

Solemnity of St. Joseph, 2020 March 19
Definitive Social Distancing Day.

Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/031920.cfm>

I have so much I want to say to you before you go today. I want to say everything that needs to be said. Then again, I have had nearly twelve years to say it already. If you haven't heard me say it by now, you probably won't hear it today. Not only that, you have had your whole life to attend Mass and receive the Sacraments. You have probably heard many things now that you can reflect on. So, as you go into the distance for a time for this hyper-Lent, I encourage you to read some extra Scriptures, spend some time thinking about the Mass – what it is and what you have experienced – and to spend this time cultivating a longing for the Sacraments.*

We listened to the first dream of St. Joseph in today's Gospel, but Joseph had another dream. Just as he was told by the angel to take Mary into his home, he was told in Bethlehem to take Mary and the Child from their homeland to Egypt. Joseph went, of course. He left Bethlehem, his ancestral home. He left his land Israel. He left to protect his family from Herod's jealousy. He also left the Temple, the place of worship for an observant Jew, where God had his footstool and where he and his family were required to go three times a year to offer sacrifice. He didn't know whether he would be able to fulfill those religious duties anytime soon, just as we don't know if we will have Mass soon or much later.

There was another Joseph. The Joseph in the Old Testament was sold into slavery in Egypt because of his brothers' jealousy. Through dreams, he learned to save the grain from abundant harvests in order to feed the people in land of his exile. By saving those people he saved many in the world; he also saved his Israelite family who came to him in hunger. Joseph saved them not only from the famine, but from their fault in the selling of their own brother. Our St. Joseph left Bethlehem to protect his family. He was told by the angel that this Child would save his people from their sins. He took the little Seed that the Father had newly planted in the world to Egypt. He saved the Grain of Wheat so that the Child could grow and be ground up and become the Bread of Life, for the salvation of the people of Israel from their sins and to save the whole world.

I do not know whether we will return from our exile before Easter, but I know that whenever we are able to return to this church it will be Easter. It will be a time of resurrection. In the meantime, as we make this goodbye for now, do not forget who you are and whose. Remember St. Joseph, our patron, and his attentiveness to the Child Jesus and to protecting the Salvation of the World. May we imitate his attentiveness and his charity. And remember Jesus Christ is our Lord. In Him we hope. In Him we live and move and have our being.

*Confession will be available at the usual times, but only behind the screen. Also, make sure that you leave plenty of distance between you and the other penitents. The church will be open for individual prayer, as the Lord is present in the Tabernacle.