17th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME REFLECTION

This week my heart was heavy with the loss of my first cousin Tuesday morning and 11 hours after my cousin's death, my good friend and longtime member of St. John Lalande R.C.I.A. Team passed away. These losses hit me very hard because these guys were all my age. Moreover, my cousin, a physician, watched his food intake very carefully and was the most fit of all the cousins. I could not wrap my head around these events. Thus, I turned to my God and scriptures as I usually do.

In the first reading for this Sunday, Solomon asked the Lord for the gift of understanding, the gift of a discerning heart. That's exactly what I have been praying for – to understand the deaths of my cousin and my friend; to discern the meaning of their death and the death of those we lost due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

My consolation and comfort came from Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul told them "all things work for good for those who love God." "All things" is inclusive in the fullest possible sense. It includes our present trouble, our heavy heart, our poverty, our richness, joblessness, our success and failure, our weakness and strength, as well as our sickness and health. Indeed, "everything" and nothing is left out! By saying that "all things work together for us," Paul tries to reassure us that there is no discord in God's providence. God's powerful hand is active in all the circumstances of our lives.

We need to stand with Solomon to ask God to help us see His hand at work in us, in our families, in others, in the splendor of creation and the beauty of human life. We need to ask for a discerning heart to see God at work all around us despite the presence of death due to the Coronavirus, due to heart attack or due to gun violence.

We are called to seek and recognize the pearl of great price – the Kingdom of God. Therefore, let us ask God for understanding and wisdom as Solomon did, so that we may be wise enough to discern what is good for us and to make God's kingdom our priority.