

Dear People of St. Joseph's,

I miss you. I barely know you, but I truly do miss you. I spoke today with a good friend of mine who is a religious brother in New York and he shared with me how they were just teaching the youth group about the priesthood under the old covenant. In those days only the high priest was allowed into the holy of holies to offer the sacrifice. In the new covenant each priest has the amazing and undeserved privilege to stand in the place of our one High Priest, Jesus Christ. Now, thousands of years later, we priests are experiencing something similar; what it is like to be alone in the Holiest of Holies. I miss your faces, your voices, your presence. I miss you. How beautiful it will be when it becomes prudent for us to reunite.

Although we feel the physical distance, I have to share with you that I feel very close to you. We are in this together. I just finished praying with our Holy Father Pope Francis in his extraordinary *Urbi et Orbi* message (To the City [Rome] and to the World). Typically, this kind of message that the pontiff communicates on a global scale at Christmas and Easter. Today the scene was staggering. Pope Francis walked by himself, through dreary rain falling on an empty St. Peter's Square. The camera shot is one of this small white figure, slowly ambling against a background of dark, wet stone. No entourage, no Pope Mobile, no security detail. It really did feel more like a scene from a movie. Picture an old man plodding along a long, desolate, lonely journey. Except it was the pope! Please pray for him. Can you imagine? When he arrived at the dais he addressed all of us. Not just us Catholics, but ALL. OF. US. ([Click here](#) to read his manuscript. [Click here](#) to see the whole thing for yourself.) He began with a selection from the Gospel of Mark (chapter 4:35 and following) about Jesus being asleep in the stern of the boat as a squall tossed the Apostles about and they panicked. It's worth the time to listen and reflect.

I enjoyed the pope's words and it felt good to me to have someone minister to me. I was happy to have a priest ministering to me. As your pastor I need a pastor, too. I remember what it was like to be in the pews alongside you. I know how important it is, as a sheep of the flock, to have a relationship to my shepherd. I'm writing to you today because I was inspired by His Holiness. I want to share with you some of the consolation that was afforded me through his pastoral care. I want all of you to know that you have a shepherd who is with you. We may not see each other often these days, but we are together. I desire for you to share in the experience that moved me this afternoon.

After his reflections were complete, the Holy Father walked yet again through the rain the rest of the way to the façade of St. Peter's Basilica. He visited first the icon of Maria Salus Populi Romani (Mary Health of the Roman People, to whom he has entrusted his pontificate from the beginning) to ask her intercession. Then he proceeded to a beautiful and miraculous crucifix that survived an enormous fire that gutted the church where it resided 500 years ago. It was revered throughout the times of the Black Plague in the city of Rome. As he entered into the basilica he paused for a time of Eucharistic Adoration and a beautiful litany. I'll admit, I've always thought it a strange thing to adore the Eucharist via digital platform. But today I found myself in my office, on my knees in front of my computer. I knew that I could let myself into the church and see Him in person. But I wanted to be in union not only with Our Shepherd, but also with our shepherd. I wanted to experience this alongside all of you and the way that the world was united in prayer in that singular moment. And it was beautiful. I was deeply moved to watch him take the monstrance back out into the night, into the rain to give Benediction to the City and to the World. Not a single soul visible

in the square, yet knowing that literally millions of people would be joined in this single blessing. God's grace reaches far, the distance doesn't matter.

Typically, the *Urbi et Orbi* message comes complete with a plenary indulgence if you follow through on the usual prescriptive measures: confession, reception of Holy Communion, and prayers for the Holy Father. Today's indulgence is very easy to obtain as the faithful are dispensed from the usual measures. All you have to do is watch the pope's prayer service and pray. There are a few other ways to obtain an indulgence ([click here](#) for more information). An indulgence is the removal of temporal punishment due to sin.

Please keep an eye on your email, StJosephOrlando.org, our [facebook page](#), and our [YouTube Channel](#) so that we can keep in touch with each other and close the distance! I love you! You are in my prayers constantly!

May the Lord give you His Peace,

Father Benjamin