

March 22, 2020



Dear brothers and sisters of the Cursillo Filipino Group:

For some people, being in prison is a waste of time. For others, it is an opportunity for reflection and for inner enlightenment. For some, it is an opportunity to discover or rediscover their faith in God. For these, the time of confinement is ***a time of grace.***

I pray that this time of confinement in our homes is a time of grace.

First, it should not be a time of chaos or laziness or anxiety. To avoid this and eventually make it a time of grace, it is important to create a routine. Prepare a list of the things you want or need to accomplish this day and schedule them. This may help you not to develop a laziness habit that will lead you to boredom and lack of satisfaction.

These days, there are so many news about the pandemic that it can occupy all the hours of the day. You need to curtail this and reduce it to watching the news a couple of times, if possible. Reduce the amount of time you spend in front of the TV and/or in front of the computer, unless you are working from home. Moreover, make sure the information you get is reliable.

Being together at home for hours can lead to conflicts. If or when this happens, be careful and stop when you realize that you are getting angry or frustrated and may not be able to control your emotions.

There are good things going on even in times like these. For instance, solidarity, concern not only for what is affecting me but for what is affecting others. Some people may not know it, but they are practicing a Christian virtue. During these days we hear also many expressing their gratitude to the health professionals and to those who collaborate with them to fight the spread of the Coronavirus or to treat it. They are practicing a Christian virtue, gratitude. Other leaders call the people to hope in the middle of uncertainty.

For us, as believers, a situation like this can be an opportunity to cultivate our faith through the practice of prayer. We can become more aware of our dependence on God. We realize that we cannot depend on our health, on our riches, on our knowledge, or on our prestige. All these things are contingent, not firm or secure enough; they can disappear in a week and by means that are apparently insignificant, Coronavirus. It is a good time to refresh our faith in God as our Creator and Provident Father. He created us out of Love and cares for us with loving care. In connection with this, we can make acts of trust and of hope. He loves us not because we deserve it but because of His compassionate heart.

In the gospel of Friday, March 20, we heard a scribe being praised by Jesus because he had come to realize that *to love God with all our heart and strength, and to love our neighbor like ourselves is worth more than all burn offerings and sacrifices.* Considering this fundamental teaching of Christ, we are moved to do acts of adoration, praise, gratitude and love of God. This love can lead us also to acts of solidarity, of love for our neighbor. Through these acts of love, we are called to reach out first to those close to us, in our family, in our workplace.

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Then this love moves us to extend this love to those in greatest need. I would like to point out something that we may forget. We need to be aware and accept that practicing love and charity may require sacrifice. Sacrifice of our time, of our talent and of our treasure.

Through the time of confinement, we can give meaning to the inconveniences and pain that the present situation can cause. We are invited to associate these difficulties to the sufferings of Christ, who went to the cross for us. His was not a cheap love.

There are many people who live alone in our cities or where we come from, perhaps our father or our mother, our grandfather or our grandmother; perhaps our neighbor or a member of the Parish or a member of the Cursillo movement. Contact that person by phone or by internet. Help that person realize that he or she is not abandoned nor forgotten. Offer concrete help if possible.

Traditionally, in many families, the Rosary was prayed at home as a family. Remember the motto of Father Peyton: *a family that prays together stays together.*" The Secretariat of our Cursillo Filipino group has sent us a prayer of Pope Francis for this occasion. You can make copies of it and pray it together as a family.

Let me mention one more thing. Since we cannot have celebrations of the Eucharist in the church as we used to, it is very important to watch with religious attention the Mass on TV or on the Internet. When you are watching the Mass, do not be doing other things but focus your mind and your heart to the celebration of the Mystery of our Faith: the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ. Some may be able to do some Lectio Divina using one of the readings of the Mass of the day as a preparation or as a way to bring to personal prayer the reading of the day.

Finally, my brothers and sisters of the Cursillo Filipino Group, invoke the intercession of Mary, Our Lady of Antipolo (Bon Voyage) and Saint Lorenzo Ruiz. They are our Patron Saints before Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Peace to you! The Coronavirus has not and will not have the last word. Only Jesus is the Eternal Word.

Fraternally,

+Rutilio