

Like many of you, I have been tuning into many Catholic websites and apps lately; and on Thursday, I happened upon an interview with Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, VA. Speaking about the current state of the Church and the world, Bishop Burbidge used the analogy of a plant to drive home the attitude that Christians could have at this time. He mentioned that when a plant is deprived of water, its life source, it will send deeper roots. I liked this analogy.

Currently, the Catholic faithful are being deprived of Mass and the Eucharist due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Using Bishop Burbidge's analogy, perhaps Our Lord is providing us a time to send our roots even deeper into our faith. Clearly there is nothing deeper nor higher than the meaning of the Mass in our lives of faith, so going deeper cannot mean preparing to live without the Mass or the Eucharist on a permanent basis. Perhaps going deeper can mean deepening our comprehension and devotion to the Eucharist, to the Mass, and to the Church. Going deeper must be done with the backdrop of desiring the Eucharist and the Mass and praying for a quick return.

A few weeks ago, we had our parish retreat and in it was presented the idea that we, as parishioners of the Parish of Pope St. Pius X, can be people who are *receptive, purposeful and who can become a blessing* to the community. This might be just what the world needs right now.

In this unprecedented time, let us be people who are receptive. I often hear people say that they want to pray more. If you are not working as much or if you have kids home from school, be **receptive** and spend time in prayer. Pray the Rosary, read the daily Mass readings, begin devotional prayers to favorite saints, observe a few moments of quiet reflection and prayer. Prayer can seem to be a waste of time, especially when we do not perceive something happening. This is why it is the perfect posture and manner of being receptive, offer your prayers and leave them with God. He will bring about the fruit of your prayer. You and I can learn to be docile and receptive by being faithful to our prayer.

In this difficult time let us be people who are **purposeful**. Being purposeful means knowing that our prayers, actions and acts of penance make a difference. They make a difference in our relationships with the Lord, in our own lives and in the lives of others. One good way that we can be purposeful is to offer acts of penance to the Lord. Hopefully all of us have already taken on acts of penance for Lent, but now we can join them to the needs of our day or perhaps we can take on a bit more penance. Pences can include giving up pleasurable things, spending time in study, going out of our ways for others and many others. Our Lord told His followers that some demons can only be driven out with prayer and fasting driving home the necessity and power of penance. The coronavirus is not, strictly speaking a demon, but it is certainly not our friend; it causes harm and it frightens us. It needs to be driven out. Certainly, it will be scientists and doctors who discover the cure for the virus, but it will be our prayer and penance that will quicken its arrival. Be purposeful and do an act of penance.

This time calls us to be a **blessing**. I encourage everyone to please be receptive in prayer, purposeful in penance and then allow the Lord to lead you to where He wants you to be a blessing in this time. Prayer and penance will bring about peace and joy that you can then spread to others. This time certainly calls for many blessings. Right now, the best way to be a blessing seems to be to maintain social distance from others. The countries afflicted with this pestilence before us have shown that maintaining distance is the best way to stop its spread. Further, you can be a blessing by calling older members of our community whom you know may not have many social connections. You can offer to go shopping for someone who is at greater risk of contacting the virus. Be a blessing.

Perhaps God is showing us how to send deeper roots, I hope we all will respond. One of the titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary is, Health of Christians. Let us entrust ourselves to her and her powerful intercession to keep us safe. I will be celebrating a daily Mass in private; and at each of these Masses I will pray for you and your intentions.

In Jesus and Mary,
Fr. Flores