

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the Season of Lent “A Barren Bush and a Fruitful Tree”  
March 12<sup>th</sup> 2020  
Fr. Frank Schuster

My friends, as you know, we are unable to have daily mass for the time being due to the epidemic sweeping our area. These reflections are meant to be a way I can still reach out to you, hopefully offering an insight or two on the readings for the day. The readings for the day can be found at [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) if you don't have a daily missal handy. And, although I haven't figured out the art of blogging. I always enjoy hearing from you so you are welcome to email me at the parish if you like.

So here goes...The first reading from Jeremiah today contrasts two kinds of plants. The first is a barren bush planted in a lava waste. The other is a tree with deep roots about to produce fruit even during a dry season. As we enter into an unprecedented time in history when we can't gather and worship together at mass, I think we are going to find out rather quickly what kind of plant we are. I'll be honest, the grief I am experiencing right now gives me a lot of compassion for that barren bush in the lava waste. Jeremiah says, there is nothing more torturous than the human heart sometimes. I think I understand that in a new way this morning. However, I don't know about you, but, from the depths of my being, I really want to be the tree that is still fruitful during what is shaping up to be a very, very long and dry season. I mention this because I think we all want that.

You see, we began Lent following Jesus into the desert. This is a historic Lent in that...we really are joining Jesus in the desert now, a very long and very dry season. During this time God is going to really probe our hearts without question. What will he find there? I think the good news here is that Jesus wants to give us life giving water. That will be the Gospel reading this weekend with the Woman at the Well. However, in the readings for today, the Gospel reading juxtaposes a wealthy man who we can argue was very fruitful in his life at least in the way this world judges that and Lazarus dying at his doorstep looking an awful lot like a barren bush. Jesus however turns this around. Clearly Lazarus' life was more fruitful than the rich man's life. The scary thing about that rich man's damnation had nothing to do with him being rich, it had to do with him not even seeing Lazarus' plight at his doorstep.

I think these two readings today are not a bad way to begin our “quarantine”. During a public emergency like we are in right now, it is easy to think about our own needs and forget the Lazarus' in our community. As people fill their carts at the grocery stores, let's remember the food banks too, let's remember those experiencing homelessness in our community like Camp Unity who we are still hosting on our parish property. And perhaps we can also sit down with the Lord at some point today and ask him how we can be more like the tree that is still fruitful during the drought and less like the barren bush in the lava waste.

And so, even though we cannot have public mass for the time being, and life can really, really feel dry as a result, please know I will still be praying for you and our community at the altar today. Let's pray for each other. Let's pray for Jesus' life giving water and for ways we can live out his Gospel more fruitfully today.