



**Saint Catherine's Vision**  
Building Up the Body of Christ

## **PASCHA 2020**

### ***Contemplating "Signs of the Times" and Pascha 2020***

The entire globe, all of humanity, has been affected in some manner by the Corona virus. This phenomenon indicates something uniquely significant to *us*, to *our* generation. Perhaps most importantly, it points to a mystery of relationship. Somehow, in ways that are far beyond our ability to comprehend, all of humankind is simultaneously prodded to face our shared vulnerability and mortality. Try as we may, "business as usual" cannot be maintained...whatever our notion of "business as usual" may be.

As believers, we affirm that we are "knit together in Love" (Colossians 2:2) by the God Who loves us first. Nevertheless, these strange times accost Christians with extreme examples of human action and inaction. On the one hand, we may be blessed to bear witness to astonishing examples of sacrificial love. And, on the other hand, we may also see instances of mind-boggling, self-interest. The Lord's foretelling that prior to the end-times "the love of many will have grown cold" (Matthew 24:12) gives us great pause today to humbly ponder.

Humankind is inextricably joined by the One Who created us. When our hearts and actions strive to honor God, in some mysterious manner, all of humanity and creation is inexplicably touched. When we deceive others for self-seeking reasons, we ever-more separate us from God, one another, creation—even our own selves.

Could it be that these current challenging "signs of the times" (Matthew 16:3) may somehow also unexplainably be related to troubled times from the past? There are many accounts of Christians through history, who by Divine Compassion (*theion eleos*) were prodded by visitations from the saints to pray for their people just before a geographical calamity or plague. To mitigate the destruction, they would be urged to pray and do works of philanthropy for their community, their region, their nation and/or their world. This also bears witness to the mystery of our call to growing authentic relationship with God, our collaboration or "*synergia*" with Him, especially through these types of events. After all, the essence of genuine prayer is *agape* love. And the Lord's "greatest commandment" to love God *and one another* with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength (Matthew 22:37) is as true for us today, as it has been throughout the centuries.

With the above in mind, what may be most moving of all is the unprecedented (for our generation) positive response by many who at sacrificial, personal expense, have been bringing comfort, mercy, and healing to those in need. They are responding to the insatiable, unfathomable neediness that all of us bear and share! As the late 4<sup>th</sup>-early 5<sup>th</sup> century St. Augustine's assertion testifies, "*You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.*"

May God enable and bless the first responders, physicians, nurses, medical personnel, police, firefighters, civic leaders, philanthropists, restaurateurs, truck drivers, delivery persons, grocery and drugstore workers, errand-runners, personal care-takers and the countless other people now striving to prevent and alleviate suffering. Their heroic, shared commitment to help slow the progress of the virus, indescribably joins them together creating a force larger than the sum of their individual selves.

May God also enable and bless those who have begun to reach out in much less visible ways in response to the crisis: for those who pray, for those who extend themselves with acts of private charity, for those who pick up the telephone and encourage others electronically. We are also appreciative of new social media outreaches in order to extend tender-loving-kindness to persons in isolation. We especially are mindful of and grateful to those who have begun to do so as an act of witness to the Thrice-Holy, Divine Compassion (*theion eleos*).

We give thanks to the Merciful God, Who, loves each one of us to folly. We ponder the death and resurrection of His Only begotten Son. We do this during the same weeks when so many of us are forced to carry new Corona-virus-related crosses. Our pain and personal crosses, ultimately, can only be carried by the One Who triumphs over death through the definitive Cross. And so, together with the saints of all ages, we exclaim, *Christos Anesti*, Christ is Risen! Through the days that unfold before us, this proclamation asserts the victory of Life over death; even as many of us may be starting to face post-pandemic losses that hurl our lives toward an unanticipated trajectory.

Together, let us humbly face the Compassionate God in prayer, and ask for His tender-loving-mercy (*theion eleos*). Mercy to curb the destructive path of this malady and bring it to a speedy end. Mercy to enable us to bear and overcome our personal crosses. Mercy to soften hearts to better attend to the will of God. Mercy for human persons to better "see" themselves in the stranger, the "other" —also created "in the image and after the likeness of God" (Genesis 1:27). Mercy that we may better attend to the above as we strive together to seek His love and will for us. And for those who do not seek this, we ask for an extra measure of God's tender-loving-mercy on them!

And even more fervently, we implore the One Who is Risen from the dead, to raise, guide and enable saints for our times; Spirit-filled persons equipped to attend to "the building up

of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12) and also to the groanings of His Creation, which in its utter depths, seeks Him and only Him.

*Christ is Risen!  
He is Risen, Indeed!*

Pascha 2020

Submitted on Behalf of Saint Catherine’s Vision

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