

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

Huddle reflections in the time of COVID-19



Audience: All Colleagues

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Entering Into Chaos

Bridget Deegan-Krause

Adapted by Jackie Lapinski, Executive Director Performance Excellence, Michigan Region

The God We Bring

An important question to ask, as we approach those entrusted to our care, is "Who is the God I bring with me?" Consider the God we know in Catholic health care. There we find a God who enters willingly into the chaos of our world, who chooses to make a home in the midst of woundedness, confusion and darkness — and who finds beauty and blessing there.... We know the wisdom that can emerge from struggle, and the sacred power that can be found in the midst of seeming chaos. Our health as individuals and communities depends upon our willingness to enter into the fray, time and again, with and for one another.

Today, make a choice to engage with someone who is struggling. Enter in. Be the presence of mercy that is needed. Do so with the expectancy that God will accompany you and that there may be creativity, compassion, friendship and other blessings to discover. And trust — wherever there is both chaos and mercy, always, always, there is God.

"Reflect today on where the chaos in the lives of those around you may invite your presence. Make a commitment to enter in with mercy, whether through a loving conversation, a shared meal or a listening ear. You can expect that the experience may be messy, awkward and perhaps even a little frightening. But as you willingly face the chaos experienced by another, you can do so with a spirit of trust and expectancy. You can look for the potential, the beauty and the creative, restorative power in even the most difficult situations. Because where there is both vulnerability and tenderness, we know that God shows up.

A Blessing for Health Care Workers in Time of Pandemic

Blessed are the ones who cannot be isolated.

Blessed are all the health care workers.

Blessed are the hands that are raw from scrubbing and sanitizing, and the hands for healing, comforting, and supporting.

Blessed are the shoulders that carry the weight of life and death.

Blessed are the feet that are aching from standing at the bedside, running between rooms, and answering phones.

Blessed are the hearts that are frightened and breaking.

Blessed are the mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, sisters and brothers, partners and friends, who cannot go home.

Blessed are the families who become isolated from each other, the ones who sacrifice their own comfort so that others need not be alone in their suffering.

Blessed are the sick and the dying, those who bear the image of God before us.

Blessed are those who look upon their work as sacred as and as gift at this time of overwhelming demand.

Blessed are those who lack the space to process all what lies ahead and may others bear their burden with them.

Blessed are the ones who are found weeping in corners of our emergency rooms, our hospitals, our primary cares, our outpatient centers so that we might see a strong face to greet our need. Blessed are those who weep openly with us, so that even our tears have companions.

Blessed are you, O God: quietly holding each of us along the way. Come quickly, abide unceasingly. Love us while we see the worst, and give us the hope to do our best and continue our mission with compassionate care.

Amen.

Lockdown

Bro. Richard Hendrick, OFM

Yes, there is fear. Yes, there is isolation. Yes, there is panic buying. Yes, there is sickness. Yes, there is even death.

But, they say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise you can hear the birds again. They say that after just a few weeks of quiet the sky is no longer thick with fumes but blue and grey and clear. They say that in the streets of Assisi people are singing to each other across the empty squares, keeping their windows open so that those who are alone may hear the sounds of family around them. They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know is busy spreading fliers with her number through the neighborhood so that the elders may have someone to call on. Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples are preparing to welcome and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary. All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting. All over the world people are looking at their neighbors in a new way. All over the world people are waking up to a new reality. To how big we really are. To how little control we really have. To what really matters. To love.

So, we pray, and we remember that yes, there is fear, but there does not have to be hate. Yes, there is isolation, but there does not have to be loneliness. Yes, there is panic buying, but there does not have to be meanness. Yes, there is sickness, but there does not have to be disease of the soul. Yes, there is even death, but there can always be a rebirth of love. Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now. Today, breathe. Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic the birds are singing again. The sky is clearing, Spring is coming, and we are always encompassed by Love. Open the windows of your soul and though you may not be able to touch across the empty square, Sing.

The Long View

Ken Untener, Bishop of Saginaw, 1979

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about:

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,
But that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

For Peace in Anxiety During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Catholic Health Association

Loving God, we come to you full of anxiety about what may happen in the coming days and weeks. Shower us with the peace Jesus promised to his disciples, and make us into steady pillars for those around us. In this time of uncertainty and epidemic, wake us up to the reminder that we are not alone.

