

## WORDS OF HOPE

Hello brothers and Sisters of St. Bernard Parish. I want to let you know that I and the staff have you in our thoughts and prayers, especially at this critical time when we should be unrelenting as far as praying is concerned. I hope you are staying safe, and are abiding by all the regulations enforced as safety measures. As we obey to abide by those rules we are actually obeying God who inspired such wisdom guides. Let us keep connected and united by whatever means that can be explored, and at the same time be conscious of social distancing. Remember that out of sight is not out of mind. Pray for one another and let us remember to be grateful and thankful always to Almighty God has kept us safe and alive at this time. Let nothing worry you, God is in control. If God closes the door, somewhere he opens the window, all for his good purpose.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, "Believe me woman, the time will come when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father...but the time is coming and is already here, when the true worshipper will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the father is seeking such people to worship him (Jn.4:21 &23)". There is no time than now when this statement is very relevant. It is so true with the COVID-19 pandemic which has caused the Governments and Religious Leaders to modify people's normal way of life and worship. This is so true with the banning of public celebration of the Holy Eucharist and allowing priests to have private celebration without the Christians present. For Catholics, the Eucharist is the highest form of prayer since it brings Christ physically down to encounter his people and put them in physical contact with him.

My dear friends, not to worry about this denial because Christ is actually suffering with you at this time. Remember that you are his body and members. He said, "Where two or three of you gather in my name, I am there in your midst (Mt. 18:20)". Following these words of Our Lord, Catholics should use this time to strengthen their understanding of the Christian family as the 'Domestic Church'. What does this mean?. It means that they can turn their families into Churches where the parents or a designated person will be the Chief celebrant who presides daily or weekend celebration of 'mass without a priest'. Such practice has existed in mission land where it is difficult to find priests on regular basis.

How does this work?

It begins like a normal mass. The presider acts like the priest and presides over the celebration following the normal order of the Eucharistic celebration. 1. Greetings 2. Penitential service or confession of sin to God 3. The Gloria(if outside lent and advent) 4. The liturgy of the words of God with a reflection by the presider 5. Credo and the prayer of the faithful 6. Our father 7. Spiritual Communion 8. Dismissal

Brethren, it is our faith and manner of believing that is put to the test by COVID-19, and we shall rise up to it. Instead of this time dividing us and keeping us separated, let this trying time be a golden moment to strengthen family relationships, parish unity and make our love and faith more visible. This will put the devil to shame.

Be still! God is watching over you. Fr. Jude

