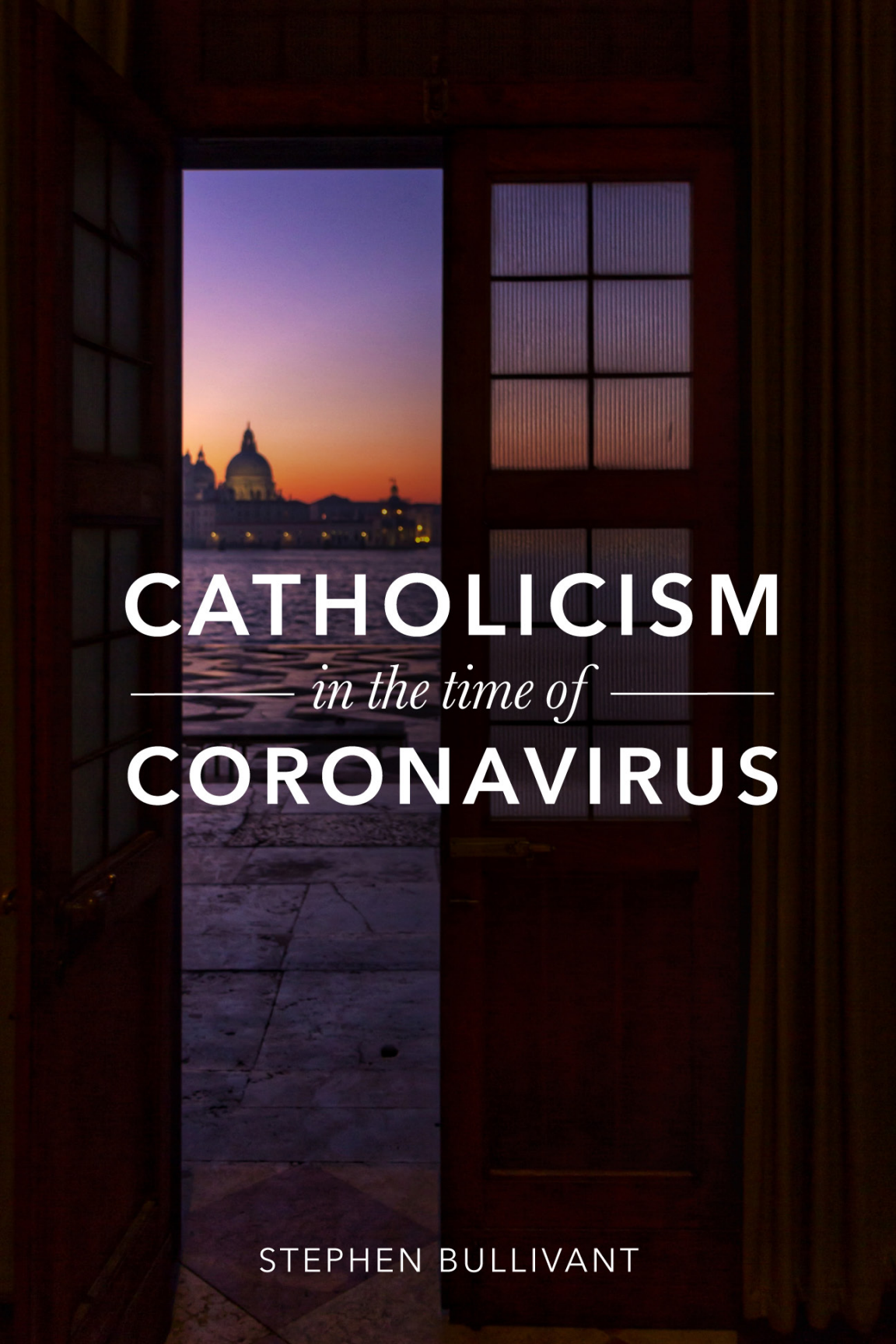
CATHOLICISM
in the time of
CORONAVIRUS
STEPHEN BULLIVANT

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WORD on FIRE

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Stephen Bullivant, 1984–

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For David Sanders, OP

Our brethren who are freed from this world by the Lord's summons are not to be lamented, since we know that they are not lost, but sent before; that, departing from us, they precede us as travellers, as navigators are accustomed to do; that they should be desired, but not bewailed; that the black garments should not be taken upon us here, when they have already taken upon them the white raiment there.

—St. Cyprian of Carthage

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FOREWORD

The COVID-19 pandemic has been, for countless people around the world, a great and unexpected trial. At the time of this writing, over two million cases of coronavirus have been confirmed worldwide (with America comprising over a quarter of that number), and over one hundred thousand people have died. Shopping malls, movie theaters, restaurants, school campuses, sports stadiums, and airports are all emptying out, countless people are self-quarantining in their homes, and the economy is showing signs of serious distress. What seemed just a short time ago a fairly stable state of affairs, medically, politically, and economically, has been turned upside down—and we will likely be dealing with the virus and its impacts for months to come.

In the midst of this crisis, Catholics have faced another trial, one that is not only economic, social, or medical, but spiritual. Catholic dioceses throughout the United States and around the world

have suspended public Masses, restricted access to Confession, and postponed Confirmations and other sacramental celebrations. Meanwhile, many priests and lay ministers have put their own safety on the line in ministering to those affected by the dangerous pathogen. Over one hundred priests have died in Italy, which has been one of the hardest-hit countries in Europe. And who can forget the haunting image of Pope Francis walking through an empty and silent St. Peter's Square to deliver his extraordinary Urbi et Orbi blessing? (You can read the Pope's reflection in the Appendix to this book.) Plunged into the darkness of uncertainty, illness, and death, and separated from the life-giving power of the sacraments and the support of their parish communities, Catholics are feeling, understandably enough, quite disheartened.

Yet this might also be a time of great spiritual opportunity and transformation. In the first place, the coronavirus—like many tragedies before it—has forced us to confront a general truth about the nature of things, a truth that we all know in our

bones but that we choose, typically, to cover-up or overlook: the radical *contingency* of the world. This means, to state it simply, that everything in our experience is unstable; it comes into being and it passes out of being. And though we habitually divert ourselves from accepting it, this contingency principle applies to each of us. Whenever we get really sick, or a good friend dies, or a strange new virus threatens the general population, this truth manages to break through our defenses. When we are shaken, we seek by a very healthy instinct for that which is ultimately stable, and for that ultimate cause that is not itself contingent—namely, God.

The coronavirus has also provided countless people in quarantine with an invitation to some monastic introspection, some serious confrontation with the questions that matter. Blaise Pascal said that all of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone, and this observation has come to my mind a good deal as our entire country has gone into shutdown mode. Suddenly, people are finding themselves with plenty

of time to get out their Bible and read it slowly, prayerfully; to pick up a spiritual classic like St. Augustine's *Confessions* or Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain*; and to use the solitude and silence as an occasion for prayer. There are new opportunities to take in the beauty of God's creation, or to practice concrete works of mercy, love, and solidarity, especially for those suffering the effects of the coronavirus.

Finally, this crisis has accentuated the power of the new media for evangelization and building up the kingdom of God as perhaps never before. The suspending of Masses and closing of churches is a very serious blow to our incarnational faith, and both priests and laity are feeling the heartache of it. We will, and we must, return to the sacraments. But the Church is not shut down, because the Church is the Mystical Body of Jesus. And as I heard a bishop remark recently, by the providence of God, we still have these extraordinary media tools to connect the Church. We at Word on Fire are offering daily Mass online, as are countless

other ministries and churches, and there has been a dramatic rise in virtual rosaries, retreats, and Eucharistic Adoration. This digital outreach is also offering non-Catholics a unique opportunity to see and experience the Catholic faith online. During one of our Masses, one commenter on YouTube remarked that this was his first time seeing a Mass. Who can say what good might come of this harnessing of digital media to spread and practice the faith—not only in the present but in the years to come?

Yet the practical questions remain. The laity and clergy alike are wondering not only about the long-term impact of the crisis on our own spiritual lives, but on the Church's institutions and its mission of evangelization.

This insightful and encouraging book from Dr. Stephen Bullivant, a former Oxford researcher, expert in Catholic disaffiliation, and Fellow of the Word on Fire Institute, is intended to explore precisely these questions. Looking at the coronavirus

pandemic from the historical and sociological as well as ecclesial perspective, and weaving in his own personal reflections as a convert to the faith and a Catholic husband and father, Dr. Bullivant sheds light on the spiritual implications of the coronavirus, offering Catholics a unique roadmap for this challenging time.

The Church finds itself once again in rough waters. Down the ages, across space and time, the barque of Peter has been beset by similar storms, as Dr. Bullivant shows here. But our hope is not finally in the comfort and security of this passing world. Our hope is in Jesus Christ—the Christ who died for us, and by dying, destroyed our death. This Christ is alive; he guides the Church and is present to it even now. He is sending each one of us, in our own way, on mission—even now, even during this crisis. If we look around at the waves, we will sink. But if we keep our eyes fixed on him, we will walk on the water.

—Bishop Robert Barron

PREFACE

I hope this book is less strange to read than it was to write. The whole process, from pitch to preface (always written last), happened over the space of twelve days: Monday, March 30, to Friday, April 10, 2020. It is therefore, and deliberately so, *of* and *for* a very particular moment, one indeed very aptly likened—as Pope Francis did in his Urbi et Orbi blessing, which we are grateful to the Holy See for allowing us to include in the Appendix of this edition—to a storm at sea.

As coherently as I'm able in my seasick state, I've tried to collect some structured thoughts about the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath, and their likely impacts upon the Church's pastoral and evangelistic mission. I'm focusing especially on the Catholic Church in the US and UK. That said, I hope much of it will resonate beyond these ecclesial and geographical contexts. This is a short and (hopefully) readable work, blending sociology,

theology, spirituality, and Church history. To quote the informal motto of the research center I have the privilege of directing at St. Mary's University, London, my general aim here has been "academically rigorous and pastorally useful," with a particular emphasis on the latter virtue. Far more so than I planned when I started writing, it is also very much of a personal work—and I trust all the better for it.

I must thank here my wife, Joanna, who has as ever "done everything well" (Mark 7:37) in even-more-trying-than-usual conditions; our three bonus houseguests, who have daily demonstrated the wisdom of Hebrews 13:2; Dr. Shaun Blanchard, Fr. Hugh Somerville Knapman, OSB, Dr. Luke Arredondo, and (again) Dr. Joanna Bullivant for incisive commenting on drafts; and all at Word on Fire, especially Brandon Vogt and Jared Zimmerer, for their enthusiasm and all around excellence. It's a great honor to have my words graced with a Foreword by Bishop Barron, albeit of the "dauntingly tough act to follow" kind.

