

*Foreword from Fr. Bob*

*I am grateful for this opportunity to share a few thoughts with you. I ask the Holy Spirit to send **His message** to you through the words that you read. You will all read the same words but it is possible that each one will get some different meaning. I ask you to pay attention, not so much to my words as to what the Holy Spirit may be telling you. It is through opening ourselves to the Holy Spirit that we begin to understand what God wants from us.*

**In the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen**



*O Lord, hear my prayer...  
Hasten to answer me, O Lord,  
For my spirit fails me.  
Hide not your face from me  
Lest I become like those who go down into the pit...*

In King David's Psalm 143 we hear the cry of one in distress.

How well we can identify with this cry of distress! The world has suddenly changed for us. A deadly virus is threatening our lives. We feel unsafe. We are told to stay home and quarantine ourselves. We find ourselves separated from our families, our neighbours, our workplace, our recreation centres. Our churches are closed and we are denied the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. We are in distress.

What is happening? Has God "hidden His face from us"? Has God abandoned us? What do we do now?



There is a story written by Franz Kafka, of a man who has been called to a faraway place to do some special work. When he arrives in that area he sees a castle on a high hill. He knows that he has to go to that castle in order to get his instructions but there seems to be no way to get there. He asks people how to get there but no one seems to know. Throughout the story the man is searching

how to get to the castle on the high hill but he cannot find his way. In the end he dies not having reached the castle and not having found out what he was to do.

This is a sad story. If this is an allegory, what the author seems to be telling us is that we cannot find our way to God, we cannot find our way to the heavenly kingdom by our own means. We cannot even know what we are to do to reach God.

**But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, there is a way. There is hope.**



In my house there is a painting that always inspires me. It is a painting of Jesus Christ knocking on a door. When we examine this painting, we see that there is no door knob. The artist is wanting to show that the door can be opened only from within. This painting always gives me great comfort. I know that Jesus is always there, just outside the door. **It is I who have the power to let him in or to shut him out.**

The painting is a reference to a verse in the Book of Revelations.

***Behold, I stand at the door and knock:  
if anyone hears my voice and opens the door,  
I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.  
Rev. 3:20***

This scripture verse and many others in both the Old and New Testament assure us that – NO! God has not “hidden his face from us!” God has never abandoned us! Rather, God is the one who *seeks*, who *searches*, who *knocks*. God’s only desire is to have His children close to Him.

We see this clearly right from the beginning of the Old Testament in the Book of Genesis in the story of Adam and Eve. God creates Adam and Eve and gives them paradise. They have everything they need but are tempted and lured in a different direction. They end up disobeying God, doing what they want, not what God wants for them. And thus they turn away from God.



Suddenly they find themselves alone and naked and so they **hide**. ***They hide in the garden! They hide from God!*** Can you believe it? And what does God do? God comes into the garden looking for them. God calls out: “*Adam where are you?*”

Right from the beginning, God seeks his lost children. He knows what they have done but he calls anyway. **“Adam, where are you?”** Today

he could just as easily be saying: “Bohdane, where are you?” or “Stella, where are you?” or “Robbie, where are you?”

Throughout the Old Testament we read the words of the prophets sent by God to testify to God’s enduring love and His desire to have his children back with Him. Despite the wickedness of mankind, despite their many sins, we hear God virtually crying out, pleading with his children to change their ways.



In the book of the prophet Joel, we read:

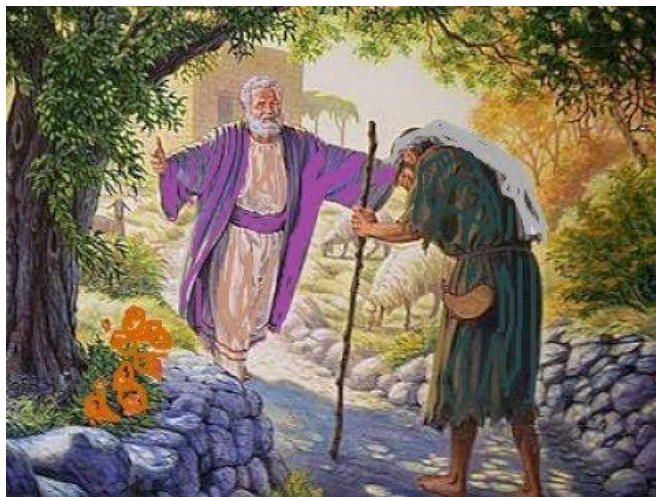
*"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."*

