

DO NOT FEAR, FOR I AM WITH YOU (Isaiah 40:10)

“Do not be afraid”. Echoing these words that God spoke to his people over a hundred times throughout the Bible, Pope St. John Paul II began his Pontificate: **“Do not be afraid, open wide the doors to Christ...”**

“Do not fear” Jesus tells us in Matthew 10:26-33, “*for they can only kill the body, but not your soul...*”

As we gradually return to our churches, in the midst of this pandemic, we will need to adjust to new ways and procedures in our worship practices. In my previous reflection on “New Evangelization for a New Church” I posed a few questions for reflection: - *what will the post-pandemic Church and Christians be like?* - *Has this isolation changed you as a Christian for the better? – What lesson have you learned or are still learning?*

Once again Jesus is repeating **“do not be afraid”**, because God has allowed this pandemic for a greater good. **A new Church** will come out of this, and a **new zeal in the proclamation of the Word** will be given by the Holy Spirit to the disciples of today, but **only if we are not afraid** and do what He tells us: “*what I say to you in the dark, proclaim in the light (openly); ...and from the housetops (loud and clear).*

So..., what will the Church and its mission be like?

In 1970's while he was still a Cardinal, Pope Benedict XVI, during an interview, commenting on the situation the world and the Church were facing at the time, spoke thus prophetically: “*The Church will be reduced in its dimensions, it will be necessary to start again. However, from this test a Church would emerge that will have been strengthened by the process of simplification it experienced, by its new capacity to look within itself... the Church will be numerically reduced*” (Interview with Peter Seewald).

“Do not be afraid...” to start again, as we return to the Sacraments. **Let’s not be afraid** to start with small numbers as in the first centuries, but with renewed zeal. **Let’s not be afraid** to return being home-church, the **domestic-church**.

It is now time to regain courage, and begin to rethink ways to bring “**the joy of the Gospel**” to our families and to our youth in our home-cenacles/home-church; time to catechize our own children at home; time to do home liturgy, family prayer. That is how Christianity became leaven in the pagan world; that is what we are called to be in today’s world. Then... weekly, at the right time, the home-church members will gather in the larger parish building for the communal celebration of the Liturgy and to...“**open wide the doors of our hearts to Christ.**”

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