I'd like to thank my three children who, despite being off school for the duration, heroically and self-sacrificingly created a calm and quiet environment in which to write. I'd like to, but simple honesty—and fear of breaking or even mocking the Eighth Commandment—forbids it.

—Stephen Bullivant
Good Friday, 2020

CHAPTER ONE

Everything Is Tears

In the late 240s AD, a grave new illness arose, wreaking terror throughout the Roman Empire for the best—or rather worst—part of the next two decades. This sickness, originating in the south-eastern reaches of the then-known world, would suddenly appear in a major city and transport hub: Alexandria, Carthage, Rome. It would torment and ravage the inhabitants over the cooler winter months, then ease over the summer. Often enough, it would return the next year. And sometimes the next.

Exactly what this illness was, modern scholars are not sure. While there have been various suggestions, including smallpox and bubonic plague, the smartest money is probably on one of two possibilities: either Ebola or an especially virulent influenza-like illness. In his 2017 book *The Fate of Rome:*

Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire, historian Kyle Harper draws instructive comparisons to the global "Spanish" Flu crisis of 1918–1920 and the more recent outbreaks of H5N1 "avian flu." Today, another parallel leaps all too readily to mind: our current coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic.

Though there are clear and (for us) merciful differences—the "diseased putrefaction" of bodily extremities, necessitating amputation, being just one—there are nonetheless some striking similarities. Here we rely on the first-hand testimony of St. Cyprian, who was bishop of Carthage in modern-day Tunisia when the disease hit the city around AD 250. He speaks, for instance, of "the attack of fevers." Severe gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea and vomiting, which afflict a significant number of coronavirus sufferers, were also a major hallmark: "The bowels, relaxed into a constant flux, discharge the bodily strength. . . . The intestines are shaken with a continual vomiting." Specific symptoms aside, the malady clearly thrived on close person-to-person contact, as per our own obsessions with "social distancing" and "self-isola-

tion." Hints from other ancient sources also suggest that, while no age group was truly "safe," those in middle and older age brackets were at least equally, if not (as with COVID-19) harder hit. (This contrasts with the 1918–1920 pandemic, for example, which disproportionately hit the young and fit.)

Though medically and historically interesting, comparing symptoms is not what is most helpful in considering our current situation. For our purposes, the most salient link between the so-called "Plague of Cyprian" and our present global crisis is something they both share with countless other such outbreaks throughout human history: the staggering costs in terms of lives and livelihoods; the anguish—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—afflicting millions, even billions, of people; and the stress and strains put on all, but especially on those whose calling it is to serve, protect, treat, and/or care for others.

Writing within a year or two of Cyprian, another North African bishop, St. Dionysius of Alexandria, noted that "now, indeed, everything is tears

and everyone is mourning, and wailings resound daily through the city because of the multitude of the dead and dying." These harrowing words, written almost eighteen hundred years ago, have a ring about them at once timeless and yet painfully relatable. As I sit typing at the end of March, identical sentiments—howsoever differently phrased—might easily appear in my Twitter or Facebook feed from friends in Rome, Hong Kong, or New York City. By the time you are reading this, who knows where the current hotspots will be?

Having finished writing the above section, I went off to pour another coffee, and idly check social media. Among my messages was the news that a Dominican priest friend in Oxford, whom I've known for over a decade, had just died of COVID-19. The sad irony of my above remark on "relatability" is not lost on me here, as I'm sure it will not be on my dearly departed friend Fr. David. And indeed, St. Dionysius, just a few sentences after the

one I quoted above, remarks: "Truly the best of our brethren departed from life [having contracted the disease in the course of their care for others] including some presbyters and deacons and those of the people who had the highest reputation."

The pestilence of the mid-third century, plus several others in the Church's maiden centuries, have been of professional interest to me for some years—long before I imagined I'd be living in the middle of one myself. Not because I'm a scholar of epidemiology, strangely enough, but because I'm a sociologist and theologian with an interest in evangelization. And one of the things I'm especially intrigued by is the lessons that the "old" evangelization—though it was "new," and radically so, at the time—might hold for the contemporary world.

In a groundbreaking 1996 book, *The Rise of Christianity*, the American sociologist Rodney Stark turned the tools of his trade on the early Church—

with fascinating results. Among other things, he highlighted the role that such pandemics—and Christians' response to them, which differed from other people's—played in the ultimate Christianization of the Roman Empire. St. Pontius, who served as a deacon of Cyprian's during the period in question, describes the "numberless" inhabitants in Carthage succumbing to the "dreadful plague":

> All were shuddering, fleeing, shunning the contagion, impiously exposing their own friends—as if with the exclusion of the person who was sure to die of the plague, one could also exclude death itself. Lying about over the whole city were, no longer bodies, but the carcasses of many, demanding the pity of those passing by, who contemplated a destiny that in their turn would be their own.

The city's Christians, however, were a notable exception to this general trend. While others fled to the countryside (in many cases, one assumes, taking the disease with them), a significant number of Pontius' coreligionists stayed behind to nurse any in need, irrespective of their faith. Nor was this a local aberration. Over in Alexandria, for instance,

Dionysius reports: "Most of our brethren were unsparing in their exceeding love and brotherly kindness. They held fast to each other and visited the sick fearlessly, and ministered to them continually, serving them in Christ."

Early the next century, as a new plague ravaged parts of the Empire, Christians again came to the help of those in need. According to Eusebius of Caesarea:

> In the midst of such illness, they alone [the Christians] showed their sympathy and humanity through their deeds. Every day some continued caring for and burying the dead, for there were multitudes who had no one to care for them; others collected those who were afflicted by the famine throughout the entire city into one place, and gave bread to them all.

All things considered, it is perhaps not surprising that this selfless heroism won both admiration and converts: "[These things were] reported abroad among all men, and they glorified the God of the Christians; and, convinced by the facts themselves,

confessed that they alone were truly pious and religious." While Christian writers may be suspected of some bias here, there is no good reason to doubt this basic assessment: even the Church's enemies admitted the public power and persuasive pull of Christian love for "the least of these" (Matt. 25:31–46). In addition, Stark demonstrates how this care for the sick and dying would have had other, more subtle implications. For example, even the most basic nursing care—bringing water and food to the bedridden, say—can dramatically raise a patient's survival prospects. Given the lack of basic hygiene and poor understanding of how contagions spread, the odds were high of contracting the latest disease at some time anyway, whether one tried to flee or not. Being a Christian, and thus belonging to its mutual nursing syndicate, could greatly increase one's chances of surviving. Even just *knowing* Christians would help, since if they knew where you lived, they'd be able to send someone to you. These two facts—a higher survival rate for Christians, and for people already connected to Christians—would have important repercussions once the pandemic

had passed: (1) a higher-than-before proportion of Christians compared to the pagan population; and (2) a good number of pagans more closely networked with, and grateful to, Christians than they had been before. Hence, they themselves were more susceptible to conversion. Repeat this whole process every generation or two and, combined with some other factors (e.g., a trend for bigger families, not least due to Christians' countercultural aversion to both abortion and infanticide), you have an important part of how "the West"—including North Africa and the Near East—was Christianized.

Now, you might think I'm about to turn to you, my reader, and declare: "Go and do likewise" (cf. Luke 10:37). But let me assure you that I'm not. At least, not exactly.

I don't deny that true charity—*caritas*, love—has an important place in our troubled times. There is much that Christians can and should be doing,

individually and collectively, to alleviate both the direct impacts of COVID-19 and its much wider collateral damage. Think of the countless local church-sponsored initiatives, from foodbanks to homelessness charities to support for those fleeing domestic abuse—vital services during the best of times, but all the more needed now and for the foreseeable future. While true Christian love is not practiced in order to evangelize, we should not be naïve about the role such witness has always played in "preparing the way" (Mark 1:3). If ever there was a time to adopt Philippians 2:4 as one's personal mantra—"Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others"—it is the present. For Christians, both "our own interests" and "the interests of others" are intimately bound up with the Church's ability to fulfil its overriding mission: "Go therefore and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19).

In the developed world, at least, the state of our pandemic hotspots is not remotely akin to third-century Carthage or Alexandria. The diseased

and dying are not left to die in the streets. On the contrary, medical staff and other essential workers are working tirelessly to save lives. Charities, corporations, and small businesses are playing their parts as best they can—rallying resources, rejigging logistics operations, and retooling assembly lines. The full might and machinery of the state is being pressed into action. As I write, US Navy hospital ships are docked in Los Angeles and New York, and football stadiums and exhibition centers across Britain are being converted into field hospitals.

The fact that informal, untrained bands of ordinary Christians are no longer our best hopes of surviving the present pestilence is itself the best possible proof of their historic victory. For it is thanks to them that the revolutionary Christian ideals of charity and mercy—however imperfectly realized in this or that time—gradually won out over the prevailing, and far more callous, norms of the Greco-Roman world. It is perhaps difficult for those in our (ever more) post-Christian world to quite grasp how brutal life could be in the pre-Christian

one. Yet so much of what is now taken for granted—from public hospitals and hospices to famine relief charities and social security—were avowedly Christian innovations. As Bart Ehrman, a scholar of early Christianity (who is an agnostic), puts it:

> By conquering the Roman world, and then the entire West, Christianity . . . changed the way people look at the world and choose to live in it. Modern sensitivities, values, and ethics have all been radically affected by the Christian tradition. . . . Without the conquest of Christianity . . . billions of people may never have embraced the idea that society should serve the marginalized or be concerned with the well-being of the needy, values that most of us in the West have simply assumed are "human" values.

Ehrman is by no means alone in this assessment.

True enough, genuinely "Christian values" have long gone native, and Western societies often now fall far short of their founding ideals (this is most glaringly true on life issues). Nevertheless, we may justly look upon the tireless efforts of our fellow citizens in the face of the coronavirus emer-

gency and see the reflection—however distant—of ordinary Christians' witness transforming both individual lives and, over time, a whole culture. Recall that they did so out of the very depths of the same "various and vast human destruction" described by St. Dionysius, which forms the backdrop to our own lives today. "But though they see the race of men thus constantly diminishing and wasting away, and though their complete destruction is increasing and advancing, they do not tremble."

