Opening Prayer:

Loving God you call us this day to be mindful of your grace and blessings. May we your people remember all of our brothers and sisters around the world today. We are truly blessed to have one another and we are all working together to do our best to keep one another safe and healthy. Bless all those who are working daily with those who are sick and bless them this day. May we strive to continue to listen and be open to you during this difficult time. Thank you for this day and may we witness to your unconditional love.

Reflection by S. Regina Bechtold, SC from New York

Suddenly, the world has become very small. In ways we could not have imagined, we are truly citizens of the world, as Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton said of herself. She knew something about quarantine. In 1803 she arrived in Italy with her eight-year-old daughter Anna Maria and her husband William who was in the last stages of tuberculosis. He was hoping the Italian sun would cure him. Instead, the authorities mistook his illness for a potentially contagious fever and quarantined the three in a damp, cold prison. A month later they were released; William died eight days later, and Elizabeth’s world was turned upside down.

We struggle to comprehend the enormity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Obediently we wash our hands, stock up on essentials, practice social distancing and curtail trips and visits. But at a deeper level we are trying to wrap our minds around the implications of this fierce virus for ourselves, for our families, friends, communities and our sisters and brothers in China, Italy, South Korea and over 130 other countries besides our own.

With the whole human family, we are facing our fragility in a way that most of us have never experienced. Life is precious — and precarious. Times of change and crisis can trigger anxiety. They can narrow our focus to our own needs and fears, even turn us against one another (think of supermarket fights over the last bottle of sanitizer).

Yet times of crisis can also summon us to be our best selves. Think of the selfless first responders and care providers after the 9/11 attacks, Hurricanes Katrina and Irma, Superstorm Sandy, floods, hurricanes, and wildfires near and far.

As people of faith, we pray and believe that “life is changed, not ended” (Preface Mass for Christian Burial). Changed it will be, indeed. Of that we are certain, when so much else remains uncertain.

Through it all, we desire to keep the fire of Charity alive within us, with eyes and hearts open to those most in need, deliberately living from the perspective of “we/us/our.”

Silent reflection:
In prayer, let us call on our Sisters and colleagues who have gone before us:

You who served the people of New York during epidemics of yellow fever, cholera and influenza—

*Response: Give us a share of your courageous charity.*

You who nursed seriously wounded Civil War soldiers—
*Response: Give us a share of your courageous charity.*

You who treated persons with HIV/AIDS with compassion and skill, even when little was known about the cause or transmission of that deadly virus—

*Response: Give us a share of your courageous charity*

**Let us pray:**
Much is uncertain. Yet we know and believe in the certainty that our God will be with us, giving us the grace and strength to do the work that is before us to do.

**Closing Song:**
*Ubi Caritas*   **BB#326**   verses 4&5