



August 23, 2020

Dear friends of God,

Last weekend on Saturday morning August 15<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated the feast of the Assumption of Mary. This feast is a fairly new one but is based on an ancient belief in the Church. As I was preparing my homily I came across some insightful commentaries about the role of this ancient doctrine that responds to our modern human struggles.

I want to share with you some of what I learned. I hope that you find it as inspiring as I did.

The belief in the Assumption of Mary is an ancient one, but only became defined teaching in 1950. Our world was still struggling with the trauma of World War II. Approximately 3% of the human population died during the war. That's between seventy and eighty-five million people.

Whole cities were in ruins. Those who returned home came fearing the trauma of the war in the psyches, bodies and spirits. The Pope at the time, Pius XII saw this as a time to affirm that Mary, and the whole human family, was a precious gift to God.

The Pope saw how the nightmare that is always war cheapened human bodies and how life wasn't valued. The Pope reminded all of us in his letter defining this ancient doctrine that the body that carried the life of God was a holy vessel.

Last weekend during the weekend homily, I offered a suggested prayer practice for us this week and maybe for the weeks to come. It came to my mind as I experienced all the negativity that comes to us during our distracted moments of internet use and in the negative speech going on in our world right now. We can and must do better. I believe that the change that we need must be rooted in prayer. As one priest said recently that "true prayer wants others to flourish." That ought to be our goal: for others, even those with whom we disagree and might even call enemy. It ought to be our desire for them to flourish because they are our brothers and sisters, and we are children of the same God and Father.

This was the end of my homily as I wrote it:

Let us take the time that we watch the news (whether MSNBC, Fox News or our local stations). Take the time that we spend on the computer, Facebook, or

whatever else distracts us. Or take the time that we spend gripping and gossiping. Take 15 minutes for every half an hour that we lose in distracted activities and pray for others to flourish.

Maybe this week we can see miracles happen in our midst and in our world.

We believe Jesus when he tells us in John 10:10 "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." Jesus came that we might flourish and we need to take up our role as his disciples and help others to flourish. For that to happen, we need to leave self (selfishness) aside and take up our cross and follow the Lord. Let us continue to pray for each other, our nation and our world.

It is time for school to begin again. This is a challenging time for everyone, but maybe more for our young ones than anyone else. We pray for them and for our teachers and staff both at St.

Michael's School, of course, but also for the teachers and staff at our local public schools. To be an educator is a sacred role in our world. I offer this prayer from the *Book of Blessings*.

#### **Prayer of Blessing for Students and Teachers**

Lord our God,

in your wisdom and love

you surround us with the mysteries of the universe.

In times long past you sent us your prophets to teach your laws

and to bear witness to your undying love.

You sent us your Son

to teach us by word and example

that true wisdom comes from you alone. Send your Spirit upon these students and their teachers and fill them with your wisdom and blessings.

Grant that during this academic year they may devote themselves to their

studies and share what they have learned from others.

Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Jesus is our teacher within each of us. May we be open to learning and following the path of being his students no matter our age.

Much love,