Go and do likewise.

CHAPTER TWO

Facts Without Fear

There is certainly much we might learn from past pandemics, a good deal of it cautionary in nature. In the fourteenth-century Black Death, large numbers of clergy were reportedly seen to have abandoned "their responsibilities, to have run away in fear or in search of gain, to have put their own skins first and the souls of their parishioners a bad second." But it is also important that we face the realities of now, and think clearly about what they'll mean for our immediate and mid-term future.

As I write, our churches are closed. They won't, however, remain closed forever. We will look at the church closures with respect to the sacramental life of the Church in chapter three, but I also know that I am not alone in wondering what Mass attendance figures might look like when all this is over.

In this chapter, I'll put on my sociologist hat and lay out a mix of facts, reasonable theory, and informed-but-fallible speculation. I'll warn you now that a good deal of what follows will not exactly be cheerful reading, though I'll also be highlighting some silver lining countertrends in a bit. But those committed to the New Evangelization must be clear-sighted and realistic. There is no one, believe me, who would be happier to see me proven wrong.

First, some necessary background. Mass attendance is already somewhat fluid. It fluctuates, sometimes quite dramatically, from week to week (as you've probably noticed from your ability to find a space in the church parking lot). Those surface ripples, however, average themselves out. One month each year—October is traditionally regarded as the most "normal" for these purposes, though this may differ from place to place—dioceses ask their parishes to count up who's there at all the Sunday Masses (including vigils). Parishes are usually encouraged to tally the numbers each

Sunday throughout the whole month and submit the mean figure, though whether they always do so is between a pastor and his confessor. This produces an "annual Mass count" figure for each parish, which in turn goes on to produce an overall diocesan figure. While any diocese's precise number in any single year should, it's fair to say, be regarded as being a little "fuzzy around the edges," the real value of these statistics is in enabling us to see how long-term, general trends play out.

As part of the research for a previous book, I spent a lot of effort contacting every US diocese and asking for their Mass count numbers, going back as long as possible. The full fruits of this exercise are available elsewhere, along with a lot of commentary and explanation. What it allows us to do here is to set a sort of loose "base rate" of expected annual increase or decrease—or rather a range of them, since they differ from diocese to diocese. *Why* these base rates are as they are (i.e., why churchgoing is growing or falling, where, and by how much) is a topic for another book.

Table 1

Annual average +/- percentage change in "typical Sunday" Mass attendance, between 2012 and 2017 (* 2012-16 data), in England and Wales, and 22 US (arch)dioceses

COUNTRY / STATE	(Arch)Diocese	Base level annual +/- change in "typical Sunday" Mass attendance
ENGLAND & WALES	*All**	*– 2.3 %*
TEXAS	*Dallas*	*+ 0.9 %*
COLORADO	*Denver*	*– 0.8 %*
OHIO	*Steubenville*	*– 1.4 %*
OHIO	*Columbus*	*– 1.5 %*
IOWA	*Des Moines*	*– 1.5 %*
TEXAS	*San Antonio**	*– 1.6 %*
FLORIDA	*Orlando*	*– 1.6 %*
MISSOURI	*Jefferson City*	*– 1.8 %*
IOWA	*Dubuque*	*– 1.9 %*
NEW JERSEY	*Trenton*	*– 2.1 %*
ILLINOIS	*Rockford*	*– 2.2 %*
NEW HAMPSHIRE	*Manchester*	*– 2.2 %*
ILLINOIS	*Chicago*	*– 2.2 %*
GEORGIA	*Savannah*	*– 2.3 %*
CALIFORNIA	*San Francisco*	*– 2.5 %*
NEW JERSEY	*Newark*	*– 2.6 %*
ILLINOIS	*Springfield*	*– 2.9 %*
WISCONSIN	*Milwaukee*	*– 2.9 %*
PENNSYLVANIA	*Philadelphia*	*– 3.2 %*
WISCONSIN	*Green Bay*	*– 3.6 %*
NEW YORK	*Rochester*	*– 4.0 %*
NEW YORK	*Ogdensburg*	*– 5.7 %*

Table 1 on the previous page, showing England and Wales (my home) and a fairly random set of US dioceses, gives a good sense of this range. The figures here are based on an average +/- change from year to year, over the five-year period from 2012–2017 (or four-year period, 2012–2016). For example, the chart affirms that Catholic parishes in Denver, Colorado, declined by about 0.8% each year in terms of Mass attendance, while parishes in Dallas, Texas, grew by nearly the same rate.

In theory, Table 1 ought to give at least some impression of the changes in Mass attendance one could reasonably have expected *had there been no COVID-19 crisis*. In truth, several other factors may have complicated matters anyway, from Brexit chaos over here, to immigration clampdowns and sexual abuse revelations in the US. But they're the best numbers we have for now. And if we take the median figure for our American dioceses as "minus 2.2%" (very close to the England and Wales average), then we at least have something to work with.

As I see it, there are three main pandemic-related factors likely to impact Mass attendance negatively, beyond the trends just discussed.

Firstly, people are dying. There is no point in sugar-coating this most brutish of facts. Furthermore, we have no solid idea what the final death toll will be. Like many of you, each day I get my fix of news and commentary from several sources. Also like you, I have heard and read wildly divergent and ever-changing estimates of the ultimate death toll over the past weeks and months. Initially, the most authoritative US projections put deaths between 100,000–240,000. That's a huge and harrowing number, to be sure, though more recent projections have placed it much lower, thanks to better medical care, social distancing, and other protective methods. Nothing I say below is intended to diminish its magnitude as a human tragedy. As Pope Benedict once beautifully put it: "Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary."

Even one death is an immense tragedy.

Of most relevance here is the fact that Catholic Mass-goers are significantly older than the wider population. On my analysis of the best-available data, 40% of American Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more are over the age of 70, compared to just 20% of the population as a whole. In other words, Mass-going Catholics are, on average, significantly older than the general population. It is precisely this age group who are, by a considerable distance, most at risk of dying if they do contract the virus. Inevitably, this means that church communities (the same is true for many non-Catholic churches too) will be hit harder, perhaps even several times harder, than the "US average."

Critically, the flipside to all of this is that churches have an outsized responsibility to help *now*. Every parish has the contact details of *both* significant numbers of at-risk or otherwise vulnerable people, *and* significant numbers of people equipped to (in compliance with the recommended social distanc-

ing) run errands, do shopping, collect prescriptions, or simply check in by phone.

Think of it as a contemporary reboot of third-century Alexandria: "Most of our brethren were unsparing in their exceeding love and brotherly kindness. They held fast to each other . . . and ministered to them continually, serving them in Christ."

Secondly, the number of immigrants coming into America, England, and Wales will slow down, which means less people frequenting parishes. The Catholic Church in America has aptly been described as "a communion of immigrants." That's been true throughout its history, from the "secret Catholics" at the Jamestown colony, to the Pentecost of languages proclaiming "God's deeds of power" (Acts 2:11) in Masses across the diverse Catholic landscape today. Fully a quarter of America's cradle Catholics were born in another country; around 40% have at least one foreign-born parent. Fur-

thermore, in the US—as also in Britain, and very many other places—first- and second-generation immigrants make up a disproportionate number of those Catholics actually at Mass each Sunday.

Now, this is a very simple observation, but the current chaos has greatly disrupted the normal flow of people in, out, and around countries, and looks to do so for months if not years to come. Whatever one's view about this or that aspect of immigration policy, the American Catholic community is certainly a net beneficiary of immigration in terms of laity, clergy, and religious. In fact, with the Catholic birth rate being so low—roughly identical to the mainstream population and in some places even lower—combined with high levels of lapsation and disaffiliation, this immigrant effect is all the more important to Catholic pastoral vitality. I have no specific numbers here, but this crisis will almost certainly have a negative effect, at least in the short-term. Sure, many of those who would have come to America, England, or Wales to work this year will simply come next year instead. But I very much

doubt that all will, especially if the economy continues to spiral downward in the wake of the virus.

Thirdly, we are creatures of habit. Old habits may die hard, but once dead, they're hard to revive too. Difficult though it may be to imagine, not everyone who sits in Mass on a Sunday does so "fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and"—to the best of their knowledge, at least—"enriched by its effects." Some people keep attending despite knowing full well that they're "only doing so" because, well, they attended last week, or last year, or since they were a child. For others, it is only after a period of not going to Mass that they realize they don't especially miss it, or at least not enough to do much about it. This is common, for example, when people move to a new area, or go off to college, and never quite get around to "finding" a new church. For others, the habit just sort of slips, from attending every week, to most weeks, to, well, "We'll definitely make sure we go next week." There have been several recent studies asking Catholics

why they stopped practicing, and, among a suite of other reasons and factors, these observations hold very consistent across them all.

Such people have, one might say, little intrinsic motivation for attending Mass. They go because they always have, or because they vaguely feel that they ought, or because they never quite had the heart to tell mom they don't really want to anymore. Now, this is certainly not true of everyone. There are plenty of Catholics feeling near-viscerally starved of the sacraments, who agree with Joni Mitchell that "you don't know what you got 'til it's gone," and who are longing for restrictions to lift "more than watchmen for daybreak" (Ps. 130:6). But I fear it is almost certainly true of a decent minority even of weekly Mass-goers. And for them, a period of weeks or months when they can't go to Mass might easily be the nudge required to stop altogether. This will be especially true if, as seems likely, we will have a long period where people can go to church again, but when being part of a large gathering is still widely viewed, and possibly officially cautioned

against, as an "unnecessary risk." In such a situation, certain groups may be very strongly advised to stay home. Many others, out of an abundance of caution, might well agree.

Again, I have no specific figures to add here. Social scientists might like to think we're the ones "who search hearts and minds" (cf. Rev. 2:23), but nationally representative surveys and binomial logistic regressions (don't ask) can only really get you so far. But I think it's likely this factor alone will cause a drop in Mass attendance by at least a couple of percentage points.

These factors will play out differently across different congregations, perhaps even within the same multi-campus "super parish." Many parishes will, happily, have no deaths, but will lose out on a year or more of a boost from immigration. For others, it will be quite the opposite. All parishes will, I fear, be hit to some extent by the third factor, and those areas already hard-bitten by generational

decline may be hit very hard indeed. All pastors, parish leaders, and intentional disciples ought to be mulling the impact of the probable combination of these factors on their own local communities.