Even as we are asked to keep our distance from others, help us to find ways to reach out to those who need our support. We pray especially for those whose incomes and livelihoods are threatened. For the children who

will miss meals due to school closures. For those already isolated, lonely and scared. Loving God, give them your peace, and through our hands ensure they have what they need.

Sustain, strengthen and protect all caregivers. Bless them as they offer compassionate care and show selfless courage in the face of risk.

Remind us, each time we wash our hands, that in our baptism you call us to let go of our fears and live in joy, peace, and hope. Amen.

By Laura Kelly Fanucci

When this is over, may we never take for granted:

A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbors
A crowded theater
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.

When this ends, may we find that we have become more like the people we wanted to be, we were called to be, we hoped to be; and may we stay that way – better for each other because of the worst.

For Peace and Fortitude in Worry

Prayer for the NACC by Elizabeth (Lisa)Ecks in Sacramento, CA

In this age of anxiety & stress, we ask for your Presence to be made clearly amongst us.

Be with us as we confront illnesses that leave many of us in a state of worry for our families, our friends, our colleagues, our communities, our nation and our world.

As hospitals and health care providers seek to continue the healing ministry of You, may they have fortitude for the road ahead, knowing that you are walking this journey with them with your mighty Hand. Remind them of both their strength and Your strength.

We ask for Your comfort upon those who have already lost loved ones during the time of viruses. And, may healing be upon those who are physically suffering and spiritually suffering through this season.

May the wilderness of this time & the uncertainty we may feel, strengthen our resolve to lean on your word, abide in your presence, and be guided by your enduring and powerful Spirit.

You have been with us in every age and will remain a refuge — to take solace, to recollect our thoughts, to remember that all things of this world are fleeting, and this too shall pass.

Let us recall the calming of the storm by your Hand. Let us today and tomorrow and the days ahead lean on Your fortitude, and resolve to care for each other and support each other each through this difficult journey before us in our lives both collectively and individually.

Amidst the darkness, the confusion and the storm of worry, may your Presence be made abundantly revealed so that Your light, Your hand and Your strength, gives us steadiness, refuge, clarity of purpose, and hope.

Amen.

By Mary Ann Brussat

God of mercy, be with the tens of thousands of people who have contracted the coronavirus around the world. Comfort those whose loved ones have died. Bring peace to those living with uncertainty after perhaps being exposed to the virus. Give patience to those who are quarantined and unable to move freely in their communities.

Wise and faithful guide, watch over and protect other people from catching this deadly virus. Strengthen those who are risking their own lives to care for sick patients.

May we all be filled with compassion for those who are suffering.

Blessing for Caregivers

Catholic Health Association

May you see with tender eyes
The wounds of those before you.
May you hear with well-tuned ears
The unspoken needs of those whose voices are muted.
May you hold with gentle hands
The bodies and the spirits of those you care for.

May the beauty of soul,
The strength of spirit,
The wholeness of being
Lead you, inspire you
And let you know your own
Beauty of soul,
Strength of spirit,
Wholeness of being.

May you know that,
As you care for others,
God cares for you, sees you,
Holds you tenderly. Amen.

From Morning Huddle – Monday, April 16, 2020

Rev. Crystal Schmalz, M.Div., BCC, ACPE Certified Educator Associate, St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor

Some health care workers may feel fear going into work, in addition to their courage for caring for the sick. Most of the health care workers I know are committed to providing the best care with compassion and excellence. Yet, it can still feel scary to expose oneself to some amount of risk. Health care workers have

families, children, and loved ones who might be more vulnerable to Covid19. Health care workers are real people who serve: nurses, doctors, chaplains, social workers, patient care techs, environmental services, food and nutrition, pharmacists, security, and administrators. So thank you to everyone who is participating in social distancing and helping to reduce the risk for all. Thank you for caring and thinking about more than yourself. As I walk into the hospital this morning, I'm trusting God and praying for the colleagues, patients, and families I may encounter. May God's strength be with us. May God's wisdom help us as we use our own judgment. May God increase our skills and training. May God's presence go before and with us. May God's protection and healing be upon us. May God's peace and comfort abound.

