

Counselling the bereaved and quarantined during the coronavirus pandemic

Humanity is facing one of its deadliest virus outbreaks in history. We can see this in the growing number of deaths and the economic hardship resulting from the lockdown.

The sickness destroys the physically fit, the rich, the poor, the learned, the health experts and church people alike.

There is no escape. It is not a scare tactic to say that people are dying in their droves.

We feel more helpless when we see doctors and nurses infected and dying, particularly when we learn that hospitals are facing shortages of protective equipment.

We must pray that swift justice is dealt on those who steal from the resources that are meant to benefit the hungry, the jobless, orphanage, UIF, etc at this time.

No amount of heartlessness and cruelty can equal the act of stealing scarce resources at a time like this by the people we are meant to trust.

Besides the sad loss of our loved ones, and effects of economic downturn, the looming grinding poverty will be made worse if such reported corrupt actions are not halted.

Strength to all who lose loved ones

From my first-hand experience of seeing the deep sobbing resulting from unexpected loss, it is clear that pastoral healing and support is needed for all the bereaved.

It is not easy to accept that close family members, relatives and friends are no more.

Life will never be the same without a parent, spouse, child, uncle, aunt or granny.

When someone who was putting bread on the table is no more. When a husband and or wife is lost while isolated in quarantine, we must realise this pandemic brings an ugly death.

Humanity is in mourning. This pandemic has stolen our identity and scattered us through social distancing on our beautiful planet.

It is more painful to experience a grief in your loneliness, when people who would have come to ease your pain in the African way through payers, singing, care and counselling are kept away by this contagious virus.

In the coronavirus funerals that I have conducted, it always hit me to the core to observe immediate family members being left alone, with no one to pray and comfort them.

It is not that these members of community do not want to come, but that the health regulations do not allow such normal communal comfort.

These are the people I want to lift and strengthen here.

In times of crippling anger and dark despair, where the prophet Isaiah bemoans death hovering in our homes, climbing in through our windows, killing our families, and leaving streets and public squares empty, he reminds us that God is there strengthening, protecting and assuring all bereaved of His presence.

In the context where dead bodies “lie down like dung on the open field, like cut grain behind the reaper, with no one to gather them” (Jeremiah 9; 22), God, the ever-present chief counsellor is there.

God knows every drop of your tears. He lovingly supports all the bereaved right now.

Children of God must be filled with assurance in the hope and trust that God is there.

Hope even at this time of loneliness and hopelessness must purify thoughts so that we do not lose the strength and comforting hand of the Lord.

Apostle John (1 John 3;3) comforts us, “Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

When you experience loss, please do not allow the tragedy of death to define your life.

Do not allow that inner strength that connects to the risen Lord to die.

Greater is God in Jesus who is inside you, than the one in the world. From that experience of bereavement, rise up with a clear purpose in mind, accepting that your loved ones have passed on to meet the Lord, and that you will purposely and fearlessly rise up and say, like conquering David in (Psalm 23;4), “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

Strength to the quarantined

Right there, in that quarantine you are the master of life, a game changer.

Do all you can to save your life, as guided by health professionals and prayer.

It is important to understand that quarantine is not death lurking in solitary confinement.

It is rather a retreat to assist your body and mind to regain your energy, courage and right attitude in life. Be healed!

Holy God, from whom all power of healing comes, I pray for your pastoral intervention to all bereaved, the infected and all our health professionals at this difficult time.

Heal your people Lord, in Jesus Name, for nothing is impossible with you.

Hold this country and its authorities into your loving care and give them wisdom as entrusted stewards of our lives and creation.

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