

Dear Friend,

This year has not turned out the way any of us expected. It helps to keep in mind all the stories of Scripture, where people who encountered God were always in for a big surprise. We believe that God can work through all things, even storms, strife and global pandemics. My prayer is that through every trial, you never feel alone. "I will not leave you orphans," Jesus told the disciples at the Last Supper, and I hope we all feel that assurance every day of our lives.

My calendar, normally crowded with meetings and trips to visit our Missionaries across the U.S. and in other countries, was cleared off by COVID-19. Maybe yours was, too. And God's faithful people found themselves outside their church buildings, yet still a vital part of the Church.

I have watched our Missionaries who minister in parishes, schools and hospitals rethink the way they go about their days. The pastors in particular had to adapt to continually changing recommendations, requirements and restrictions, first to close their church and parish buildings to the public, and then later in the spring to reopen them with extreme caution. It is a toss-up as to which is more difficult: closing a parish to the public or opening it back up!

As I checked in with our Missionaries, I heard their stories of how they had to manage in this new landscape. Some are comfortable in the digital world. For them, switching to livestream Masses exclusively was something they could accomplish relatively easily. For others who are not so tech savvy or perhaps serve in places where internet connections are more difficult, going online with Mass and other worship opportunities was a real challenge. Many mentioned how strange it was to preach not to a congregation but to a computer screen or an iPhone. Our Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S., a chaplain at Marian University in Indianapolis, joked that "it's not very motivating to look at your ugly mug on a screen and pretend you're preaching to the people."



Fr. Rick Friebe, C.P.P.S., holds a drive-by eucharistic devotion at Sts. Peter and Paul, Ottawa, Ohio.

(Please detach from letter and return with your gift in the envelope provided.)

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