Adapted from 'A Prayer for Those Who are Ill'

Spirit of God, we bring before you today those who suffer from illness, for those whose lives are profoundly affected by their illness, and for those caring for them.

When they feel fragile and broken, remind them that you call them by name and hold them in the palm of your hand.

When they feel devalued, remind them that they are made in your image.

When they are reminded of different times in the past, lead them to grow in the faith that you love them today, as they are, in the reality of their lives this day.

When they feel uncertain and fearful about the future, lead them to that perfect love which casts out all fear.

When situations remind them not of what they can do, but of what they cannot do, remind them that love never fails.

May all of us continue to see or respond to the needs of others, especially those who suffer in our midst. May we live with courage to respond to the challenges that each of us faces. Amen.

A Prayer for the Caregiver

Becky Evans, National Association of Catholic Chaplains

Giver of life, and light,
Healer of all souls,
Let my cup overflow
with your grace, so that I
may bring solace to each
soul entrusted to my care.

Let my eyes see your face
in each person I meet. Let
my ears listen with attention
to the stories of anguish, joy,
loneliness, fear, or pain. Let
your empathy overcome me.

Let my hands be your hands,
your consoling hands of peace.

Let my feet be anointed to walk
with integrity and authenticity.

Divine, healing Caregiver,
let gratitude dance in me
as I carry your Word
of love and hope to each
sick or troubled person
in this broken, beautiful world.

Blessing for the Sick

Catholic Health Association

May you be held in love.
May tenderness carry you.
May the pain you know
Too well
Be lifted from you.

May your heart's heaviness
Be lightened by grace,
May hope abound for you.

May those who serve you
Care for you.
May their expertise help you,
Their compassion sustain
you.

May you know you are not
alone
But always loved by God.

May you see miracles
And know you are one.
May your courage give us
courage.
May your love hold us
tenderly.

And may you dwell in peace
In the midst
The depth
The breadth of
Your being.

Amen.

A Prayer Amid an Epidemic

Kerry Weber, executive editor of *America* magazine

Jesus Christ, you traveled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace.

Jesus Christ, heal us.

Prayer for a Pandemic

Author Unknown

May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors
Remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making the rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close
Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips
Remember those that have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market
Remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
Remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country,
Let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,
Let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God of our neighbors.

Amen.

A prayer for the sick especially those suffering from the coronavirus

Loving God, you sent your son Jesus Christ to heal the sick. We ask you to come to our aid in the midst of the coronavirus crisis that we too may experience your healing love. We ask you to heal those who are sick. Calm those who are living in fear. Be with those who have died and comfort their families. Inspire health professionals to aid them in their healing work. Guide national leaders to lead and make decisions with wisdom. Help us to always be aware of your presence as we place our trust in you. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

Prayer for an end to the coronavirus crisis

Loving God, we come before you in our time of need. We lay before you our concerns and fears over the spread of the coronavirus. We know that you are mightier than all our fears and that the name of Jesus is the name above all other names. We ask, in the name of Jesus, that you stop the spread of the coronavirus. In your mercy, heal those who are sick and lead those who have died into your heavenly kingdom. We ask this in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

A Prayer for Uncertain Times

Sr. Cynthia Serjak, RSM

God of infinite mercy, hear our prayer!

In this time of bewilderment and fear, we ask you to give us the courage to take care of one another as Jesus did. For those who are ill, especially those who are frightened and alone, for those who cannot access health care, for those who are homeless and lost, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our sadness and grief, we ask you to give us words to comfort one another. For those who are dying, and for those who have already died from this virus, for those who tend them and for those with no one to tend them, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our own anxiety we ask you to give us the courage to support one another as you would. For those who are unexpectedly unemployed, for employers who share what they can, for our government and financial institutions and those who lead them, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our struggle to ensure a healthy future for all who live on this planet, we ask you to give us the hope that surpasses our current understanding. For health care workers, spiritual leaders and our faith communities, for artists and poets, for prophets and teachers, hear our prayer!

In the midst of our growing awareness that all life on Earth is connected, we ask for the heart to respect and cherish all life. That all peoples recognize that we are all your children, hear our prayer!
We trust in you and your power working in us. Please hear and answer our prayers.

Amen! Amen!

