

Pembroke Diocesan Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada
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"You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending." This quote from C. S. Lewis is one I have always loved, because it is so true. We cannot change the reality of the last few years of Covid, or its negative social impact on our culture but we can commit ourselves here and now, where we are in our present lived circumstances, to choose hope. Hope that we can begin the process of healing the divisions influenced by this polarizing catalyst that has been **Covid 19**.

The other day I woke up to birds singing outside my window, a sound I had always hated in the summer, as I have a large tree growing outside my window in my bedroom at the rectory, and I remember with irritation the very early summers mornings, sometimes as early as 4:00 am, when the piercing chorus of dozens of birds would begin to greet the air outside my window.

I'm going to use another quote now because I believe it speaks in a special way to our current lived experiences. This quote is attributed, believe it or not, to a few different sources, from an American 1939 politician to a section of a Chinese curse. Anyway, the saying is, "May you live in interesting times." Wow, when you think about it, do we ever, but let's get back to the birds I was talking about before. This time when I heard the birds singing, I was happy. The singing was now sweet to my ears, and I had hope that the long cold cemented grip of winter was slowly opening its rigid grasp. This spring carries a special hope, and that hope rests in the power of our human free choice. The truth is, blessing or curse we always have a choice: to choose hope or to choose despair. Of course, we know that in our day-to-day lives these choices are not always so clear. How do we love? How do we listen? The answers to these questions may not be clear in every circumstance of our lives, but I believe that there is beauty and merit in asking them.

And there is tremendous value in remembering our own **power**, specifically our **power** to choose hope over despair. Our busy, demanding world exposes us to many jarring loud, conflicting voices all of which are right. Many of these voices wear away at us and our fidelity to the possibility of communication, real connection, and acceptance with each other despite our different ideologies.

The truth is division, isolation, fear, anger, **Covid 19** has been the seed of these emotional acids that have eroded the cement of human relationships. I choose to make a choice; and invite you to make the same choice, a choice for hope, to not give in to Judas's greatest sin, the sin of despair. He gave in to the despair that he could never be accepted back into human connection, that he could never be forgiven. The truth is we do live in interesting times, but whether we believe that is a curse, or a blessing depends on the choices we make moving forward. I invite you to choose hope, hope that our common shared faith will be the bridge we walk to heal the divisions which have been influenced by this pandemic.

That is why I feel that Bishop Guy's evangelizing initiatives are so prophetic in their timing. Just like the divisive American civil war in the states, Catholic families have been divided in their family relationships by the polarizing emotional effects of this pandemic. But by choosing hope, we can now become hope and, in this way, begin the long journey towards changing the ending to the one we hope for. An ending of despair wants us to believe that our differences will always be stronger than our similarities. I wholeheartedly disagree. If our shared faith has taught us anything it is that Christ's love draws us together. Humanity, I believe, is at a social collective crossroads, and I invite you to choose the right path, the path of hope.

God Bless, Father Michael.