



STEADY, FRANCISCANS!

By Josh Molidor, OFS

Many might remember the cute poster popular in the 70's that pictured a cat desperately hanging on to a branch with its claws! The depiction underneath was "Hang on, Baby!", and it became a common catchphrase, often used to this day. Words of wisdom for the struggles we are dealing with now.

About one year ago, the Covid virus started to circulate through the United States and the world, with the first national shutdown in April, and the virus is really raging now. Most fraternities have cancelled in-person meetings, and virtual gatherings are now the norm. That close connection we once enjoyed, that intimate gathering with family, is now replaced with something much less. Yes, thank God for the technology, but a Zoom meeting just doesn't fulfill our need to continue to grow the bonds between our favorite sisters and brothers in fraternity! Oh, what to do?

Well, let us make prayer and contemplation the soul of all we are and do. It's a good (Art.8) Rule of Life! Most have more alone time to pray for the suffering and pain around us, so use your time fruitfully. Finally, we have the spare moments to delve into the Gospels, as we always said we wished we did! Now the opportunity for contemplating His Wonderous Love is here for the taking. It seems we even have extra moments to study our Rule and Constitution. How many of us have gone in that direction?

While we cannot yet give those needed hugs to our sisters and brothers, we must still try to build fraternal bonds! Most all of us have phones, so let's more readily reach out and touch somebody, and less texting. Call everybody in your fraternity and spend time that way. Thank your council, both Local and Regional, for keeping it together. Share your stories, offer your talents up, never forget the shut-ins and suffering of our fraternities.

These plagues and pandemics come and go, but Our Lord's Love remains. Just over 100 years after Francis' passing, the Black Death hit Europe, and claimed 60 percent of the population. Franciscans have survived to this day! One hundred years ago, the Spanish Flu claimed 50 million worldwide, and we still are here to serve others in Christ Jesus! We have sadly lost many to this virus in the last year, but our light must grow only brighter. We are called to be that Hope that the suffering are looking for, the word of encouragement and help for those who have lost their livelihood, and the joyful message of the Risen Lord to all around us.

God has gifted us with the knowledge to produce a vaccine to overcome this virus. Never in the history of the world has this happened so quickly, Thank You, Jesus! Our fraternities will go back to gathering in a short while, we will once again hold visits and elections, and lots of love and hugs will happen at meetings once more. We will get through this with His Strength, and so in the words of St. Padre Pio...Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry!