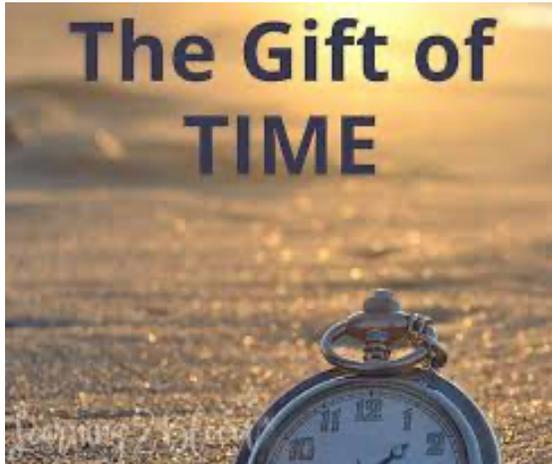


I do not have a crystal ball in front of me as I write this column. I am guessing that with the concern of the spreading Coronavirus we may find that we are going to have some time on our hands, due to cancellations of some of the things that we enjoy doing. This week I'm taking a break from reflection on the Sacrament of Reconciliation to reflect on some ideas of what we might do if our schedules slow down and we have some open time in our schedules.



Don't get me wrong, there is nothing good that comes with sickness, either for ourselves or those that we love. If we listen to the science of illness, we are all going to make sacrifices for the sake of the common good with the hope that we can minimize the risks of people getting sick.

I am thinking that in the midst of a health pandemic we may find ourselves being given the gift of time. This gift could not come at a better time than the season of Lent. Because we are always so busy we may find ourselves feeling very uncomfortable with having "nothing to do." There is always something to do, it may just take a different

form. The gift of time may stretch us to face Lent head on. We might:

- take a walk in the woods and count our blessings
- listen to podcasts to deepen our faith (use a search engine to find offerings on Word On Fire, America Magazine, Commonweal Magazine)
- make a phone call or write a note to an elderly family member or friend
- read a book that challenges your spirituality
- turn off the TV, xbox or put your electronic devices out of temptation's way and sit in silence (seriously)
- fast from 24/7 news on TV, radio and electronic devices.
- find a recipe that you have been wanting to try and make it for your family dinner
- begin the novena Mary Undoer/Untier of Knots
- examine your conscience and make use private Confession
- write a person in prison and pray for them (If you do not know anybody, send a note to "Pastoral Care" and they will take it to someone who needs it.)
- be vigilant about scammers taking advantage of people spending time at home via phone, text and email with "dire" requests.

However all this turns out, if we are given the gift of time, let's use it wisely as a gift from God to enhance our Lenten observance.