

Sermon pronounced on Saturday 7 March 2020 by Fr. Denis Puga, SSPX, at the church of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet for the votive mass “in times of epidemic”.

The Catholic answer to Epidemics

My Dear Brethren,

It has always been the habit of the Church, since the dawn of time on the occasion of public calamity to turn to the Lord, especially in times of epidemic. This is not the first, and it is not the last, no doubt, in the history of mankind. But epidemics always have something worrying about them, because like demons, you cannot see what is attacking you. Thus, the Church turns to the good God, especially through this Mass which is very ancient, which we celebrate to ask the good God to preserve us from evil.

What the Church asks of God

What does the Church ask in these prayers? It asks God, of course, to repel these diseases that attack us, if we are afflicted with them, that we overcome them; if it is the hour of our death, that we prepare ourselves for it. But the Church does not only ask for this, the Church asks for the light of God, she asks that, on the occasion of these events, which are always a little peculiar, which are often the cause of social disorder, the Christian should manifest his faith, the Christian should manifest his virtue which is sometimes put to the test: there can be a danger of lack of trust, of selfishness, of lack of charity. She also asks for assistance to all those who, especially among Christians, in these more difficult times, will have to carry out their duty of state in a Christian way. I am thinking especially of doctors, nurses, all those who care for the sick, because it has always been one of the missions of the Church to concern herself with those who suffer and with the sick. The Church also prays for the public authorities, because this kind of trial, this kind of calamity, demands that we be governed in an upright way, with prudence, with wisdom, even if we do not share, far from it, all the positions and opinions of those who govern us. There are times when we have to ask the good Lord, as St Peter said so well, to enlighten them so that we can submit to wise rules.

The meaning of these events

The Church also prays that we understand the meaning of these events. Our first reflex must be a reflex of supernatural gaze, and this is perhaps the most worrying thing right now, my dear brethren, in these days we are living. It is not so much this epidemic, it is not so much what is happening, it is to see that in the Church, fear has entered, as well as anxiety and lack of faith. It is not the time to empty the holy water fonts, it is not the time to close the churches, it is not the time to refuse communion to the faithful, or even the sacraments to the sick. On the contrary, it is a time to come closer to God, to understand the meaning of these calamities. From time immemorial the Church, on the occasion of plagues and epidemics, has made public processions with manifestations of faith, this has been the occasion for the Church to preach penance. Penance, penance! As you know, this is the very beautiful passage from the Old Testament that we read earlier in the epistle: the sin of pride of King David who wanted to count his people to have the satisfaction of knowing that he was leading a great nation. And the consequence of this was a punishment by God. Yes, because God punishes as a father can punish his children. The punishment for this pride was a terrible plague, but as soon as God saw that hearts were turning towards Him, God made the angel of sickness stop taking revenge.

The Time of Penance

This is the time of penance, the time to return to God, whoever we are, the just and the less just, sinners, all of us must do penance. God does not always punish, and events, calamities, are not always caused directly by God, it can happen in exceptional cases, it is the laws of nature such as earthquakes, epidemics. These are the consequences of the fact that since the original sin, man is no longer master of everything. Yes, man is no longer master of everything, my dear brethren. But God has said with the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ : "I will protect you from these public calamities, I will protect you from them if you are faithful to Me". The problem today, my dear brethren, is not that we are using human means to try to repel these calamities, that is quite normal, all this is in the order of things; the problem is that we are saying to God "leave us alone, let us control this". But the only one who has the situation "under control", as we say today, is the good Lord. So,

what does God do? God says, “you don't want my help? Well, you're on your own”, and that is the worst thing, the worst thing.

Let us turn to the good Lord

Let's turn to the good Lord. As I was saying, this is not the first epidemic that the world has known, nor perhaps the most serious. Just think of the Spanish flu at the end of the First World War, which caused more than fifty million deaths, I mean deaths! The Church was in the front line. If you are a little curious go and see the photographic archives of the time, you can see those nuns who were going to take care of the sick and who were already wearing the famous mask that we are talking about today, nothing new under the sun. Christians were in the front line to practice charity, sometimes at the risk of their lives, and this is an opportunity to manifest one's faith. During this terrible epidemic of the Spanish flu, the Church continued to celebrate worship, using the sacraments, sacramentals, recourse to the intercession of the saints, a great tradition of the Church. We must do the same, my dear brethren, let us not be, and it is for us priests that I am speaking, let us not be like those bad shepherds who, when they see the wolf - or the virus - appear in the distance, run away! But let us be like the good shepherd.