Bishops too would be well-advised to think ahead about the likely effect on their numbers of active clergy. A 2009 study estimated the *average* age of US priests to be sixty-three (the average age in 1970 was thirty-five). Older men seem to be doubly at-risk for the coronavirus to begin with. What's more, being the good shepherds I know the vast majority of our priests to be, large numbers are likely to have risked their own health in tending to their flocks (cf. John 10:11). Many dioceses' clergy are already overstretched, serving two, three, or more parishes, in addition to other responsibilities. Whether this is, in the strictest sense, due to a *shortage* of priests is a debatable point; in England and Wales, at least, the actual priest-per-practicing-Catholic ratio is as good, if not better, than it has been for decades. The sadder truth is that, in many places, we have vastly fewer clergy *and* laity (especially active laity) than

we used to. The difference now is that we stretch them out over an inherited parish infrastructure, which was built in better times to accommodate many more of each. Biting this particular bullet has been in the cards for many years in lots of dioceses. Yet the trouble with all those "If present trends continue, by 2030 we'll have only X number of priests to serve just Y number of active worshipers" diocesan restructuring proposals is that "present trends" haven't continued. When the dust finally settles on the COVID-19 crisis, dioceses may well find they've been fast-forwarded by at least several years when it comes to this problem, with significantly fewer priests *and* laypeople.

In the midst of this coronavirus chaos—without distracting from the media and public's understandable focus on death tallies, infection rates, or how "flattened" or "spiky" a given state or country's curve is looking—a good deal of attention is being given to the economy's future ability to bounce back. This is good and important. True, the economy is not the be-all and end-all of human

existence; when "the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father" it won't be on account of our contributions to GDP that "he will repay everyone for what has been done" (Matt. 16:27). But insofar as it means livelihoods, and the ability of families to make ends meet, and for the sick to afford their prescriptions, and for scared young mothers-to-be to feel secure and supported, and for both individuals and governments to see to it that "the least" (Matt. 25:45) are properly looked after . . . it is indeed a thing worth worrying about and planning for.

But the economy of salvation is an immeasurably greater contributor, in the grand scheme of things, to the "common good." And Christians' capacity to help its shareholders' reap their dividends—"For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance" (Matt. 25:29)—depends very much on our ability, both individual and collective, to bounce back. As Pope Francis noted in a recent interview:

> [The] aftermath has already begun to be revealed as tragic and painful, which is why we must be thinking about it now. . . . I'm living this as a time of great uncertainty. It's a time for inventing, for creativity. . . .
>
> What we are living now is a place of metanoia (conversion), and we have the chance to begin. So, let's not let it slip from us, and let's move ahead.

In the following two chapters, therefore, we'll focus on two areas where, *right now*, we can begin readying ourselves and others to do just that.

CHAPTER THREE

No Bodiless Phantom

In 1575, plague descended on Milan. The city's bishop, St. Charles Borromeo, hastened both to action and to prayer. Indeed, he exemplified the maxim, beloved of Dorothy Day and others, to "work as though everything depended on ourselves, and pray as though everything depended on God."

Borromeo sold his own possessions to fund the relief effort and persuaded many wealthy citizens to contribute generously. He organized his clergy to care, materially and spiritually, for all in need. He created and staffed hospitals and quarantine houses. Concerned by the growing ranks of the unemployed (sound familiar?) he created jobs for, or otherwise supported, large numbers of laid-off workers. Though he instilled strict social-distancing policies, he was nevertheless desperate not to forego his own personal contact with the

suffering. Accordingly, St. Charles made everyone, including his own household, treat him as though he had the plague; he went so far as carrying a long pole to keep healthy-looking people at bay when going about his business. He also made a special point of ensuring that the most vulnerable—that is, the orphaned infants whom he took "particular pleasure in rescuing"—received adequate love and attention.

Mindful above all of his flock's spiritual needs, Borromeo went to great lengths to ensure people, despite everything, received proper religious care: "While he did not neglect their bodies, his principal solicitude was for the salvation of souls." Most strikingly, at the peak of the epidemic, with churches closed and people confined to their homes, he had outdoor altars erected all around the town, "where Mass was said daily, so that all could assist from their homes." He also instituted door-to-door confessions—"the confessor sitting on the doorstep outside, and the penitent kneeling within"—and home-delivery of the Eucharist on Sundays, ad-

ministering the sacrament at the doorstep "as if they had been cloistered religious."

I'm surely not alone in seeing here an echo of some of the creative solutions to today's problems. Our situation is, in many respects, very different from that of sixteenth-century Milan. Clergy and religious are no longer, for the most part, the main first responders as they had to be then, able to administer the sacraments at the same time as food, water, and medicine. Instead—healthcare chaplains aside, who really *are* fighting on the frontlines in the current battle—today's religious sisters, priests, and deacons are as likely to be under lockdown as are the rest of us. Furthermore, the idea of holding Masses outside of people's windows to enable all to attend was an inspired one in a densely packed city with an overwhelmingly Catholic population. It would be quite impossible to replicate that in our dispersed parishes and sprawling suburbs. Nevertheless, there are clear parallels to be drawn with the "drive-through confessionals" set up in church parking lots, or even drive-in outdoor church services, that

enterprising pastors have been road-testing—or most significantly, to the livestreamed Masses, such as those offered by Bishop Barron and Word on Fire, which have, almost by default, suddenly become so big a part of many people's religious lives.

There is much that can and no doubt will be said about "online Masses"—I'm personally looking forward, albeit with some trepidation, to the slew of four-hundred-page PhD theses in sacramental theology probing all the various corners of the topic. Here, I wish to dodge some of the knottier questions. However, I think all commentators are basically in agreement that livestreaming a Mass at home, however welcome as making the best of a bad situation, is *not the same* as being there in person. (Even at the most mundane level, the same is true of being at a live concert or sporting event versus watching it on television.)

Televised or online Masses are, of course, nothing new. Stations like EWTN and CatholicTV

have been providing this service for decades. And with the necessary technology recently becoming cheaper and easier to operate, churches have increasingly offered (often fairly rudimentary) online feeds for the benefit of homebound parishioners. But for those of us not already used to the experience, it is fair to say that the adjustment has come as something of a jolt. This shock and discomfort is good; it would be worrisome if online Masses felt normal.

Televised or streamed Masses may well seem like a bad imitation of the real thing. But we should make some important points. First, the Mass itself is real enough, no matter how much our "fully conscious, and active participation" may feel remote and attenuated. Let us therefore be glad that, even behind closed doors, the liturgy is being continually offered "for our good and the good of all his holy Church," and moreover "to advance the peace and salvation of all the world." As the popular New York City-based journalist and blogger Deacon Greg Kandra, expresses it:

> Our world will be remade, and our Church will endure, in part, because of a stalwart, largely anonymous band of men who spent quiet afternoons before small altars, blessing and breaking bread, praying for the world.
>
> As I write this, private Masses are being said in churches, chapels, rectories around the globe. Intentions are being remembered. Sacrifices are being offered. The vital spiritual work of the Church is continuing, often in places where no one can see; sometimes it is being recorded on an iPhone or streamed on social media. Most of the world doesn't even know it is going on. But it is.
>
> It is.
>
> And thank God for that.

In such circumstances, online arguments as to whether a livestreamed Mass "counts" get very tiresome, very quickly. Some thoughtful, holy people take an "accept no substitutes" approach: if they can't actually participate in person, then they'd rather go without. Other thoughtful, holy people

find that livestreams help them to "pray along at home," in more-or-less real time, which is no bad thing. Both sets of people, moreover, are being made aware of just how much we take the sacraments for granted in normal circumstances. After all, it was not that long ago that many Catholics in America were served by itinerant circuit-riding priests. Even today, in places such as the Amazon basin, single priests must cover vast, remote, and treacherous territories. Remember, too, the tens of thousands of Catholics in the global shipping industry, literally keeping the world's economy afloat, who often don't get a chance to attend Mass for months at a time. And, naturally, the sick and housebound we will always have with us.

In important ways, therefore, this should prove a welcome counterbalance to the likely drop-off in Mass attendance after the coronavirus. Many Catholics who were spiritually "neither cold nor hot" (Rev. 3:15) before the health crisis will, perhaps afterward, feel a powerful sense of loss and longing. If large numbers of those people return more fired-up, prepared, and determined to meet the challenges

ahead, then that is just the silver lining the Church needs: "Let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:4). Such was the case, I've no doubt, for some of the *half a million* Catholics participating remotely in the "Rededication of England as the Dowry of Mary" at the medieval shrine of Walsingham, Norfolk, in eastern England, on March 29, 2020. This had been planned as a massive celebration focused on the tiny, middle-of-nowhere village of Walsingham itself, but also united with Masses and processions in parishes up and down the country. As it turned out, hundreds of thousands from across the world joined the livestream to witness a drastically stripped-back Mass. In place of an organ, full choir, and thousands-strong congregation belting out the opening hymn "Jerusalem," four men gathered around the altar and sung out, falteringly but stirringly, to an empty basilica:

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Til we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

Think, too, of Pope Francis' extraordinary Urbi et Orbi blessing (which you can read in the Appendix) on March 27, delivered to a desolate St. Peter's Square. For the millions watching at home, this only made it the more moving: "You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: 'Do not be afraid' (Matt. 28:5)."

Do not underestimate the power of those words, and of that witness, broadcast to a frightened audience that included many non-Catholics. One of my best friends, an Anglican priest, said, "That visual of the Pope in the rain in an empty square with the 'plague crucifix' commending the world to God was incredibly powerful." (That crucifix, which was transported to St. Peter's Square for the blessing, is said to have miraculously saved Rome from the 1522 plague.) Another Anglican priest friend told me:

> There are a lot of clergy and laity—both Anglo-Catholic and definitely not—who saw the Pope very humbly commending the city and the world to God's keeping. I think it massively improved the pope's standing among non-Catholic Christians; and the reaction from around the world by atheistic broadcasters was one of amazement and warmth, which is not something Roman Catholics tend to receive from the broadcast media.

Again, I encourage you to read the Holy Father's full meditation in the Appendix.

We might do well to heed an intriguing draft paper published online at the end of March 2020 by the Danish economics professor Jeanet Sindig Bentzen. Bentzen has a long-standing interest in tracking indicators of religiosity, and how these rise or fall in reaction to natural disasters such as earthquakes. Using Google data from around the world, she shows how searches for "prayer" have leapt as the COVID-19 crisis has unfolded, noting that the "search intensity for 'prayer' doubles for every 80,000 new registered cases of COVID-19."

