3-28-20

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we approach the solemn and beautiful celebrations of Holy Week and Easter, we immerse ourselves into the life-giving mystery of Jesus’ passion, death and Resurrection. It is natural in doing so to feel the weight and effect of our sinfulness, and desire to be reconciled with our Lord in order to fully enter into the mystery with hearts that are open to all the mercy and love that God offers.

In this time of purposeful isolation and caution it will not be possible to celebrate the Sacrament of Confession in exactly the same way we are accustomed. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, understands this and in solidarity through Bishop Soto is offering us a way to fully experience this merciful gift under these difficult circumstances.

The means for receiving God’s forgiveness in the absence of the Sacrament is by “Making an Act of Perfect Contrition” as prescribed in the following:

**“On Making an act of Perfect Contrition when unable to approach the Sacrament of Penance:**

**Approaching the Sacrament of Penance, through the ordinary way (confessing to a priest and receiving absolution) has become a challenge because of concerns for the COVID-19, as known as the coronavirus. Priests are making every effort to provide the Sacrament of Penance keeping in mind public health precautions and safeguarding the seal of confessions. Many of the Faithful, may find themselves unable to access to the Sacrament and receiving sacramental absolution. The Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See has published a note reminding both clergy and the Faithful of the salutary option of making an act of perfect contrition.**

**Primarily, a perfect contrition comes from the very love of God who is beloved above all things and whose mercy is inexhaustible. Secondly, in making an act of perfect contrition, the penitent is required to express a sincere and genuine request to receive forgiveness from God. And lastly, the penitent must make a firm resolve to approach the sacrament in the ordinary way as soon aspossible. (from the Catechism of the Catholic Church 1452)**

**Here are simple steps in making an act of perfect contrition:**

1. **Find a good and private spot to pray. Reaffirm one’s belief in the love and mercy of God. God’s love for us is unconditional. Renew one’s conviction of the truth of God’s enduring love. Employ a meditation on God’s Word (e.g. Parable of the Prodigal Son, Lk. 15.11-32; Sermon on the Mount, (Mt. 5:13-6:34 or other suitable text).**
2. **Make a good examination of conscience and articulate in prayer the request to receive forgiveness. At the end of the examination, pray the Act of Contrition or some similar prayer.**
3. **Finally, make a firm resolve to approach the Sacrament of Penance as soon as possible.**
4. **Finally, when possible, make satisfaction for sins against one’s neighbor. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1459)”**

Connected and complimentary with this is the *Special Indulgences to the Faithful* during the current pandemic giving through Pope Francis and communicated by our bishop, Bishop Soto, as follows:

**“On March 19, 2020, the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See issued a decree, *ex auctoritate Summi Pontificis*, granting special indulgences to the Faithful who are suffering from COVID-19, commonly known as coronavirus, and are subject to quarantine by the health authorities in hospitals or in their own homes. The granting of special indulgences also includes those who are health workers, first-responders, family members, all those who in any capacity -- including prayer -- care for them, as well as all members of the Faithful who join with the Church in imploring from our merciful God the end of the epidemic and relief for all afflicted.**

**Hoping to slow the rate of infection caused by COVID-19 and protect vulnerable members of our community, government officials have enacted necessary and prudent measures. I have cooperated with these measures for the good of the Faithful and clergy as well as the common good of all.  The decree from the Apostolic Penitentiary serves the mission of the Church to provide care for the afflicted and the salvation of souls.**

**An indulgence is “the expression of the Church’s confidence of being heard by the Father when in view of Christ’s merits and, by His gift, Our Lady and the saints, she asks Him to mitigate or cancel the painful aspect of punishment by fostering its medicinal aspect through the channels of grace.” (*John Paul II, General Audience, September 29, 1999*) A plenary indulgence is the remission before God of the temporal punishment for sin whose guilt is already forgiven. (*c. 992*) It removes all the temporal punishment due to sin. (*CCC 1471*)**

**In order to obtain the plenary indulgence, individuals, with a spirit detached from any sin, unite spiritually through media to one of the following ways:**

* **The celebration of the Holy Mass**
* **The recitation of the Holy Rosary**
* **The pious practice of the Way of the Cross and other forms of devotion**
* **At least recite the Creed, the Lord’s prayer, and a pious invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
* **Offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters**

**These are to be done with the willful intention to fulfill the usual conditions of receiving a plenary indulgence (sacramental confessions, Eucharistic communion, and prayer according to the Holy Father’s intention) as soon as possible.”**

Our Diocesan Shepherd, Bishop Soto concluded his instructions with this request:

**“Join me in prayer as we journey in Faith through the dark valley of this global pandemic. We place our trust in the divine, tender mercy of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. May the intercession of the Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Joseph and all the Saints bring healing to the afflicted, patient perseverance and protection to those who care for them, eternal rest to our beloved deceased, and comfort to all those who mourn.”**

**+Jaime Soto**

**Bishop of Sacramento**

*More resources regarding this and other pastoral assistance will be available on the diocesan website:* https://www.scd.org/

May God be with us all during this wandering in the desert with Christ, and may He bring us all together to the glory of the Resurrection!

Love in Christ,

Fr. Aldrin