Victims with Our Lord Jesus Christ

Dear brethren, we always wonder in front of such events, disasters, because the good ones are also affected, not only sinners, but also the good ones. I was speaking to you a moment ago about the Spanish flu, remember that it was during that flu, which was terrible, that Jacinta and Francisco Marto, the two children of Fatima, died, in quite terrible conditions, and they offered their lives for the conversion of sinners. This is a law that will last until the end of the world. The good Lord needs victims, victims who atone in union with the one who is the Victim par excellence, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

One day in the Gospel, the apostles questioned Jesus because there had been a massacre in the temple of Jerusalem, Galileans had come to pray, to offer sacrifice, and on that occasion Pontius Pilate had them massacred. This had “challenged”, as we say today, the apostles and disciples of Jesus. “What? Holy men who offer the sacrifice are being massacred? What sin have

they done that God should punish them in this way?” In the same way, the apostles asked Jesus because there had been a catastrophe in Jerusalem, a tower had collapsed, the tower of Siloam, and eighteen people had died, and the apostles had asked the question, “What did they do to die like this, coming on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and to be crushed like this under a tower?” What is the answer of Our Lord Jesus Christ? Our Lord said, “Do not think that they were greater sinners than others, but I tell you, if you do not do penance, you will all perish likewise.” This is what Our Lord says.



Votive Mass for times of epidemics - Sermon of Father Puga (in French)

Calamities are the consequence of sins...

Calamities must make us think that if we do not do penance, we will all perish. God is good, He does not want the death of the sinner but He wants him to convert and live. Public calamities are often the consequence of the sins of public authorities, that is so. Today we can be worried because all the evil laws that are multiplying, all the violations of natural law, the apostasy - even in the Church - that we see today, cannot leave the good God indifferent. In the Old Testament we even saw the Jews who protested to God when he did

not punish them, because they said, "But do you no longer love us?" They preferred God's punishment to God's silence, and God's silence is perhaps the worst thing.

My dear brethren, all day long on the television sets, we are shown the curves of the sick or of the dead, and it is true that it is impressive, but let us not forget that, for example, recently, in a country not so far from us, in Belgium, in one year three thousand people were euthanized - that is the official figure - and among them children as well were euthanized. And I am not talking about the number of abortions today. These are all sins crying out to heaven. My dear brethren, we have to think about this, we have to do penance: God does not want the death of the sinner, but He wants him to convert and live.

The traditional way of dealing with epidemics

My dear brethren, among you there are people who are coming here perhaps for the first time, I have met some of them this week, and the priests of this parish too. People who have been refused communion in the churches because they asked for it in the traditional way in the mouth, and they come here because they want to receive communion. We see here the weakness, to say the least, of the leaders in the Church, not all of them, fortunately. There is no greater risk of spreading the virus by communion in the mouth than by communion in the hand. Fortunately, there are still some bishops, such as one bishop in the United States, who reminded us of this. In a letter to his faithful, this bishop said: "I consulted a committee of experts, of doctors, before writing this letter, and they say that (communion on the tongue) is not a greater danger for the spread of the disease".

Communion is not the source of death, communion is the source of life. There is a right, that was recalled by the Holy See a few years ago, there is a right for the faithful to receive communion on the tongue, one does not deprive those who are in calamity of the sacraments. So, I say to them: you are at home, here, because here you will always find the Church's usual, traditional way of dealing with epidemics. Let us also entrust ourselves to the miraculous medal, wear it, let it be worn, it is a bulwark against all the temptations of the devil.

In a little while, after this Mass, you will have the possibility, for those who wish, to come to the communion table to receive the blessing with relics that we have, among others, relics of Saint Pius X, Saint Pius V, our dear holy Curé d'Ars, and Saint John Eudes, there is also a relic of Saint Thomas Aquinas that we are celebrating today. This is not done in vain, but it is to receive the protection of these saints, to live a Christian life, to endure illness and to be protected from it if it is God's will.

Becoming like children again

I'll just close by saying that the peculiarity of this disease as we see it today is that it doesn't seem to affect children, or at least not seriously. Perhaps this is a sign from God because in the Gospel Jesus Christ tells us: "unless you become as children again, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven". Not to enter the kingdom of heaven is to be damned, that is the worst of perils, that is the worst of calamities.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Father Denis Puga