many have already. They lead by example, and we can all afford to live up to that example.

There is a scene in the 1995 movie, "Apollo 13", in which one of the NASA administrators comments that this flight could be the greatest disaster in NASA history. The flight director, played by Ed Harris responds: "On the contrary sir, **I believe this will be our finest hour.**" We are a people of faith whose story started when Jesus was nearly annihilated and faced his utter destruction on the cross. But that wasn't the end of our story. Our story went on to Resurrection, and to the spread of the Good News of God's Reign, because the faithful few chose to rise above their circumstances, to commit themselves to an impossible task, and so brought life and light to the nations. That was then. This is our time. It's time for us to show the world what it means to be a people who live for the good of all, taking on personal challenges for the transformation of the world by God's grace.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. David