Reflection on Solidarity and Mental Toughness

Scott Opperman, Director of Mission Integration, Mercy Health St. Mary's

On March 15, 2020, the award-winning columnist Mitch Albom shared that his physician asked him a favor during a recent medical appointment. She requested, "Can you tell everyone to stay calm? To be kind to each other, and not panic? People in your position can make a difference."

In his column, Albom shared: "[A] dark national mood is dangerous. For society. For the economy. For the future. ...It will lead to more panic. More anger. More people grabbing every roll of toilet paper for themselves. ... As much as we need to control the spread of the virus, we need to control the spread of hopelessness. It is every bit as debilitating. ...[M]isinformation can lead to fear, and ... fear can lead to cruelty. ... How we handle ourselves the next few months will determine what our nation looks like for the next few years. The dangers of the virus should never be ignored. But neither should the hopefulness of surviving it. I have learned, through decades writing about the subject, that most people can't really envision death. But they react mightily to the threat of it. Fear and depression quickly rise. Anger. Isolation. Doing and saying things they never did before."

It'd be easy for our mood to become dark. To panic. To anger. To be hopeless. To fear. And, unfortunately, to become cruel. If we did, however, we'd lose our soul as a health care ministry that pledges to serve together in the Spirit of the Gospel. Our culture, which is based upon being true to our Mission, living our Values, and excelling in all we do, would erode. Let's promise one another that we're not going to let that happen.

I have two asks of everyone, based on my past service as chaplain-coach for a college football team. In my role, I constantly asked the players and staff in huddles and team meetings to focus on two behaviors:

- 1) Solidarity. They needed to value, care for and work together with all teammates, regardless if they liked one another, were second string, were walk-ons, hurt one another in the past, were freshmen—whatever. They needed to love one another as brothers if they wanted to win a national championship.
- 2) Mental toughness. They needed to be focused on winning games together. I asked them not to be distracted by referees, opposing fans, past failures, recent successes, romantic relationships, or anything else. The players claimed they won back-to-back national NAIA championships while I was there because of their solidarity and mental toughness. They had always had the talent.

Like the football team, Trinity Health has the most talented colleagues. What I think we need right now is solidarity and mental toughness to be true to our Mission, live our Values and excel in all we do. Solidarity and mental toughness.

Pandemic

Lynn Ungar

What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath – the most sacred of times? Cease from travel. Cease from buying and selling. Give up, just for now, on trying to make the world different than it is. Sing. Pray. Touch only those to whom you commit your life. Center down.

And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart. Know that we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful. (You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives are in one another's hands. (Surely that has come clear.) Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart. Reach out your words. Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love – for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, so long as we shall live.

This Can Be Our Finest Hour-But We Need All Of You

Gretchen Schmelzer

For the vast majority of people nationwide and worldwide, this virus is not about you. This is one of those times in life, in history, when your actions are about something bigger. They are about someone else. They are about something greater, a greater good that you may not ever witness. A person you will save who you will never meet.

You may be healthy, and your kids may be healthy. You parents may be healthy. Everyone around you seems fine. And all the things you planned and the 2020 spring you thought you were going to have has been completely undone. You have to work from home. Your conference is cancelled. Your semester is over. Your work is cancelled. It all seems fast, and out-of-proportion and disorienting. You look at each action and think—but it would be okay if I did that. It's not so big. We worked so hard. They would be so disappointed.

Your losses are real. Your disappointments are real. Your hardships are real. I don't mean to make light or to minimize the difficulty ahead for you, your family or community.

But this isn't like other illnesses and we don't get to act like it is. It's more contagious, it's more fatal—and most importantly, even if it can be managed. It can't be managed at a massive scale—anywhere. We need this thing to move slowly enough for our collective national and worldwide medical systems to hold the very ill so that all of the very ill can get taken care of. Because at this time of severe virus there are also all of the other things that require care. There is still cancer, there are still heart attacks, there are still car accidents, there are still complicated births. And we need our medical systems to be able to hold us. And we need to be responsible because our medical systems are made up of people and these amazing health care workers are a precious and limited resource. They will rise to this occasion. They will work to help you heal. They will work to save your mother or father or sister or baby. But in order for that to happen we have very important work to do. ALL OF US.

