

"And he said to Moses, 'Come up to the Lord [...] and worship afar off. Moses alone shall come near to the Lord; but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him.'"

Exodus 24:1-2

Dear brothers and sisters,

Because of the suspension of Mass, we find ourselves in a situation analogous to that of the Israelites on Mount Sinai. Moses came near to the Lord, but the people had to worship at a distance. Through Christ, *all of the baptized*, without distinction, have drawn near to the living God (see Heb 12:18-24 and Gal 3:27-29); but now, for a period of time, you are in a situation similar to that of the Israelites: you must worship God "at a distance."

Before getting into the "how" of worshipping God during this time away from the Eucharist, I want to emphasize that it is important we be deliberate about worshipping God. During this time of deprivation, one of two things can happen: our desire for God can intensify or it can weaken and even die out.

There are many examples of people in the Church who grew in their love for God at a time God seemed to be "taken away" from them. One such person is St. John of the Cross. He was a priest who was imprisoned for nine months by his adversaries (Who were fellow friars!). In a dark, dank cell he was isolated, unable to celebrate Mass, and felt abandoned by God. But he held on throughout this trial and grew in his love for God. This is some of what he wrote as the fruit of his ordeal—he is writing about God:

*"Where have you hidden,
Beloved, and left me moaning?
You fled like a stag
after wounding me;
I went out calling you, but you were gone*

*[...] if by chance you see
him I love most,
tell him I am sick, I suffer, and I die."*

St. John grew in the desire for God in his time of "being far off." May we do the same!

On the contrary, if you look at that story of the Israelites at the top of this email, when Moses alone went up the mountain, what did the people end up doing? They fashioned for themselves a golden calf and worshiped it. They forgot who God is when they were "at a distance". They got off track--*way off track*. We don't want to get off track during this time, so here is how to stay on track.

Read the readings for Sunday's Mass, and spend some time praying with them. They can be found on

3/19/2020

the [website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) and many other places. Do it daily if you can, but certainly do it every Sunday. Continue to carve out time with the Lord, to listen to him and pray to him.

Watch Mass online. There is no substitute for being at Mass. But when that is impossible, some people may like to watch it on TV or online. There will be a homily to hear, to explain the readings at Mass.

There are many places to watch Mass online, but here are a few:

- Bishop Robert Barron/Word on Fire: <https://www.wordonfire.org/daily-mass/>
- St. Dominic in Panama City: <https://saintdominicpc.com/videos/>
- EWTN: <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/daily-readings>
- St. Patrick's Cathedral in NYC: <https://www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/live>

Make a spiritual communion. In the past, even though people regularly attended Mass, they did not receive communion as frequently as we do now. And even now, some people do not receive communion for one reason or another. When a person is not receiving communion, they are encouraged to make a "spiritual communion," which St. Thomas described as "an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him."

St. Alphonsus Liguori gave us this prayer to help make a spiritual communion:

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least into my heart. I embrace You as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

St. Alphonsus Liguori

Stop by the Church to pray. The Church will remain open during regular business hours (9-5ish). The Lord is still there in the tabernacle. We can visit him. We can do our best not to be "far off."

Please know that I will be celebrating Mass privately each day and will remember you during those Masses. May this time of exile pass and may we be reunited around the altar of the Lord soon.

Stay tuned for more emails addressing more aspects of faith and parish life.



Sent by Fr. Chris Winkeljohn

