



Dear People of the Diocese of New Westminster

First, let me say how grateful I am to all of you as you do your best to adjust to this ever-changing situation in our diocese, region, country and the world as the COVID-19 outbreak continues to expand.

The Reverend Canon Richard LeSueur, Interim Priest-in-Charge of Christ Church Cathedral (who is self-isolating on account of international travel) was speaking to me about the story of Jesus asleep in the boat in the middle of the storm and the disciples' understandable fear that the boat would be swamped. Jesus awakens and calls a halt to the storm and then questions the disciples about their trust in him. In this COVID-19 situation part of me just wants to say, "Wake up, Jesus!" while another part of me has to trust that God is present in the middle of this storm, this weird, dangerous storm.

Let me just say that I feel privileged to be in the boat with all of you (even if we are not physically together) as we rock back and forth and as we do our best to be disciples of Jesus, even with all our fears, all our fatigue and all our questions at this time.

I was listening to an interview with Dr. James Towne, the medical director of the medical intensive care unit at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. The interviewer asked him how the hospital was coping with the situation there. This is what he said:

"You know, we're all preparing for the worst so that we can make sure that we still retain the ability to offer services that we normally offer as well as services for an expected influx of patients. There's a strong esprit de corps at Harborview and at a lot of hospitals like ours where we know that this is our job and we're here to help. But at the same time, you know, people are scared. People are not sure what's going to happen next."

The interviewer then asked whether he had ever seen anything like this.

"No," he said. "A friend of mine said it best. This could be one of the defining moments in our careers or in our lives."

Dear people of the Diocese of New Westminster: let's nurture our esprit du corps, the Spirit that animates the Church itself. Let's lean on one another as we meet a defining moment in our lives. It is a moment that none of us would ever have chosen for this world of ours. It is a moment that asks us to be a community rather than act as if we were only individuals, to share rather than hoard and to pray rather than panic.

With love and prayers for you all,

*In Christ,
+ J. LeSueur*