

**Personal Letter of Appreciation and Encouragement
to Céilí Community
During this period of the Coronavirus.**

17 March 2020

Dear Community,

I want to first of all wish you all a very happy feast day on this St Patrick's Day.

We are living in very unique times with many people expressing genuine concerns and others being gripped by fear. Given that we are fast approaching the day we celebrate the arrival of Christianity to Ireland, we have a fantastic opportunity to humble ourselves and collectively seek the Lord by prayer and petition.

Traditionally, on St. Patrick's Day, we have a big family day out, attending local events and visiting family and friends. But, this coming St. Patrick's Day with all events cancelled, we can have a 'Big Day In'.

I would call on all of us to commit to a time of prayer, in our homes, on 17 March at this time of National challenge. Let us pray for our community, island, our people, families, and our neighbours that we will not be caught up and overwhelmed by this virus".

Let us also pray for those who have succumbed to the illness and those at the frontlines – especially doctors, nurses and medical staff and other carers, including clergy – that the Lord will protect them as they place their own wellbeing at risk in the service of all.

God's wonderful promise is true for Ireland today that: "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14.

It is a good time to again read St. Patrick's powerful and yet simple Confessions. { www.catholicplanet.com/confessions-of-St-Patrick

pdf} We could also watch the new movie [“I am Patrick”](#) on Netflix. We will be inspired again as we read and watch how Patrick

- Acknowledges at 16 how he didn't know God
- Tells of his conversion
- Relates elegantly his wonderful concept of God in the Trinity
- Describes how he experienced the power of Prayer
- Admits he was betrayed by his dearest friend
- How he learned to always give thanks in good times and bad
- Came to understand that freely we receive and thus freely give
- How he seen many people converted through his ministry
- And yet while being aware of his weaknesses, he persevered to the end.

It is no wonder he could pray

“Christ be with me,

Christ within me,

Christ behind me,

Christ before me,

Christ beside me,

Christ to win me;

Christ to comfort and restore me;

Christ beneath me,

Christ above me,

Christ in quiet,

Christ in danger,

Christ in hearts of all that love me,

Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.”

As a community, may we hold Patrick as an inspirational model and know the closeness of the Lord, as he did, during this whole Corona virus phase.

I believe the Lord is saying to us in Ireland today

“Do not fear. For I have not given you a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind”. {2 Timothy 1:7}

As well as the above I thought it appropriate that I write this personal note to you to express my gratitude to you, especially at this challenging time in our society when we are all trying to respond to the Coronavirus. You are at the forefront of evangelisation, and you are no doubt doing your best to exercise good leadership, by being sensible and following the guidelines of the experts the medics and the Bishops’ while also trying to help people to remain calm and not become overly anxious.

Thank you for your leadership as good evangelisers, who are protective of and caring towards others. I am, however, conscious that many of us are in the more vulnerable age group that is being spoken of in terms of this virus. It is important, therefore, that we all, especially those who are more elderly, exercise good care towards ourselves, so that we can continue to be good carers to those we know, live with and minister to. Let’s try to ensure that we all look after ourselves, by trying to get sufficient rest and eating properly, by remembering to apply to ourselves all the advice we are giving others, such as washing our hands regularly and especially when we return to the our homes and community, and by not hesitating to self-isolate if that proves necessary. All the known data suggests that the fight against this virus will take some time, but we must not let ourselves become despondent. We are being guided by our Triune God and very good advice, and let us also pledge to add a prayer of intercession for each other in the intercessions of Morning and Evening Prayer, beginning today.

In terms of your care for others, please do encourage them to follow the advice about staying at home and not coming to Mass if they are unwell or carrying symptoms of a cold or flu. Please also make clear that, if they are unwell or more at risk because of age or respiratory issues, attendance at Mass in these circumstances is not required by the teaching of the Church. We are surely well

placed as a Catholic community to play an important part during the Coronavirus in showing care and practical support towards the elderly and infirm, especially those on their own.

Perhaps we could use the telephone more and more in our own ministry, as a way of keeping in regular touch with those who may be quarantined or in voluntary isolation. Perhaps too we could encourage others to also make use of the phone as a way of keeping in contact with our elderly neighbours, fellow community, relations and friends, especially those whom we know are feeling very anxious at this time. In this way we will, as a community, be better able to try and provide care and practical support to those in need around us in our local community.

I know there is still discussion about how we are to receive Holy Communion during the Coronavirus threat, even after the guidelines of the Church. I want to emphasise how important it is that, to help minimise the spread of the virus, we gently but firmly encourage people to receive Holy Communion on the hand during this period of the threat of the Coronavirus. This too is an ancient tradition of the Church, and the scientific facts suggest that, in 90% of those who are carrying the virus, it is present in their saliva. Please do patiently and gently explain to those who may still insist on exercising their rights to receive on the tongue that they are expected to: 'take into account the common good of the Church, the rights of others and their own duties towards others' (Code of Canon Law, 223).

There will certainly be more guidelines as the Coronavirus takes greater hold in our country but, for now, please know that each of you is very much in my prayers and Masses. Our ministry as evangelisers takes each of us each day into pastoral contact with many people, and this must continue, so please do all you can to take wise precautions as you go about your ministry as disciples of Christ.

With prayer and good wishes.

Your brother in Christ.

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