And in the book of Isaiah:

*"Thus, says the Lord, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I the Lord, your God, teach you what is for your good, and lead you the way you should go. If you would hearken to my commandments, your prosperity would be like a river." Isaiah 49:17*

How far would God go to bring his children back to Him. **In His search and desire to have His children with Him**, God finally humbles Himself and becomes like one of us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus comes to us to show us who God really is and who we are. Jesus comes to show us the way to that castle on the high hill so that we do not spend our whole life wandering about and die achieving nothing. Jesus comes to pull us out of that life without God, away from the life of sin.



**The parables** which Jesus tells confirm this desire of God to find his children. There is the story of the **prodigal son** who leaves his father’s house and wastes his life in sinful living. And when he finally comes to his senses, what does he find? He finds his father running to him, his arms outstretched.

There is the story of **the lost sheep** who strays away from the flock. And

what does the shepherd do? The good shepherd leaves the 99 sheep in the wilderness and goes looking for the lost one and when he finds it, he rejoices.



**Jesus is the One who will lead us to God. He will stop at nothing.** He will endure torture, crucifixion and death in order to accomplish his mission.

And so now, in this time of crisis, Jesus stands at the door of our heart and knocks. He knows our sins. He knows what we have done and what we have not done. And still he stands and knocks, waiting for us to let Him in. He wants to be the good shepherd who will lead us along the right path to our Heavenly Father. And it is we who have the power to let him in or to shut him out.

**As soon as we open up our heart to God He will find us.** This may happen in various ways, maybe through sickness or trials, such as we are experiencing now, maybe through the love of others. **Let us remember that today**, as we find ourselves in our current unhappy circumstances, fearful of a spreading virus, forced to isolate ourselves from others, forbidden to go out and congregate, seeing our churches closed.

**In these days of trial** we are given the choice of opening the door to Jesus or to leave him standing outside knocking.



**There is a story** of what may happen when we don't open that door. A famous surgeon had been called to another city to operate on a young girl who was suffering from a rare disease. The doctor came and operated on the girl who got better. One afternoon the doctor decided to do for a walk and see the town. He was enjoying his walk when suddenly there was a violent thunderstorm. The doctor hoped to find some shelter knocked on the nearest door asking to come out of the pouring rain. The woman who answered, said, "Go away there is enough trouble in this house!". and she slammed the door. The next morning she saw the doctor's picture in the paper and realized what she had done. Her own very sick daughter was suffering from the same illness as the girl whom the doctor had cured. She had slammed the door and did not allow the doctor to come in. She had chosen to shut him out.



**My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.** We don't know what is going to happen in the next few months or years, Fear, anxiety, and worry do not help but having Jesus on our side will give us peace and a sense of trust and even courage. Jesus Christ, the greatest healer of all, the One who pours out endless love, is standing outside the door of our heart. He is knocking, wishing to come and be with us. Let us not make the mistake of shutting him out.

Today our lives have changed ***but we are not alone.*** Today that hectic pace that so many of us have been living has slowed down. What a wonderful opportunity to listen and hear that knock. What a wonderful opportunity to bring God into our lives, into our homes, into our relationship with our families. Our churches are closed because of the virus. What a wonderful opportunity to rekindle our domestic church, to pray the Holy Rosary, to read Scripture together. Our children cannot go to school. What a wonderful opportunity to bring them together and teach them at home - to teach them about the most important of all fields, the knowledge and the love and the service of God. What a wonderful opportunity to spend time in family prayer.



***“Behold, I stand at the door  
and knock:  
if anyone hears my voice  
and opens the door,  
I will come in to him  
and eat with him  
and he with me.***

Rev. 3:20

Let us pray:

***Lord Jesus Christ, help us to know that You are with us in this time of distress.***

***Help us to hear You knocking on the doors of our hearts.***

***Help us to open up our hearts so that You can enter in.***

***We long for Your peace, Your guidance and Your strength***

***as we face this tribulation together.***

***We ask this in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.***