

Today we celebrate the Most Holy Name of Mary. In our Gospel, Jesus teaches that every tree is known by its own fruit (Luke 6:44). We cannot help but think of the Elizabeth's greeting to Mary. "Blessed art thou among woman and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus" (Luke 1:42).

Just as we might repeat the name of Jesus, as a short and powerful prayer; so, too might we repeat the name of Mary, as a short and powerful prayer. In the Revelations to Saint Bridget, Mary tells her that: "At the sound of my name, the good angels immediately draw closer to the just souls to whom they have been given as guardians and rejoice over their progress." So, our Guardian angels offer protection as we call upon Mary for help. Conversely, "The demons all dread and fear this name. At the sound of the name of Mary, they immediately let the soul go out of their clutches." We should not take this for granted, but rather seek to turn from sin and turn towards God. If we have a firm purpose of amendment to turn from serious sin, then we are protected. If however, we turn back to grave sin, so too will the danger be to our soul. "Like a bird with its claws and beak on its prey leaves it as soon as it hears a sound, but comes right back when it sees nothing happening afterward, so too the demons let go of a soul, frightened at the sound of my name, but fly back and return to it again" (p. 29)ⁱ unless there is a change.

As colleges open and students return in great numbers, there is concern on every campus that the coronavirus may spread exponentially. Such was the case at Benedictine Catholic College in Atchison County, Kansas where 38 students tested positive. Meanwhile, county wide, the number of cases jumped from 4 to 200. The college president "asked his students to pray and fast for the health of the college from August 28 until September 8, the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary."

Local public officials felt more stringent health measures were needed than what the college planned. On September 2, the County asked that all 2,000 students isolate in their rooms for 14 days to stop the coronavirus from spreading. College officials were concerned that the school year would get off to a rocky start if they were prevented from holding Masses and classes. Negotiations for a compromise began the next day.

Benedictine students organized a masked, socially distant rosary to pray for their school community as county officials maintained there was "no chance" they would back down from the 2-week quarantine period. The President of Benedictine College feels the prayer and the fasting were powerful forces in changing the atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. When negotiations resumed the next day, "There was an atmosphere of unity, not of division." County and school officials were working together "trying to get this resolved, not trying to punish anyone."

By Friday the 4th of September, both sides had come to an agreement they felt was fair and helpful to maintaining good health and limiting the spread of the virus. Students living on campus may not leave, except for work, essential activities, or for academic requirements. Off campus students must also observe some restrictions but they can come to campus for classes, religious services, work, and athletic practices. Seen through the eyes of faith, the college president has no doubts. "It was Our Lady that did that."ⁱⁱⁱ

As we honor the Most Holy Name of Mary and the fruit she bore, we should also see ourselves through the lens of God's desire for our own souls to bear good fruit. Again, we turn to Saint Bridget and the message she received from Jesus. "The soul was created in order to advance in virtue and grow fruitful through the seed of the virtues, so that she may be clasped in the arms of divine love" (p. 465). God's deepest desire is that everyone bears good fruit. Like Mary, we too must respond "yes" to God's plans for our lives.

ⁱ St Bridget of Sweden. The Revelations of Saint Bridget of Sweden: Books 1-5.

ⁱⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/news/faced-with-universal-quarantine-benedictine-college-turned-to-mary-16221