Bentzen's data and analysis tie in with other data suggesting a new openness to religious questions and/or practices as a result of the coronavirus. This will, I'm sure, not come as any great surprise to historians: times of turmoil often engender periods of religious awakening and/or experimentation. For example, fourteenth-century Europe, which experienced both the Black Death and a biblically proportioned seven-year famine, witnessed many new revival movements.

Sociologists sometimes talk about "existential security"—very roughly, how safe and settled a population feels in terms of its health, livelihood, and general well-being—as a major contributor to secularization. In other words, the more secure and safe a society, the less religious it tends to be. On this theory, it's no surprise that many comparatively comfortable modern Westerners might be somewhat "buffered" from the harsh, life-or-death gravity confronting the vast majority of humans throughout history (including a large part of the world's population today). Nor would it be surpris-

ing if the current crisis prompted a certain segment of them to take ultimate questions more seriously than they had before. While I'm not predicting any major religious awakening, the coronavirus might lead our culture to slumber a little less peacefully than it has in the past, and thus look to a transcendent source for hope and security.

This leads us nicely to another welcome side effect. One might reasonably prophesy that, finally, our churches will realize how important the internet and digital technology now are. "Attending" Mass online will, for the vast majority of people, be only a temporary expediency. But it has nudged, if not forced, pastors and parishes to take a second look at their online presence and digital strategy. Here I'm thinking less of the relaying and hosting of live Masses themselves—although a crash-course in digital videography never hurt anyone, frankly—and more of the whole online architecture that goes around them: the parish website, social media accounts, email and text communication, and

more. Perhaps for the first time, those in charge of parish communications have had to think seriously about how best to use them to connect with people, whether existing parishioners or anyone else.

This goes beyond just including Mass times on the parish website, or a link to download the bulletin. Parishes should have a broader communication plan that includes social media, email, text messaging, and online giving. For example, parishes already using services such as Flocknote, a Catholic email and texting tool, hardly skipped a beat in terms of communication after they were forced to shutter their parish doors. They could still instantly reach parishioners and have a two-way discussion. Similarly, parishes on platforms like eCatholic still had beautiful, mobile-friendly websites and could still pay their bills thanks to online giving capabilities. None of this is rocket science. As I often point out to people, nobody would dream of trying to run a local burger joint these days without making sure the basics of an online presence were properly covered—including exploring the use of cheap but

potentially very effective Facebook and Google ad services. Why should running a church be any different? As Paul almost puts it, "How are they to hear without someone running ads targeting people in your area who Googled 'coronavirus' and 'prayer'?" (cf. Rom. 10.14).

Historically, the Church has been at the forefront of adopting technological innovations and putting them to good work in the vineyard (cf. Matt. 20:1–16). The Vatican put Pope Leo XIII on film in 1896 and launched an international radio station (Vatican Radio) in 1931. In 1957, Pius XII—the first pope to speak on TV—promulgated an encyclical on "motion pictures, radio and television," in which he could truthfully write: "We rightly think that the most excellent function which falls to Radio is this: to enlighten and instruct men, and to direct their minds and hearts towards higher and spiritual things." More to the point, the Catholic Church was a significant early adopter of the internet, launching the Vatican website in late 1995—the same year as CNN, but well before the BBC (in 1997).

Pope Benedict XVI first tweeted in June 2011. Pope Francis became an Instagrammer in March 2016. And these are all, of course, merely examples of the Church's institutional forays into the digital Areopagus. There are countless successful examples of Catholic ministries, big and small, at work in this space. Readers of an eBook published by Word on Fire scarcely need me to tell them that.

I was baptized and received into the Catholic Church on May 1, 2008, the culmination of a long intellectual, social, and spiritual journey. How it happened—meanderingly pursued "with unhurrying chase, and unperturbèd pace"—is a story for another time. But were I to do it all again today, I'm struck by just how different the whole journey of conversion would be.

Obviously, the internet and social media were already very much "a thing" twelve years ago. Even so, aside from the occasional thing I read online, I don't recall it playing any major or direct part in

my conversion: no apologetics websites, no liturgy blogs, no breviary apps, no *Word on Fire Show* or *Risking Enchantment* podcasts, no digital summits, no *Eye of the Tiber* gags, and—critically—no daily social media interactions with Catholic friends (almost all unmet in the offline world, though no less the genuine because of that). For a contemporary young-adult convert, that is now near-unthinkable.

Of course, this is far from a Catholic-specific shift. So much Catholic life happens online these days because so much of life as a *whole* happens online these days. It no longer makes a great deal of sense to distinguish sharply between "online" and "real" (i.e., offline) life. Again, this is not a new thing that's happened because of the coronavirus. It's certainly true that even more of people's lives are being conducted online at the moment, though a fair bit (but not all) of this will soon move back to analog again. Zoom office meetings are one thing; Zoom birthday parties, however fun and novel, are another thing entirely. As I write, two of my friends are preparing to be received into the Church. One's

conversion was directly influenced by YouTube's autoplay algorithm—how's that for God moving in mysterious ways?— serving up the videos of a certain American auxiliary bishop. The other is currently doing his catechetical instruction via live video link. All online, but nevertheless "real" for all that.

The digital revolution we are experiencing at the moment, whether we like it or not, might seem to promise a golden age of evangelistic opportunity. The resources out there for attracting people to the faith, or for keeping them once they've joined, are astonishing. Furthermore, thanks to the wonders of NewAdvent.org—one of the great pioneers of Catholicism online—or the Verbum smartphone app, you need never leave the house without the *Catechism*, Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*, thirty-odd volumes of the Church Fathers, and a great deal besides in your pocket. It's no wonder that I've never felt the need to spend idle commuting hours playing Candy Crush Saga.

However, things are not altogether so simple. They never are. For, of course, the very same media being employed by Catholics for Christ and his Church are equally open to others to do precisely the opposite. Thus, for every new Catholic convert whose journey was sparked by something on the internet—and this could be anything from the on-a-whim download of a free Chesterton audiobook, to a Pope Francis retweet, to a heated argument about abortion with a stranger on a mutual friend's Facebook wall—chances are that at least one cradle Catholic has had their faith weakened, or undermined altogether, by something online too. Indeed, there is a growing body of scholarship into the rise of "religious nones," beginning in the mid-1990s, which cites the catalytic effect of the internet.

To be fair, this is not a new problem either. The television revolution of the 1950s that beamed Fulton Sheen into the homes of millions of non-Catholic Americans likewise beamed Billy Graham into the homes of millions of Catholic ones. And perhaps

more ultimately influential than either, the *I Love Lucy* show gave everyone, Catholic or Protestant, something else to do on a Monday night than attend their local church's Bible study or rosary circle.

The realities of the situation should not, however, dissuade anyone from evangelizing, catechizing, or simply being visibly and proudly Catholic in their online lives. (Do not underestimate the galvanizing effect of knowing that one is not alone—that other Facebook friends, say, are also pro-life, or take Friday abstinence seriously, or whatever.) The internet might not be some gold-paved, one-way road to Rome, but if that's where "all nations" increasingly reside, then that is precisely where we are called to "go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19). To paraphrase Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the mouse-clicks of him who brings good news!"

Ours, of course, is an incarnate God. And just as Christ himself was "no bodiless phantom," so too the Body of Christ today cannot subsist in a wholly

virtual manner. This is also why, of course, live-streamed Masses can never replace (for those able) turning up in person. (And if you have to ask why, the next time a friend invites you to their birthday party or wedding, try answering "No thanks, but I'll watch the livestream if there is one; it's basically the same thing.") Ultimately, the Church's successes or failures on the digital continent won't be measured in Facebook shares, Twitter retweets, or TikTok . . . well, whatever it is that people do on TikTok. Instead, it will chiefly be measured, as it ever was, by the numbers of beaming, shiny-foreheaded new Catholics walking out of our churches and into the *real* Second Life.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Prayers of the Church

Meanwhile, back in sixteenth-century Italy, Cardinal Borromeo was having more eminently relatable worries: "It did not escape him that the forty days of quarantine, if given up to idleness, afforded many temptations to sin; he therefore was heedful to provide that this time should be spent so as to promote the glory of God and the salvation of their souls." To this end, he organized a number of activities and resources to help his flock homeschool themselves in piety and virtue.

The provision of "livestreamed" Masses and a sacramental home-delivery service for sixteenth-century Italians we have already discussed. Prayerbooks were also distributed to each household, so the whole city might pray in unison at seven times of the day and night, "singing psalms and hymns in two choirs, after the manner of a

chapter of canons, and saying suitable prayers, each hour being announced by the ringing of the great bell of the cathedral." Copies of inspiring readings were translated into the vernacular and published, including works by our third-century friends Sts. Cyprian and Dionysius, relevant sermons and letters from other saints, and an account of the Franciscan St. Bernardine's ministrations in plague-torn Siena in 1400. And that was not all:

> To provide still further against the evils of idleness, St. Charles sent round a pastoral letter, suggesting how the rest of their time might be profitably spent in mental prayer and spiritual reading, and granted special indulgences to those who practiced these exercises and prayed for the sick.

Now, quite how much the evils of *idleness* specifically feel like a temptation for those of us still working, from home or otherwise, and/or minding and educating a house full of stir-crazy children, I probably can't comment honestly here without upsetting the delicate sensibilities of some of my readers. Nevertheless, the basic problem here is

the same: How best to turn our families' newfound isolation into something more spiritually profitable than it otherwise might be?

The idea that the household or family is a kind of "domestic church" has a long pedigree. The Holy Family itself, with its own living Tabernacle (cf. John 1:14) front and center, is an obvious inspiration. Think also of the literal domestic churches (i.e., "the church at your house" [Philem. 1:2; Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15]) addressed by St. Paul. This analogy works both ways too, of course. If the home is, or should be, a type of "little church," then so too can the Church be thought of in familial terms. This is true even of the titles Christians have, quite organically, come to use over the years: "Mother Church," priests being addressed as "Father," religious "brothers" and "sisters," and so on. And of course, following the lead of "God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart" (John 1:18), Christians have traditionally conceived of their own relationship with God, and thus also with each other, in

similarly "relative" terms (e.g., John 1:12, 20:17; 1 John 3:1).

