

July 26, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today is traditionally the day we honor the parents of Mary. July 26th is the Feast of Sts. Joachim and Ann, the parents of Mary and the grandparents of Jesus. They were elderly when they conceived Mary in the natural way. They were unable to have children until God fulfilled his promise through them so that the mother of our Savior would bear the Son into the world. Mary, of course, was conceived without original sin and is therefore called the "Immaculate Conception". In this way, God made her worthy to be the mother of the Savior. She reversed Eve's disobedience by her own obedience to the plan of the Father. For all of these reasons, this Sunday is called Natural Family Planning Sunday because all married couples are called to cooperate in the plan of the Father with regard to their own fertility. Joachim and Ann cooperated with the Father's plan to bring new life into the world and they were blessed by conceiving the Mother of God. We encourage every married couple and every person to seek to understand God's plan for fertility, the sexual union of man and woman in marriage, and their call to be the bearers and nurturers of human life. Today is a good day to ask ourselves do I really understand God's plan for marriage and fertility? Do I understand how the Church explains God's plan for marriage, fertility, and human sexuality? Am I able to discuss these important matters of life and love to my children and grandchildren, or to my friends or others with confidence and understanding? Many of us come to these questions with some trepidation or lack of knowledge. Some of us have never really been exposed to what Christ and the Church really teach in these matters. We are here to help and have many ways to assist you and your family with these questions. We have individuals and families in our parish that are true experts in Natural Family Planning and in living God's plan for marriage and family life. We also have many resources in all these subjects that can be obtained online or in written form. Finally, Tommy and Nathalie Shultz hold Natural Family Planning and Marriage and Family Enrichment courses throughout the year that can be done with an individual couple, in a group setting with couples, in person or online. It's so important that we are all well formed in these areas because fertility rates and birth rates are plummeting due to many factors in our country and around the world. We Christians are the ones who bring hope to the world and the Church by bearing and raising good, holy, and healthy children for the up-building of God's Kingdom. May God's gift of life be gratefully received, cherished, and loved by all of us!

As we have been reflecting on the signs of the times in which we live in, and on prophecies found in the Bible or given by Saints, popes, and other visionaries regarding the end times, we wanted to provide a few more passages for your reflection. At these times we may feel like St. Louis de Montfort regarding the state of our world today. St. Louis promoted total consecration to Jesus Christ through deeper relationship with the Virgin Mary in our spiritual lives. At one point he cried out to the Lord with a heavy heart for the coming of God's definitive victory over evil:

*Today Your divine commandments are broken, your Gospel is thrown aside, torrents of iniquity flood the whole earth carrying away even your servants... Will everything come to the same end as Sodom and Gomorrah? Will you never break your silence? Will you tolerate all this forever? Is it not true that your will must be done on earth as it is in heaven? Is it not true that your kingdom must come? Did you not give to some souls, dear to you, a vision of the future renewal of the Church? — St. Louis de Montfort, Prayer for Missionaries, n. 5; www.ewtn.com*

All of us are waiting for a renewal of the world and of our hearts. We need hope for the coming of a time of peace which has been foretold by the prophet Isaiah. During a certain period of time, creation will be restored and a certain victory over evil, sickness, and discord will be gained. These are the words of Isaiah concerning the millennium: "For there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and the former will not be remembered nor come into their heart, but they will

be glad and rejoice in these things, which I create... There shall no more be an infant of days there, nor an old man that shall not fill up his days; for the child shall die a hundred years old... For as the days of the tree of life, so shall be the days of My people, and the works of their hands shall be multiplied. My elect shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for a curse; for they shall be a righteous seed blessed by the Lord, and their posterity with them". — St. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, Ch. 81, The Fathers of the Church, Christian Heritage; cf. Is 54:1

It looks then, that there is an era of peace coming (Rev 20:4). However, until that time we will be in a great struggle between good and evil as St. John Paul II observed:

*"We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has gone through... We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-Church, of the Gospel versus the anti-Gospel, of Christ versus the anti-Christ... It is a trial... of 2,000 years of culture and Christian civilization, with all of its consequences for human dignity, individual rights, human rights and the rights of nations". —Cardinal Karol Wojtyla (JOHN PAUL II), at the Eucharistic Congress, Philadelphia, PA; August 13, 1976*

And so, over the next several weeks we will be promoting extra opportunities to join together in prayer for ourselves, our neighbors, our country, and the world so that good will overcome the evil that all humanity seems to be troubled by today. We have Hope as a divine gift from God and so we must intercede by fasting and prayer for good to triumph over evil in every human heart.

As we have mentioned week after week, it is time to pray, especially the Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, time to repent and come to Confession, time to come to Eucharist Adoration and Holy Mass if you are physically able, and time to fast and do penance and acts of charity for the conversion of others. We have also have been encouraging for the last four months, please remember that the grace of Christ that we receive in His Sacraments is our sure refuge during these days. We are all being called to find refuge in Confession and to Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist. Once again, included below, is the liturgical schedule with additional Confession times, Mass times, and Adoration times. Weekday Mass times may be adjusted on special days so please remember to check the parish Mass intention section of the bulletin to confirm weekday Mass times. Please remember the Catholic precept to confess sins in the Sacrament of Penance and to receive Holy Communion at least once during or near the Easter Season. Confessions are done in a socially distanced way in the church or outside on the parish grounds. We have many extra confession times scheduled. If you are unable to come to church or someone is homebound and in need of any of the Sacraments, please let us know and the priest or deacon will come to you!

May the Risen Lord come soon!

In Jesus' Precious and Saving Blood,

Fr. Derda, Fr. Steve, Deacon Russ and Deacon Ed