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## *Darkness and Light*

Joan Steele, Director of Religious  
Education and Mission Administrator

When you were very young, were you ever afraid of the dark? Are you still afraid? *What exactly* about the darkness is us? Is it the unseen, the unknown, the potential we can be hurt, or even killed by something or someone that we can't prepare to fight since we don't know what or who it is that threatens us?

When today's news for five minutes and you will have been bombarded by more *darkness* than perhaps you've ever *imagined*. A worldwide pandemic that has turned our world upside down. We have to socially distance ourselves; we can't get together with friends and family (support systems), we can't go to restaurants or theaters, or even the beach! Our economy is losing money and we are losing our *jobs*! Our children are trying to learn everything *online*, on the very computer screens we were trying to pry them away from six months ago. We are encouraging them to interact with one another in

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Pastoral Council  
Mission San Antonio de Padua  
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Black lives matter . . . Brown lives matter . . . when will we finally learn and truly internalize the *truth*? **ALL LIVES MATTER!**

Add to this darkness, the dark clouds of smoke from the hundreds of fires burning across our state and our country, destroying homes and businesses in mere moments. If the dark clouds aren't from the smoke, then it's the dark clouds of hurricanes, tornados, torrential rain, high winds and excruciating heat.

Is it any wonder that we are experiencing fear, depression and despair in overwhelming proportions? Does it seem like the *end times are here*? What are we, the body of Christ, to DO?

We are people of faith and so we turn to our God, we turn to His Word for our guidance through these dark times.

***“But since we are of the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet that is hope for salvation. . . . We urge you, brothers (and sisters) admonish the idle, cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient with all. See that no one returns evil for evil; rather, always seek what is good for each other and for all. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.” - 1 Thessalonians 5:8, 14-18***

What are we to do? Again, our God's Word through the prophet Micah tell us what He expects from us.

***“You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.” - Micah 6:8***

I'm not trying to imply that we are living in easy times. It is definitely not easy to get up each morning and give thanks to God for everything in our lives. But this is what *we are called to do!* Even with everything that is going on, all the scary darkness that threatens to harm and consume us – we need to remember that we are *children of the light!* We are called to *Be the Lights to a Dark World!* We are called to be *Bearers of the Light*. Our Mother Mary lived her life as a *Bearer of the Light*; let us follow her example as we *Bear the Light of Christ* to our dark modern world. Pray to our Mother, ask her for her guidance and her intercession. Speak to Jesus. Tell Him that you are *willing*, even if you don't feel *able*. Or tell Him you *want* to be willing, but you can't even conjure up that much . . . and ask Him to help you.

***Psalms 32:7 says “You are my shelter; from distress you will preserve me; with glad cries of freedom you will ring me round.”***

Stay in the Word. Stay connected to God. Pray always. Prayer is talking to God. Get used to talking to God all day long. Don't feel that anything you have to say is inconsequential to Him. He longs for a deep

relationship with you. He yearns for you to turn to Him asking Him to protect you from life's storms . . . from the darkness.

Count your blessings. Even when the world looks dark, we still have abundant blessings in our lives. Remember those blessings. Share them, celebrate them. Let your blessings be your focus, rather than your challenges.

Praise God. Find a Christian radio station (K-Love or K-Life) and let the music be a backdrop to your day. It is almost impossible to remain fearful and despairing when you are praising the Lord. Crank up the volume and sing along. Remember ALL the times that the Lord has been there for you in your lifetime. He promised He ALWAYS WILL BE! You are NOT ALONE! Your parish family is here, God is here – you are NEVER ALONE. Reach out and keep your emotional connections going. Use a phone, a computer, video chatting, Zoom, etc. – don't isolate. Isolation makes the darkness scarier and more consuming.

**Psalm 34:2-11** *“I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be ever in my mouth. Let my soul glory in the Lord; the lowly will hear me and be glad. Glorify the Lord with me, let us together extol his name. I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him that you may be radiant with joy, and your faces may not blush with shame. When the afflicted man called out, the Lord heard, and from all his distress he saved him. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. Taste and see how good the Lord is; happy the man who takes refuge in him. Fear the Lord, you his holy*

*ones, for naught is lacking to those who fear him. The great grow poor and hungry; but those who seek the Lord want for no good thing.”*

**Psalm 32:4-5, 20-22** *“For upright is the word of the Lord, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the Lord the earth is full.”*

**Our soul waits for the Lord, who is our help and our shield, For in him our hearts rejoice; in his holy name we trust. May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us who have put our hope in you.”**

**Psalm 9:10-11** *“The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of distress. They trust in you who cherish your name, for you forsake not those who seek you, O Lord.”*

I am at a loss for words that could answer the questions “What can we do? Where can we turn?” It is better that we look to our God, Who has already answered them through His Word – our Holy Scriptures.