So what is our work? Yes, you need to wash your hands and stay home if you are sick. But the biggest work you can do is expand your heart and your mind to see yourself and see your family as part of a much bigger community that can have a massive—hugely massive—impact on the lives of other people. I remember the feeling of helplessness after 9/11 and after Hurricane Sandy. I remember how much people wanted to help. I remember how much generosity of spirit there was about wanting to give, wanting to be helpful, wanting to save lives. And many of you have had experiences since then—whether it was a mass shooting, or the wildfires, or floods. There have been times you have looked on and wondered how you could help. And now we ALL have that chance.

You can help by canceling anything that requires a group gathering. You can help by not using the medical system unless it is urgent. You can help by staying home if you are sick. You can help by cooking or shopping or doing errands for a friend who needs to stay home. You can help by watching someone's kid if they need to cover for someone else at work. You can help by ordering take-out from your local restaurants. Eat the food yourself or find someone who needs it. You can help by offering to help bring someone's college student home or house out-of-town students if you have extra rooms. You can help by asking yourself, "What can I and my family do to help?" "What can we offer?" You can help by seeing yourself as part of something bigger than yourself.

When the Apollo 13 oxygen tank failed and the lunar module was in danger of not returning to earth, Gene Kranz, the lead flight director overheard people saying that this could be the worst disaster NASA had ever experienced—to which he is rumored to have responded, “With all due respect, I believe this is going to be our finest hour.”

Imagine if we could make our response to this crisis our finest hour. Imagine if a year or two from now we looked back on this and told the stories of how we came together as a team in our community, in our state, in our nation and across the world. Your contribution to the finest hour may seem small, invisible, inconsequential—but every small act of ‘not doing’ what you were going to do, and ‘doing’ an act of kindness or support will add up exponentially. These acts can and will save lives. The Apollo 13 crew made it their finest hour by letting go of the word “I” and embracing the word “we.” And that’s the task required of us. It can only be our finest hour if we work together. You are all on the team. And we need all of you to shine in whatever way you can.

By Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky, B'nai David-Judea Congregation, a Modern Orthodox synagogue in Los Angeles

One of the brand new terms that has entered our daily conversation is "social distancing." It is shorthand, as we know very well, for the practical physical precautions that we all need to and must take in order to protect ourselves and others. I'd humbly suggest though, that we use the term itself sparingly, if at all. Language is a powerful shaper of thinking. And the very last thing we need right now, is a mindset of mutual distancing.

We actually need to be thinking in the exact opposite way. Every hand that we don't shake must become a phone call that we place. Every embrace that we avoid must become a verbal expression of warmth and concern. Every inch and every foot that we physically place between ourselves and another, must become a thought as to how we might be of help to that other, should the need arise. It is obvious that "distancing", if misplaced or misunderstood, will take its toll not only upon our community's strength and resiliency, but upon the very integrity and meaning of our spiritual commitment....

Let's stay safe. And let's draw one another closer in a way that we've never done before.

There are some things you learn best in calm, and some in storm.

Willa Cather

Our life, like our planet's life, knows both calm and storm. We experience times when our lake is placid and our sky cloudless. We also encounter days of howling winds and turbulent seas. We live many days in the in-between.

In all times, we can learn to deepen trust.

In times of calm, learning to trust is nuanced. When we are surrounded by tranquility, we can look closely at our environment. We can absorb detail – noticing subtle differences, grasping vital distinctions. We can understand relationships between things and in turn, our relationship to things. With insight, trust can become more practical.

In times of storm, learning to trust is sharpened. In the midst of crisis, we discover what is most basic. Urgency demands our full attention and a shedding of all that is secondary. We learn what matters most; we respond to what we know to be essential. We scan our resources, drawing upon those skills that are needed for immediate safety. We act with our abilities; we rely on our faith; we hope. With focus, trust can become more functional.

In times of storm, learning to trust is inventive. When faced with difficulty, assurance can become dislodged. Uncertainty challenges our confidence and requires us to reach out – to loved ones, to God, to our communities, to those things that have helped us cope in the past. We build pathways back to those sanctuaries or we imagine and create new ways of attaching to those anchors that most deeply secure us. With creative effort, trust can be restored. All our circumstances can be a chance to grow in trust that ultimately, we will find our way.

What has carried me through storms of the past? How can I trust that refuge today?