

My focus, like that of many people in this country during the past several months, has been dominated by the pandemic, the major interruption in our lives. I had been living in the hope that it would soon be over and the routine of our daily lives could then return to normal. However, as we have watched the nightly news and seen that the virus has continued to spread over our country and several others, that the number of people affected by the illness keeps increasing and that the death toll continues to rise, my hope has dimmed. This pandemic is definitely not just a passing storm; its effects will be with us for a long time.

So what can I hope for now? How long will this pandemic last? What and who will be left when it is finally over? Providentially, St. Augustine, a saint whom I've never even prayed to, came to my rescue. He didn't actually answer my questions about how the future will be, but he did give me some good advice about how to live it.

I met him this way: I was in the process of clearing out the desk in my bedroom when I found a card in a drawer there that I didn't remember ever seeing before. It had this message on it: "HOPE has two lovely DAUGHTERS: anger, that things are not what they ought to be, and courage, to make them what they must be" St. Augustine Although I'm happy to be called the "lovely daughter of Hope," Augustine's message helped me face the truth, that I often, like now, do feel angry. My anger or rage is not about the pandemic itself or other things in nature that we have no control over. It is, rather, about the attitude and choice of words of some of the people who have spoken frequently on TV during the past few weeks about the pandemic. It was shocking to me, for example, to hear the President of our country actually scream at a woman in one of his audiences: "You are so stupid; you don't even have the brains you were born with." I also found it difficult to endure the arguments that politicians and newscasters engaged in about a ridiculous and potentially lethal suggestion of our President. He wondered aloud, on TV, if drinking a kind of household cleanser might rid one's body of the possibility of having the infamous virus. He later "explained" that he didn't say that as a suggestion, but was just being sarcastic. Listening to such debates with the frequently insulting responses which the speakers give to one another makes my anger rise. My reaction definitely fits St. Augustine's criteria about anger being an appropriate response for "hope's lovely daughter" if things are not as they ought to be.

The task Augustine suggests for me now is to be as courageous as "hope's second lovely daughter" and work to change the things that cause the problem, i.e., to make those things

What they "must" be. That task is obviously much more difficult than the first. How can I, or even we, change the way many public figures seem to think and/or speak. Since the only viable idea I had when I read St. Augustine's exhortation was to write this letter to share with you my concerns about our country's future, and encourage you to speak out or write your views too. When the days of our "enclosure" are over, maybe we can talk together? In the meantime, if you have any ideas to share with me, one of Hope's "lovely daughters", please let me know.

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