**“Be brave and steadfast; have no fear or dread of them, for it is the Lord, your God, who marches with you; he will never fail you or forsake you.”**  
**Deuteronomy 31:6**

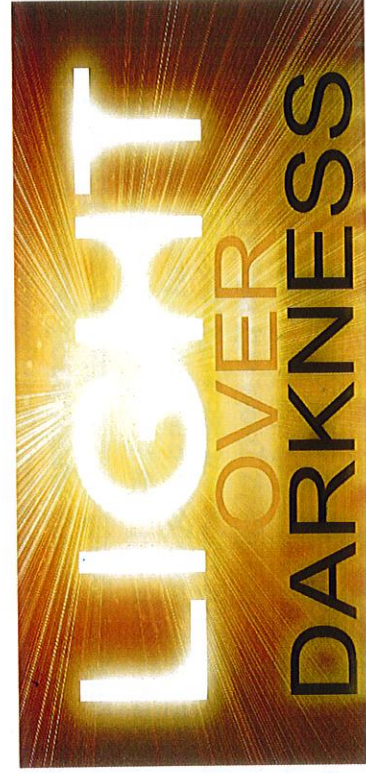
Yes, there is darkness. Yes, we are frightened. But as the Children of God, as the Body of Christ, we will stand together and Bring the Light!

When I graduated from high school, many years ago, we were asked to choose a quote to print under our graduation photo. My choice was, and still is, my guiding star . . . *The light of friendship shines best when the world around you grows dark.* I pray that each and every one of us reaches out to our *Best friend . . . our Creator . . . our Savior* and that as He holds our hands, we raise our voices in praise of our Everlasting Father as He brings us safely out of the darkness!

In the meantime, remember that if you simplify everything the Scriptures have to teach us, you'll know what to do . . . **“Love God and Love People.”**

Stay Strong . . . Stay Safe . . . Stay Healthy . . . this too shall pass and we will once again praise God within the church at Mission San Antonio de Padua.

My love and prayers, *Joan*



# Love God Love People

By Danny Gokey

I've been running in circles  
Jumping the hurdles  
Getting caught in that rush of doing so much  
I'm feeling kinda worn out

All this checking the boxes  
Trying to be flawless  
Has me spinning my head, catching my breath  
Too afraid to slow down

I tell myself to keep this up  
That God wants more than just my love  
But I've been complicating things  
It's just like me to overthink

Gotta keep it real simple  
Keep it real simple  
Bring everything right back to ground zero  
'Cause it all comes down to this

Love God and love people  
We're living in a world that keeps breakin'  
But if we want to find a way to change it  
It all comes down to this  
Love God and love people

Oh this is freedom (this is freedom)  
The keys to the Kingdom  
Knowing life will be found when love can be loud  
'Cause...

## Outreach Ministry

Mission San Antonio de Padua supports several outreach programs. We are looking for someone to help us grow this ministry. It won't take a lot of time; you do not need any training and you will be answering God's call to minister to your brothers and sisters.

### Programs:

**Communion Service for the Homebound:** Please let us know if you need communion brought to you. Receiving the Eucharist is fundamental to our Catholic beliefs.

**Prayer Circle:** Are you willing to pray for those in need? Do you need special prayer? The prayer circle is a great way to reach out and reach up! You don't need to be able to travel; prayer requests can be shared within the group via the telephone or email. A scheduled prayer time of 8 a.m., 12 noon and 8 p.m. unites those offered prayers. Join in any time or all times to add your united voice of prayer for those in our parish family who are in need.

**Meals during a family illness/hospitalization:** Would you be able to provide a meal for someone who is in need? Are you in need of some help while you deal with health issues?

**Carpooling services for Mass:** If you need a ride to Mass or if you can provide a ride, this might be the ministry for you.

If you are interested in lending a hand or would like to be remembered in any of these ministries, please contact Joan at the office.

Mission San Antonio

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