

A reflection on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the
Lord, March 25, 2020

by Deacon Ed Solomon

The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.' Luke: 26:30

Each day brings more frightening news of the spreading coronavirus, COVID-19, and fear mounts as stores shelves are emptied of tissues, toilet paper, masks, and medical supplies. Daily, the number of people testing positive and the death total grows. Gathering places, houses of worship, restaurants, malls as well as many offices and businesses are closed in an effort to stem the tide of the virus. Our lives have been turned upside down in a matter of days and there is no end in sight. As the invisible enemy spreads, we realize how vulnerable we are as a human family. This crisis gives us time to think about what is most important in life, but it also allows more time to worry and be anxious about what the future holds.

While government, health care and civic leaders do their best to reassure us that things will get better, their words cannot really address our deepest worries and fears. Only the words and life of Jesus Christ offer hope and comfort. What is that word Jesus speaks to us in the gathering storm? It is a simple yet most profound message: "Do not be afraid." With some of your spare time, google search this phrase in your bible. According to my search this exact phrase appears 76 times! It appears first in the book of Genesis when God speaks to Abram inviting him

to leave his known world and travel to an unknown place to form a new people, God's holy people, the Jewish community. (see Genesis 15-1). The last time this phrase appears in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelations, when at the end of time, Jesus, the Lamb of God, reigns over the new heaven and new earth and speaks these words to all believers: "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one" (Rev. 1-18)

Fear, worry and anxiety are normal human emotions in times of uncertainty; however, we must be careful when these feelings start to overwhelm us and rob us of life. As the pandemic unfolds, one of the ways we can stay grounded in our faith in Jesus is to listen to his words everyday. Maybe each day we are sequestered in our homes, keeping our social distance to help stop the virus from multiplying, we can open our bibles and hear Jesus speaking to you and to me right now: "Do not be afraid." It is the same message that Moses, the prophets, Mary and Joseph, and the countless saints, named and nameless, who have gone before us have heard. It is the same message that has kept Christianity alive in every age and through every crisis.

Peace be with you sisters and brothers in our Church of St. Peter faith community. I look forward to the day when we can leave our isolated tombs and gather together in the Light of Day, the Light of Christ. Until then, "Do not be afraid."

Bible concordance: a reference book that enables you to search the Bible for key a word or phrase. One of my favorite concordances is Bible Gateway The app also allows you to search many different translations of the Bible to compare the differences.