A neatly germane example of this kind of thinking, and its important practical effects, comes from the life of St. Bernardine. Aged just nineteen, Bernardine volunteered to work in Siena's plague hospital and encouraged his friends to do likewise. Nursing the sick and dying, he "labored with such readiness and cheerfulness of mind, that it seemed as if he were engaged in the care of his father, of his brothers, or of his own children. This should cause little astonishment, for in serving the sick, Bernardine served God, who is more than father, brother, or son to us."

That the home is important in fostering, or else frustrating, the faith of all family members will not, I think, come as any great surprise to readers. It is especially critical in the success of what sociologists call the "religious socialization" of children—that is, in raising Catholic children who (hopefully) grow up to be Catholic adults. In other words, the home

is critical for effectively transmitting religion from one generation to the next.

In every generation, of course, there will be some who leave the religion of their upbringing and others who join it after having been brought up in a different religious background. Such conversion stories are often dramatic—think St. Paul, St. John Henry Newman, or St. Josephine Bakhita—and rightly stick in the mind. Nevertheless, the greater part of religious transmission, and thus of each tradition's growth or decline over time, happens (or doesn't happen) from parents to child. It's no secret that, over the past several decades, Christians in many countries have found this process to be not as easy and efficient as it used to be. Even in America, traditionally the West's religious trend-bucker, a person brought up Catholic is now more likely to identify as a "none" than they are to be a weekly Mass-going Catholic.

The current period of confinement comes, therefore, as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it

places even more weight on the "domestic church" as the carrier of religious commitment, at precisely a time when, as a general trend, it appears to be less and less up to doing the job. On the other hand, it forces us to focus on this crucial sphere of Christian life. Parents simply cannot outsource their or their children's religious lives to their parish (or school, for that matter). They'll need to homechurch as well as homeschool.

This is true for everyone, of course, and not just for parents: if they can't go to a church, then they'll need to bring the Church into their home. In fact, none of this is to suggest that single or widowed people have no role to play right now in the prayerful transmission of the faith to the next generation. On the contrary, grandparents and godparents, uncles and aunts, and sponsors and mentors can also play an increased role in religious formation in this crisis, particularly given the availability of digital media explored in the previous chapter. They could even be a vital support to mothers and fathers suddenly juggling work, school, and parenting duties at home.

According to Borromeo's biographer, thanks to his concern for the spiritual sustenance of the quarantined, "Milan might at this time have been not unfitly compared to a cloister of religious of both sexes serving God in the enclosure of their cells, an image of the heavenly Jerusalem filled with the praises of the angelic hosts." Without denying the genuine fruits produced, I must admit to a little scepticism as to quite how universally this was true in the *bambini*-filled tenements of old Milan. But then perhaps that says more about my own household than it does about theirs—or indeed, yours.

In any case, prayer is certainly central to any attempt at a domestic church worthy of the name. This need not be a complicated affair. Regular prayer at set times, even very brief ones—before dinner, say, or at bedtime—is a time-honored practice, even if far less common now than it used to be. If you aren't doing it already, then now might be a good time to start. If you are, then that's a very solid platform to build other devotions upon. Per-

sonally, I'm very partial to singing the *Salve Regina* at bedtime.

The present crisis, moreover, gives us all plenty to pray *for*. The twentieth-century Dominican theologian Herbert McCabe once observed that people complaining of "distractedness" during prayer probably aren't praying for the things they really *desire* deep down; they're praying for the kinds of blandly virtuous things they feel they ought to want. People on sinking ships, McCabe suggests, probably don't find they get distracted so easily. I've found this to be true myself. I am not, I'm ashamed to admit, a very frequent, fervent, or focused pray-er. Yet when our newborn son was whisked off for life-saving surgery, my prayers came easily enough and were very much to-the-point.

The fact is, "#FirstWorldProblems" have all of a sudden been replaced by *actual* problems for a whole lot of people. We now have no shortage of people, in our families and friendship groups, in genuinely mortal peril. There is no dearth of souls (not that there ever is, mind you) for whose eternal

rest we can, and should, be praying. By all means feel at liberty to extemporize one's own prayers, however incoherent and unpolished they may feel (cf. Matt. 6:7–8). But feel free, too, to lean instead on the traditional, time-worn prayers of the Church. The Hail Mary, and better still the rosary as a whole, could hardly be more suitable: "Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." My own favorite, the concise Fátima prayer, is commonly included in many people's rosary recitations: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of thy mercy. Amen." It works just as well as a stand-alone. What's more, recall that it was revealed in July 1917 to three shepherd children in Fátima, Portugal. The following year, the so-called Spanish Flu arose, quite possibly in Kansas, and rapidly spread throughout the world. Among the millions of souls it ultimately claimed were two of those little shepherds. St. Francisco uttered this prayer prior to his first (and last) Holy Communion, from his death bed. His sister St. Jacinta, who died the following year, would kneel for "long periods of

time, saying the same prayer over and over again" for the salvation of souls. Those hungry for something longer and more detailed could also pray parts of the "Mass in a Time of Universal Contagion." This was recently authorized by the Holy See as an updated version of the old Missal's votive Mass "In Time of Pestilence," originally composed by Pope Clement VI in the midst of the Black Death (which one could also pray parts of, if preferred).

The role that livestreamed Masses might or might not play in one's socially distanced devotions has already been discussed. Here, though, let me add one further suggestion. Though it is easy for most Latin-riters to forget it, the Catholic Church is actually composed of twenty-four "autonomous particular churches," united in doctrine and in communion with the pope. Some are tiny, whereas others have millions of members, including large and often thriving diaspora communities. Each has its own storied history, saints, practices, and (often ancient) liturgical traditions.

One of the great joys of my life, personal and professional, over the past year has been finally getting around to visiting and worshiping with some of the Eastern Catholic communities in Britain. I've attended a standing-room-only Easter Vigil at the beautiful Ukrainian Greek Catholic Cathedral amid London's chic shopping streets; the Divine Liturgy in back-to-back Romanian Catholic and Belarus Catholic services in a purpose-built wooden church in its leafy suburbs; multiple Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Qurbanas (i.e., "Masses") in unglamorous industrial towns across northern England and Scotland. Sadly, while the current lockdown has ended this liturgical odyssey for the time being, it hasn't completely ground to a halt. Our nascent "livestream revolution" means that at least a first experience of our Eastern churches' liturgical riches has never been easier to access.

Naturally, this point does not apply only to the Eastern churches. I'm sure many livestream aficionados have stayed resolutely loyal to their home churches, and perhaps taken particular comfort

from this familiarity. If so, all well and good. But others, I know, will have taken the opportunity to "travel." If so, also well and good. This is a prime opportunity to explore the liturgical richness of our own traditions too. Those who have only heard about the traditional Latin Mass, or "Extraordinary Form," might take this opportunity to "come and see" (John 1:39). Among much else, this was the Mass that fortified the heroism of Sts. Bernardine, Francisco, and Jacinta. It's very similar also to the Mass—in the Ambrosian Rite—that St. Charles Borromeo had "livestreamed" from Milan's street corners. Also, the Divine Worship of the "Ordinariates" created by Pope Benedict XVI principally as an institutional home for former Anglicans (though in practice attractive to many others, myself included) is also worth seeking out, especially for Anglophiles.

Finally, Catholics know—or ought to—that they have friends in high places. Friends ready and willing—anxious even—to intercede on our behalf.

And friends, in many cases, who know *exactly* what we're going through.

Following Borromeo's lead once again, the current crisis gives us, if not perhaps a golden, then at least a gold-tinged opportunity for spiritual reading. And where better to start than with the writings or biographies of some of those we've already met in these pages? The *Lives* of Borromeo, Bernardine, and Cyprian that I've quoted in these pages are freely available online, as are most of Cyprian's voluminous writings. You can also easily find the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of both Eusebius and Evagrius Scholasticus, recounting Christians' responses to plagues in the third, fourth, and sixth centuries. The same is true of Sr. Lúcia of Fátima's remembrances of her cousins Francisco and Jacinta.

In truth, there is no shortage of pandemic-relevant saints to learn from and pray to. Permit me the indulgence of finishing this chapter with a few personal favorites, some longstanding, and some very new (with thanks to friends on Facebook and Twitter for their suggestions).

St. Henry Morse (1595–1645) and St. John Southworth (c. 1592–1654) ministered illegally to London's Catholics during a seventeenth-century outbreak of plague. Though neither liked the other's methods, they got results. Both were later martyred for these and other "crimes."

At the age of four, St. Kateri Tekakwitha (1656–1680) lost her parents and brother during one of several smallpox epidemics that devastated Native American populations. Though she herself recovered from the disease, her health thereafter was always poor, and she bore the scars for the rest of her life. It also left her partially blind, hence her Mohawk name *Tekakwitha* or "She Who Bumps Into Things." Having converted to Catholicism at nineteen, she died at the age of twenty-four.

Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos (1819–1867), born in Germany, joined the Redemptorists with the intention of being a missionary in America. After stints in Pennsylvania (including as curate to St. John Neumann in Pittsburgh) and Maryland, in

1866 he was assigned to a parish in New Orleans. He died there the following year, visiting the sick in the midst of a yellow fever outbreak.

Another Blessed, Engelmar Unzeitig (1911–1945), was arrested by the Gestapo in 1941 for preaching in defense of the Jews. Imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp, he volunteered to serve quarantined inmates who were infected with typhoid. He contracted and died from the disease himself, and was beatified as a "martyr of charity" (similar to St. Maximilian Kolbe) in 2016.

All of these heavenly friends can help guide us through this time of sickness and anxiety. They've been here before and know the way forward.

AFTERWORD

"One Step Enough for Me"

I'd like to close this book with help from another saint who is very much a long-time favorite of mine, as indeed of many others: St. John Henry Newman.

In past writings, I've leaned heavily on parts of Newman's writings to argue that, given the manifold challenges facing us, the missionaries of the New Evangelization must cultivate, in themselves and others, a spirituality of resilience and perseverance. This must fortify us for the long haul, helping us maintain the newness of our ardor despite hardships and disappointments. We need the charism of *grit*, one might say. Thus, while an Anglican priest in Oxford, sixteen years before his reception into the Catholic Church, Newman preached the following in 1829:

> To expect great effects from our exertions for religious objects is natural indeed, and innocent, but it

> arises from inexperience of the kind of work we have to do. . . . It is a far nobler frame of mind, to labor, not with the hope of seeing the fruit of our labor, but for conscience's sake, as a matter of duty; and again, in faith, trusting good will be done, though we see it not.
>
> Look through the Bible, and you will find God's servants, even though they began with success, end with disappointment; not that God's purposes or His instruments fail, but that the time for reaping what we have sown is hereafter, not here; that here there is no great visible fruit in any one man's lifetime.

