

Dear Parishioners,

As you know, Bishop Bambera has suspended all public Masses and gatherings in our diocese until further notice in response to the pandemic emergency and the recommendations of the CDC.

This is a great test of our love for God and for one another. We have been told forever that we must gather on Sundays to celebrate the liturgy and receive the Eucharist. And now we cannot do this. At a time like this, many of us are drawn to the sacraments of the Church and the solace of our faith community. Unfortunately, the nature of this crisis calls us to show our love for one another, paradoxically, by keeping away from each other. I know the depth of your faith and how difficult it is for all of us to have these obstacles placed in the way of our traditional practices, but this pandemic challenges us to find new ways to show our love and compassion for one another.

These are trying times for us as people of faith, and so I am writing to you to let you know what is going on in our parish during these difficult days.

First and foremost, please know that you are in my prayers, even though we are not physically present to one another as we celebrate the liturgy.

It is certainly a source of great sadness to be prevented from gathering as a faith community, but thanks to the wonders of modern technology, I am pleased to let you know that we can continue to remain connected as a parish and a Church in a different way as we proceed through these next weeks.

I am posting a homily podcast every Friday for the Sunday Scriptures. Beginning March 28th at 4PM and every Saturday following we will post Sunday Mass on our website. You can access through both parish websites and Facebook pages.

St Jude Facebook Page is St. Jude Parish Mountain Top, and website is www.stjc.org
St. Mary Facebook is Saint Mary's of Dorrance and website is www.stmarydorrance.org. On our website, you will also find our current bulletin.

Also, know that both St. Jude and St. Mary will be open for prayer as posted. Please be safe when visiting the churches. Doctors tell us to keep 6 feet distance from others, and if you are not feeling well or have health issues, please do not risk a personal visit, for your own safety and that of others.

At the present time we have no way to know how long these restrictions will be in place, but, as you know, the parish depends upon your free will offerings to keep operating. Although we will not be gathering weekly for a time, we all know that utility and maintenance costs will not be on a hiatus. I encourage everyone to do what you can to continue your support of the parish. If you have not yet explored online giving as an option, you may do so by calling the office or visiting our website; you can also mail your envelopes to the parish office. The address is St. Jude Parish, 420 South Mountain Bld. Mountain Top, PA 18707. St. Mary address is 3529 St. Mary's Road Wapwallopen, PA 18660.

Finally, but most importantly, I am asking everyone in our parish to join together in prayer for relief from this pandemic. St. Jude is the patron of the impossible-helper in desperate cases. Also, we turn to the Blessed Mother for intercession. In this time of trouble, it is most appropriate that we, as members of St. Jude and St. Mary, pray to the Blessed Mother and St. Jude. **And so, even though we are separated from each other physically, I ask that we unite as a parish in prayer and set aside a few minutes each day at 6 PM to pray the Prayer to St. Jude, which includes the Blessed Mother as St. Jude's guide and inspiration, until this emergency is over.**

PRAYER TO ST. JUDE:

O Almighty, and Merciful Savior who chose St. Jude to be Your apostle and martyr and who crowned him with glory and honor in heaven, listen we ask You to hear the prayers which he now pours forth to You. For us his brothers and sisters on earth. Into his hands we place our petitions for the needs of our souls, bodies and minds. Through his powerful intercession we implore You for the safety of our homes and our loved ones, for the desire to bring the Good News of salvation to all, especially those most in need of your love, for the strength to be loyal to You until death, and in particular we plead with You through the merits of St. Jude, for the special graces we are seeking at this time (pause add intentions). And to you, O, Mary, guide and inspiration of St. Jude intercede for us with Your Divine Son so that we too may live and labor like apostles and die and be rewarded like apostles at the end. Amen.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at 570-474-6315, ext. 227.

As I mentioned, these are difficult times for everyone and if we do not have faith and hope, what do we have? Remember that men and women throughout the history of our Church and the world have been called to offer their very lives in wars and in martyrdom to save others; we are called to protect our own lives and those around us by simply restricting our behavior.

Please continue to pray for our parish, our people, and for the world. Pray for those infected with this virus, and especially pray for the brave healthcare workers who are caring for the sick. With faith, God's help, and our diligence, we will survive and hopefully emerge from this experience stronger as a people, a Church, and a nation.

God bless,

Fr. Joe