

Love your
neighbor
as yourself

Jesus



I want to
accustom
all the inhabitants
...to look on me as
their brother

Bl. Charles de
Foucauld

August 2020

Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

I pray you are well! We have all been run through multiple wringers lately, so I hope you are persevering and finding some joy in the midst of all of these trials. It seems that, just when we think that things are calming down, another crisis erupts.

While my own situation has not changed much due to the pandemic, it breaks my heart to see so many others who are sick, have lost jobs and loved ones, or have simply lost their peace of mind and don't know what to do. With rioting, social upheaval, and a general "hammering at societal foundations" added to the picture, things look very uncertain. We must pray, for there a spiritual battle at hand that vastly eclipses what we see in the physical world. In speaking with other religious, priests, and prayerful people, I think everyone is feeling a kind of malaise and grinding in the wine press of spiritual suffering. So, if this sounds familiar, don't think you are the only one.

Yet, in the midst of everything, may God always be praised! He knows our sufferings and longs for us not to view them as senseless pain, but as a sharing in the Passion of Christ that merits us life, brings grace, and purifies the Church. St. Paul, speaking of Christ, writes, "Him I would learn to know, and the virtue of his resurrection, and what it means to share his sufferings, moulded into the pattern of his death, in the hope of achieving resurrection from the dead." (Phil. 3:10-11) In this mystery of suffering and the seeming continual triumph of sin and evil, let us always ask for the grace to persevere and trust, even when we feel ourselves immersed in a dark wood where the path is barely seen.

In lieu of a meditation, I'm including a few photos and details of my life to celebrate the years of living my vocation here in Biloxi, Mississippi (16 years since I moved here, nearly 15 years since my first vows on January 28, 2006, the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas.) Thank you for all of your prayers and friendship, and know I am praying for you.

May the peace of the Heart of Christ fill you,
Matthew

Please send all
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Prayers are needed and appreciated!
(no postal fee required)

As I had mentioned above, I'd like to give you some updates on my life and apostolate. I have been in Biloxi, Mississippi for over 16 years, and have lived in the same house for 15 years. I bought the house 2 months before Hurricane Katrina hit, which was good timing since the apartment I was staying in was destroyed by the storm. Since then, I have renovated almost all of it and turned it into a place where I can strive to live a peaceful life, praying for the world. I'll put a few photos below so you can see the changes I've made since I bought it.

Since 2009, I have been working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and am now working for the local Biloxi veterans' hospital which is less than a half mile from my house. Last year I transferred to the Biomedical Engineering department, and am responsible for the installation and maintenance of IT equipment and servers that drive our medical equipment. It's been fascinating, after working in IT for over 20 years, to learn the medical side of the house, such as MRIs and operating room gear. I also find it rewarding to work in a field that helps other veterans. It is a tremendous bonus to have a Catholic chapel at the hospital where I can pray my daily hour of adoration with Jesus present in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Outside of work, I follow a daily spiritual routine of the Divine Office and Mass, and at times serve as a spiritual mentor for other people, especially men who are discerning a call to the priesthood and consecrated life. Much of my vocation takes its foundation and daily life from Blessed Charles de Foucauld's emphasis on imitating the 30 years that Jesus spent in Nazareth, working and living within a community. I have always been attracted to the monastic idea of "stability of place", where you choose to put down roots in one area and stick with it through good times and bad, being there for your friends and neighbors no matter what. Please pray that I can continue to be faithful to this call, and to serve those around me in true brotherhood.

At times, I find a compelling topic to write about, so I would be remiss if I didn't direct you to <http://coastcaritas.org/writings/>, where you can download free PDF versions of my books, or buy Kindle/print copies (all proceeds go to my parish's St. Vincent de Paul society for the poor).

Praying for you and your vocation, please pray for me!

-Matthew