This is good advice at the best of times. It is even more so at the worst of them.

Four years later while travelling in Europe, Newman became life-threateningly ill, most probably with typhoid. Upon his recovery, and with "work to do in England," he was desperate to return. En route he penned a poem, "The Pillar of the Cloud," which is more famous now as the lyrics to the popular hymn "Lead, Kindly Light." This too evinces what may plausibly be described

as a kind of "little way" of the New Evangelization. Amid the encircling gloom of the COVID-19 crisis, it may be fitting to end, and indeed perhaps to dwell awhile, on his words:

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home—
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor pray'd that Thou
Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path, but now
Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

APPENDIX

Urbi et Orbi Message by Pope Francis

"Urbi et Orbi" ("to the city [of Rome] and to the world") is a special address and apostolic blessing offered by the pope on certain solemn occasions. Pope Francis gave the Urbi et Orbi talk below on March 27, 2020, on a dark, rainy evening in an empty St. Peter's Square.

"When evening had come" (Mk 4:35). The Gospel passage we have just heard begins like this. For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets, and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in the air, we notice in people's gestures, their glances give them away. We find ourselves afraid and lost. Like the

disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat . . . are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying, "We are perishing" (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this.

It is easy to recognize ourselves in this story. What is harder to understand is Jesus' attitude. While his disciples are quite naturally alarmed and desperate, he stands in the stern, in the part of the boat that sinks first. And what does he do? In spite of the tempest, he sleeps on soundly, trusting in the Father; this is the only time in the Gospels we see Jesus sleeping. When he wakes up, after calming the wind and the waters, he turns to the disciples in a reproaching voice: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (v. 40).

Let us try to understand. In what does the lack of the disciples' faith consist, as contrasted with Jesus' trust? They had not stopped believing in him; in fact, they called on him. But we see how they call on him: "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" (v. 38). *Do you not care*: they think that Jesus is not interested in them, does not care about them. One of the things that hurts us and our families most when we hear it said is: "Do you not care about me?" It is a phrase that wounds and unleashes storms in our hearts. It would have shaken Jesus too. Because he, more than anyone, cares about us. Indeed, once they have called on him, he saves his disciples from their discouragement.

The storm exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain, and strengthen our lives and our communities. The tempest lays bare all our prepackaged ideas and forgetfulness of

what nourishes our people's souls; all those attempts that anesthetize us with ways of thinking and acting that supposedly "save" us, but instead prove incapable of putting us in touch with our roots and keeping alive the memory of those who have gone before us. We deprive ourselves of the antibodies we need to confront adversity.

In this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more that (blessed) common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging as brothers and sisters.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Lord, your word this evening strikes us and regards us, all of us. In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling powerful and able to do anything. Greedy for profit, we let ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste. We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were not shaken awake by wars

or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick. Now that we are in a stormy sea, we implore you: "Wake up, Lord!"

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting in you. This Lent your call reverberates urgently: "Be converted!"; "Return to me with all your heart" (Joel 2:12). You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing.* It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others. We can look to so many exemplary companions for the journey, who, even though fearful, have reacted by giving their lives. This is the force of the Spirit poured out and fashioned in courageous and generous self-

denial. It is the life in the Spirit that can redeem, value, and demonstrate how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people—often forgotten people—who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines nor on the grand catwalks of the latest show, but who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women, and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves. In the face of so much suffering, where the authentic development of our peoples is assessed, we experience the priestly prayer of Jesus: "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents, and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their

gaze, and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering, and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Faith begins when we realise we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we flounder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God's strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith. We

have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love. In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side. The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize, and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. Is 42:3) that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled.

Embracing his cross means finding the courage to embrace all the hardships of the present time, abandoning for a moment our eagerness for power and possessions in order to make room for the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of inspiring. It means finding the courage to create spaces where

everyone can recognize that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity, and solidarity. By his cross we have been saved in order to embrace hope and let it strengthen and sustain all measures and all possible avenues for helping us protect ourselves and others. Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from fear and gives us hope.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Dear brothers and sisters, from this place that tells of Peter's rock-solid faith, I would like this evening to entrust all of you to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, Health of the People and Star of the stormy Sea. From this colonnade that embraces Rome and the whole world, may God's blessing come down upon you as a consoling embrace. Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies, and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (cf. 1 Pet 5:7).

NOTES

Dedication Page

"when they have already taken upon them the white raiment there": St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Treatises*, 7.20, trans. Robert Ernest Wells, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0507.htm.

Foreword

iii **"all of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone"**: Blaise Pascal, *Pascal's Pensees* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1958), 39 (no. 139) (translation adapted).

Chapter 1

2 **Kyle Harper draws instructive comparisons to the global "Spanish" flu and H5N1 "avian flu"**: Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 136–44. In an abbreviated form, see also Kyle Harper,

"Solving the Mystery of an Ancient Roman Plague," *The Atlantic*, November 1, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/11/solving-the-mystery-of-an-ancient-roman-plague/543528/.

2 **"diseased putrefaction"**: Cyprian, *Treatises*, 7.14.

2 **"the attack of fevers":** Cyprian, *Treatises*, 7.8.

2 **gastrointestinal symptoms . . . which afflict a significant number of coronavirus sufferers:** E.g., Lei Pan et al., "Clinical Characteristics of COVID-19 Patients With Digestive Symptoms in Hubei, China: A Descriptive, Cross-sectional, Multicenter Study," *American Journal of Gastroenterology*, available online at: https://journals.lww.com/ajg/Documents/COVID_Digestive_Symptoms_AJG_Preproof.pdf (last accessed March 30, 2020).

2 **"intestines are shaken with a continual vomiting":** Cyprian, *Treatises*, 7.14.

3 **middle and older age brackets were at least equally, if not (as with COVID-19) harder hit:** See, e.g., the letter of Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, as quoted by the fourth-century historian Eusebius: "Yet men wonder and cannot understand . . . why this great city no longer contains as many inhabitants, from tender infants to those most advanced in life, as it formerly contained of

those whom it called hearty old men. But the men from forty to seventy years of age were then so much more numerous that their number cannot now be filled out, even when those from fourteen to eighty years are enrolled and registered for the public allowance of food" (Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.21.9, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, Co., 1890), rev. and ed. Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250107.htm). On what counted as being "old(er)" in ancient Roman society, see Karen Cokayne, *Experiencing Old Age in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1–3.

4 **"resound daily through the city because of the multitude of the dead and dying":** Quoted in Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.22.2.

5 **"those of the people who had the highest reputation":** Quoted in Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.22.8.

6 **"contemplated a destiny that in their turn would be their own":** *Life and Passion of St. Cyprian*, 9, trans. Robert Ernest Wells, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), rev. and ed. Kevin Knight, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0505.htm (adapted for readability).

7 **"and ministered to them continually, serving them in Christ":** Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.22.6.

7 **"and gave bread to them all":** Eusebius, *Church History*, 9.8.14 (adapted for readability).

8 **"confessed that they alone were truly pious and religious":** Eusebius, *Church History*, 9.8.14.

8 **even the Church's enemies admitted the public power and persuasive pull of Christian love for "the least of these":** For examples, see Stephen Bullivant, *Faith and Unbelief* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), chap. 6.

8 **odds were high of contracting the latest disease at some time anyway, whether one tried to flee or not:** Writing of yet another ancient pandemic—a decades-long, repeating outbreak of bubonic plague beginning in the mid-sixth century—the Syrian historian Evagrius Scholasticus describes how it would return each year, infecting only those households who had previously avoided it. Notably, Evagrius himself contracted the plague as a child. Though he recovered, he confides how over his fifty-eight years, he had lost a wife, several children, a grandson, many others in his wider family, and numerous servants to successive waves (*Ecclesiastical History*, 4.29, trans. E. Walford, "Early Church Fathers—Additional Texts," Christian Classic Ethereal Library, ed. Roger

Pearse, https://ccel.org/ccel/pearse/morefathers/files/evagrius_4_book4.htm).

9 **how "the West"—including North Africa and the Near East—was Christianized:** See Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), chap. 4.

12 **"values that most of us in the West have simply assumed are 'human' values":** Bart D. Ehrman, *The Triumph of Christianity: How a Forbidden Religion Swept the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018), Introduction.

12 **Ehrman is by no means alone in this assessment:** Tom Holland, *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind* (London: Little, Brown, 2019), chap. 5; Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity: How the Jesus Movement Became the World's Largest Religion* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2011), chap. 6; and Larry W. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), chap. 5.

13 **"various and vast human destruction":** Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.21.9.

13 **"they do not tremble":** Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.21.10.

Chapter 2

14 **"have put their own skins first and the souls of their parishioners a bad second":** Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (London: Collins, 1969), 211. I am grateful to a recent blogpost from a friend and author, Fr. Hugh Somerville Knapman, OSB, for making this known to me: "Plagues, Interdicts, Omissions and Possibilities," *Dominus Mihi Adjutor* (blog), https://hughosb.org/2020/03/30/plagues-interdicts-omissions-and-possibilities/.

16 **As part of the research for a previous book, I spent a lot of effort contacting every US diocese and asking for their Mass count numbers:** Stephen Bullivant, *Mass Exodus: Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain and America since Vatican II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). See especially chapter 7, and the Appendix.

19 **"Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary":** Pope Benedict XVI, "Homily at the Mass at the Beginning of His Petrine Ministry," Vatican website, April 24, 2005, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050424_inizio-pontificato.html.

20 **40% of American Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more are over the age of 70**: Catholic data based on my own analysis of the General Social Survey

2018; US population data from the US Census Bureau: https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2018/demo/age-and-sex/2018-age-sex-composition.html. The exact percentages are 19.0% and 10.5% respectively.

20 **It is precisely this age group who are, by a considerable distance, most at risk of dying if they do contract the virus:** Robert Verity et al., "Estimates of the Severity of Coronavirus Disease 2019: A Model-based Analysis," *Lancet Infectious Diseases* (2020), available online at: https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30243-7/fulltext.

21 **"ministered to them continually, serving them in Christ":** Eusebius, *History,* 7.22.7.

