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Subject: How long can this go on?
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Dear Faithful of Saint John's,

Reflections

How long can this go on? I imagine each of us asks this question once a day. When will Covid be over and things go back to normal? Realistically, the answer is probably longer than we want to believe.

I took some time this summer to build a fort for our grandchildren. They sit in it and laugh when I grab the supports and shake them back and forth, shouting, "earthquake!" I picture God doing this to our whole globe with this pandemic. It shakes us, but I know the fort isn't going to fall, and God knows it too for our globe.

Some have wondered if this time is a test of our faith. Others talk about it being a spiritual desert. But if it is a test God is allowing, then I hope we can pass through it with patience and courage, faithfully doing each day what we should. And if we are in a spiritual desert, perhaps we will gain new insights into our life, since the night sky in the desert reveals things we cannot see at home. Trusting in God can be a frightening thing, but it can also be bracing, as we wait for Him to show us new things and to strip away things that need to change. This is why the Apostle Paul reminds us, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Fasts and Feasts

This coming Saturday, August 1, the Orthodox Church calls us to enter into a two-week fast that centers around the Feast of Transfiguration (August 6) and the Feast of Dormition (August 15). In the Antiochian tradition the service called the Paraklesis is sung especially during this time. It is a lengthy hymn asking the Theotokos to pray for us. An online version of the one we are familiar with can be found [here](#) as sung by Eikona.

I know it will be more difficult for us to keep this fast since we are not able to be all together. In years past we would have had special Church services, our summer Institute, and then looked forward to a Salmon Potluck on Transfiguration. But even without these, each of us can perhaps find some way to heed this call and be more mindful of God. The circumstances of each person vary greatly, and so will our means of doing this. Perhaps some will pray more for their family, for the rest of us, and for the whole world. Others might read something uplifting or listen to beautiful music. All of us can try to be kind to others. We can also remember to thank God for everything and also to ask for His help. And, yes, some will even find a way to fast, even if ever so simply, for fasting reminds us that the pleasures of this world are fleeting and that we were made ultimately to be filled up with God. Whatever we do, the goal is not just to burden ourselves with more to do, but rather to allow ourselves rest in this weary world and to be refreshed by God. So

please think about this and do as you are able.

News

As for parish news, the new, "self-directed" program at the Saint James House is filling up. Five young men have applied to be there and two young women. If you have not already read about this new program, check out the [Saint James House](#) page on our Cathedral website.

Saint John's School is gearing up to begin with in-school classes. We have a much easier situation than the public school. Our School will be creating four "cohorts" in which a team of teachers and their students will remain isolated from the others as they go through the day. Please pray for Saint John's School.

Resources

Finally, it seems that every day there are online lectures and internet blogs offering instruction and help. I can't keep up with them all and honestly look at very few. That said, I will still pile on a few more links below that some might find helpful. Check them out as you wish.

[Connecting Through Communication](#) - This 2-minute video came across my desk from Focus on the Family. The good thing is that the videos are short, but still good reminders about communication in marriage. You can find more of these and other resources [here](#).

Also, one website we use for marital and premarital counseling, "Prepare/Enrich," recently published an article ["I'm So Annoyed with My Spouse,"](#) with tips on working through these times. Perhaps no one else will find it helpful, but Betsy said she was very interested in looking at it, so I am including it.

I have previously recommended the website [Covenant Eyes](#) as a source for help and information about helping teens (and others) be aware of the dangers of internet pornography. It is vital for parents to stay aware of this pernicious threat.

Lastly, if you only want to look at only one link, check out this music performed by a virtual choir, written and compiled by Eric Whitacre, with 17,572 voices from 129 countries: ["Sing Gently"](#)

Prayers and blessings for you all.

Fr. Marc