21 **"a communion of immigrants":** James T. Fisher, *Communion of Immigrants: A History of Catholics in America*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

22 **immigrants make up a disproportionate number of those Catholics actually at Mass each Sunday:** For a full discussion of this topic, see Stephen Bullivant, *Mass Exodus*, 46–54. See also Fisher, *Communion of Immigrants: A History of Catholics in America*; Adrienne LaFrance, "A Skeleton, a Catholic Relic, and a Mystery about American Origins," *The Atlantic*, July 28, 2015, www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2015/07/a-

skeleton-a-catholic-relic-and-a-mystery-about-americas-origins/399743/; and "Annual Mass Honors 'Rich Cultural Diversity' of Los Angeles Archdiocese," Catholic News Agency, September 12, 2018, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/annual-mass-honors-rich-cultural-diversity-of-los-angeles-archdiocese-50129.

23 **"fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects":** Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 11, Vatican website, December 4, 1963, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

24 **these observations hold very consistent across them all:** Among the more recent are Stephen Bullivant, Catherine Knowles, Hannah Vaughan-Spruce, and Bernadette Durcan, *Why Catholics Leave, What They Miss, and How They Might Return* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2019); and St. Mary's Press and CARA, *Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics* (Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 2017).

26 **A 2009 study estimated the *average* age of US priests to be sixty-three (the average age in 1970 was thirty-five):** Mary L. Gautier, Paul M. Perl, and Stephen J. Fichter, *Same Call, Different Men: The Evolution of*

the Priesthood since Vatican II (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 3.

26 **the actual priest-per-practicing-Catholic ratio is as good, if not better, than it has been for decades:** See Stephen Bullivant, "How to Save the English Church," *Catholic Herald*, January 4, 2018, https://catholicherald.co.uk/how-to-save-the-english-church/.

28 **the economy of salvation is an immeasurably greater contributor, in the grand scheme of things, to the "common good":** For a short and insightful reflection on the relationship between these two "economies," see Jeff Mirus, "The Economy, in This World and the Next," Catholic Culture, May 20, 2009, https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/economy-in-this-world-and-next/.

29 **"So, let's not let it slip from us, and let's move ahead":** Austen Ivereigh, "Pope Francis says Pandemic can be a 'Place of Conversion,'" *The Tablet*, April 8, 2020, https://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/17845/pope-francis-says-pandemic-can-be-a-place-of-conversion-.

Chapter 3

30 **"work as though everything depended on ourselves, and pray as though everything depended on God":** Dorothy Day, *House of Hospitality*

(Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2015), 114. One sees this phrase, a version of which is quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 2834), variously attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola (as does Day) or Augustine.

31 **"particular pleasure in rescuing":** His biographer's touching description here is worth quoting at length:

> While the Cardinal busied himself in behalf of the suffering members of his flock, his charity was seen most especially in his solicitude for the poor little ones who lost their mothers in the plague. When it was impossible to find foster-mothers for them all, he had them supplied with goats' milk. These little nurselings were his especial charge, and he took particular pleasure in rescuing them wherever he came across them, for sometimes when going round the city by night he descried them on door-steps, sometimes lying by the side of the dead bodies of their parents; but where they might be, they always received at his hands the care and tenderness of a father.

The above is taken from John Peter [Giovanni Pietro] Giussano, *The Life of St. Charles Borromeo* (London: Burns and Oates, 1884 [1610]), 404–5. All details from the life of Borromeo quoted in this chapter are taken from this classic biography, written by someone who knew him well. It was originally published in 1610, the year of his canonization.

31 **"While he did not neglect their bodies, his principal solicitude was for the salvation of souls":** Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 406.

34 **"for our good and the good of all his holy Church" . . . "to advance the peace and salvation of all the world":** *The Roman Missal: Third Edition* © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL).

35 **"And thank God for that":** Greg Kandra, "Serving the Suffering Church: The Deacon in Lockdown in New York," *The Deacon*, March 26, 2020: https://www.the-deacon.com/2020/03/26/the-deacon-in-lockdown-in-new-york/.

37 **"Rededication of England as the Dowry of Mary" at the medieval shrine of Walsingham, Norfolk, in eastern England, on March 29, 2020:** For background, see the excellent EWTN UK documentary Norman Servais (dir.), *The Rededication of England as the Dowry of Mary*, available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8dzDrvziXE. See also Simon Caldwell, "Half a Million See England Rededicated as Mary's Dowry 'in the Eye of the Storm,'" *Catholic Herald*, April 2, 2020, https://catholicherald.co.uk/half-a-million-see-england-rededicated-as-marys-dowry-in-the-eye-of-the-storm/.

37 **"In England's green and pleasant land":** "Jerusalem," lyrics based on William Blake's poem 'And did those feet in ancient time' (c. 1808); music by Sir Hubert Perry (1916).

39 **draft paper published online at the end of March 2020 by the Danish economics professor Jeanet Sindig Bentzen:** Jeanet Sindig Bentzen, "In Crisis, We Pray: Religiosity and the COVID-19 Pandemic," March 30, 2020, draft paper, https://mcusercontent.com/50113b987267c95cf5c9d5b4f/files/07e7548c-b1b3-4043-a3fc-5799aa0cc9ca/Bentzen_religiosity_COVID.pdf.

40 **new openness to religious questions and/or practices as a result of the coronavirus:** See Luke Coppen, "Will Coronavirus Hasten the Demise of Religion—or Herald its Revival?," *The Spectator*, April 11, 2020, https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/will-coronavirus-cause-a-religious-resurgence-or-its-ruination.

43 **Historically, the Church has been at the forefront of adopting technological innovations and putting them to good work in the vineyard:** These paragraphs are adapted, with much revising, from two things I have previously written on these topics: Stephen Bullivant, "I Call You (Facebook) Friends: New Media and the New Evangelization," in Martin Lintner (ed.), *God in Question: Religious Language and Secular Languages* (Brixen: Verlag Weger, 2014), 461–73; and "Blessed are the Bloggers," *Catholic Herald*, May 19, 2016, https://catholicherald.co.uk/blessed-are-the-bloggers/.

43 **"to direct their minds and hearts towards higher and spiritual things":** Pope Pius XII, *Miranda Prorsus*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, September 8, 1957, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_08091957_miranda-prorsus.html.

44 **"with unhurrying chase, and unperturbèd pace":** Francis Thompson, "The Hound of Heaven" (1893), in *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*, ed. D.H.S. Nicholson and A.H.E. Lee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), https://www.bartleby.com/236/239.html. This poem was a great favorite of (among many others) Dorothy Day, G.K. Chesterton, and J.R.R. Tolkien.

46 **NewAdvent.org—one of the great pioneers of Catholicism online:** See Brandon Vogt, "Interview with Kevin Knight—On New Advent and Digitizing Catholic Tradition," *Ignitum Today* (blog), July 9, 2012, https://www.ignitumtoday.com/2012/07/09/interview-with-kevin-knight-on-new-advent-and-digitizing-catholic-tradition/.

48 **"no bodiless phantom":** Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Smyrnaeans, 3, in *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers* trans. Maxwell Staniforth, ed. Andrew Louth (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 101.

Chapter 4

50 **"time should be spent so as to promote the glory of God and the salvation of their souls":** Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 418.

51 **"each hour being announced by the ringing of the great bell of the cathedral":** Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 419.

51 **"granted special indulgences to those who practiced these exercises and prayed for the sick":** Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 420.

52 **If the home is, or should be, a type of "little church," then so too can the Church be thought of in familial terms**: Among the Church Fathers, this reciprocity is perhaps clearest in the writings of St. John Chrysostom. See especially *On Marriage & Family Life*, trans. Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986); and Norbert Widok, "Christian Family as Domestic Church in the Writings of St. John Chrysostom," *Studia Ceranea* 3 (2013): 167–75.

53 **"This should cause little astonishment, for in serving the sick, Bernardine served God, who is more than father, brother, or son to us":** *The Life of S. Bernardine of Siena, Minor Observantine* (London: Washbourne, 1873), 24–5.

53 **"religious socialization" of children:** For a thorough overview, see Sam A. Hardy and Gregory S. Longo, "Developmental Views on Youth Religious Non-Affiliation," in James L. Heft and Jan E. Stets, *Empty Churches: Non-Affiliation in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, *forthcoming*).

54 **a person brought up Catholic is now more likely to identify as a "none" than they are to be a weekly Mass-going Catholic:** Based on my own analysis of 2018 data from the General Social Survey, taken from a new book I'm currently working on. I've also covered much of this ground in detail in *Mass Exodus*.

56 **"an image of the heavenly Jerusalem filled with the praises of the angelic hosts":** Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo*, 419–20.

59 **"long periods of time, saying the same prayer over and over again":** Lucia Santos, *Fatima in Sister Lucia's Own Words* (Still River, MA: Ravengate Press, 1974), 125. See also Stephen Bullivant and Luke Arredondo, *O My Jesus: The Meaning of the Fátima Prayer* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2017), chap. 3.

59 **"Mass in a Time of Universal Contagion":** Official texts and translations from Divine Worship available at http://www.cultodivino.va/content/cultodivino/it/

documenti/decreti-generali/decreti-generali/2020/messa-in-tempo-di-pandemia/adnexus.html.

63 **St. Henry Morse and St. John Southworth:** John Morrill, "Saints and the Plague: Two Heroes of a Past Pandemic," *Catholic Herald*, April 2, 2020, https://catholicherald.co.uk/saints-and-the-plague-two-heroes-of-a-past-pandemic/.

63 **St. Kateri Tekakwitha:** Pierre Cholonec, *Kateri Tekakwitha: The Iroquois Saint*, trans. Ingraham Kip and Ellen H. Walworth (Merchantville, NJ: Arx Publishing, [1715] 2012).

63 **Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos:** Carl W. Hoegerl and Alicia von Stamwitz, *A Life of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, Redemptorist* (Liguori, MO: Liguori, 2000).

Afterword

65 **helping us maintain the newness of our ardor:** John Paul II, Address to CELAM (Opening Address of the Nineteenth General Assembly of CELAM, March 9, 1983, Port-au-Prince, Haiti), *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition 16/780 (April 18, 1983), no. 9.

66 **"that here there is no great visible fruit in any one man's lifetime":** John Henry Newman, "Jeremiah, A Lesson for the Disappointed," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 8 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), Sermon 9, http://www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume8/sermon9.html.

67 **"Lead, Kindly Light":** St. John Henry Newman, "The Pillar of the Cloud," in *Verses on Various Occasions* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), Verse 90, http://www.newmanreader.org/works/verses/verse90.html.