

Dearly beloved:

We are celebrating Holy Mass on this 2nd Friday of Lent of this special one. Due to the health provisions of the State facing the emergency caused by the Coronavirus (Covid-19), as well as, by the dispositions of our Bishops of Paraguay, we cannot

celebrate the mass as we normally do, with the presence of the faithful (this is rare for all it hurts... us and you...) However, through the Eucharist we are united in a spiritual way.

Since you cannot make yourselves physically present here, we bring all the intentions of you, the ones who have brought us here, like the ones in your heart.

Christ is the Cornerstone of our lives, the Rock, which, especially at this time, gives us strength, in whom we put all of our confidence. Unlike the bad winegrowers in the parable we heard (Cf. Mt 21:33-46), we are now telling the Lord that we need Him, that without Him we cannot live, that He is our Rock and our fortress.

* The Lord is our Rock. We want to put our faith and our life in Him, in His Word. If we cannot physically come to the Shrine, or to any other Church to participate in the Mass we can nourish ourselves with Jesus by reading the word. We want to eat the "Bread of the Word of God".

Last Sunday, when we read the Gospel of the Transfiguration of Jesus (Cfr. Mt 17,1- 8), I reminded you that God the Father called us to "listen to his Son". Well, now, we have more time to be at home, to be with family. I invite you to read and "eat" in our homes the "Bread of God's Word".

* Jesus our cornerstone in these days we can also receive Him through spiritual communion. We want to grow in us the desire to receive Him, to have Him come into our hearts. On this Mass, we will pray that prayer of spiritual communion which says in one part: "come now spiritually to my heart and fill it with your peace and love. Yes, during this time of Lent, when we lack of the Eucharistic Bread, since many will not be able to receive Jesus in the Eucharist - the Lord wants to make us desire Him more and more, and this we can do, not only following this mass by streaming... but all the time: being at home, or working, or when I feel lonely, or worried, or if I'm afflicted by some disease. We only need to enter our heart Shrine, desire and ask that Jesus would flood us with his Mercy.

* Jesus, our Rock, in these days, is telling us: " Cheer up, it is I, do not be afraid" (Mt 14:27). Perhaps for all that we are living and what is happening, not only in Paraguay, but also all over the world, we may feel worry, fear, anxiety, and insecurity. Today, Jesus in his Gospel, in his Word, wants to say to us: Do not be afraid, I am the firm Rock, I am the Cornerstone of your lives, In Me, you must base your existence on this earth: not on the stock market, not on money, not on the material things, in ME. I am the rock that gives you safety and confidence. Our Blessed Mother, in this shrine teaches us to trust him fully. She, who in the Magnificat, sang that "The mercy of the Lord comes from generation

to generation to all who fear him" (cf. Lk 1:50), teaches us to trust blindly in the Goodness of the Father, who holds in His hands the destiny of every one of us... She teaches us to place ourselves with a child's heart in the hands of God the Father.

- Today, by chance, I received a video from a nun who lives in Italy. She was asking the children of her school to make cakes at home, with their moms and dads, - because they must be confined, you all know how it is in Italy. They wrote on the top of the cake these phrases: "I'm staying home"... "everything will end well". I thought when I saw the faces and smiles of children: I believe that this pandemic, with all its seriousness, must convert us and help us to be more like children, to put ourselves like children in the hands of the Father of Mercy.

* Dearly beloved. The temples, shrines, churches are open, although the masses are not celebrated in the presence of the faithful. But let us not forget, each of us is a living shrine, each of our families, are shrines, living temples, home shrines alive. The family is a true "domestic church" (cf. Lumen Gentium no. 11; Amoris Laetitia no. 86). That is why in this time, when we will be more at home (how are we asked to, in order to avoid the contagion and spread of the virus, and this is fundamental!), let's take advantage of it to strengthen together in faith and love: husband and wife, parents with their children, brothers and sisters with each other. Let us be more and better "a domestic church". Family: be a true and real domestic church! And not only during this time of pandemics, but always. Many of you have Home Shrines, let's make our shrine the center of our homes, the center of our families especially now!

* Dearly beloved, in times of trial, we have a very powerful weapon: prayer of the Holy Rosary (Let us remember the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin in Fatima, in the midst of the first World War: She asked that the Rosary be prayed for peace and conversion). I believe that this pandemic can be a call, to take our rosaries, not only me, or you, but all of us, whether here in Asunción, or in every corner of our Paraguayan homeland and the world, and pray with faith, as that beautiful and ancient prayer dedicated to Mary says: "Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God. Do not disdain the entreaties of we who are in trial, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

- Let us pray the rosary together, as a family, in our homes; let us pray the rosary everywhere, here in the sanctuary or in the temples, or walking, or working... let us pray for those who are sick with the coronavirus and other diseases; let us pray that this pandemic will cease; let us pray for the doctors and health care workers who are caring so selflessly for our sick brothers; let us pray for the civil and religious authorities who must take measures and decisions in these difficult times; let us pray for the poor and most vulnerable, for our elderly and children; let us pray for the whole Church in this particular Lenten desert that we are going through; let us pray for the sincere and deep conversion to God of each one of us and the whole world.

- Let us take very seriously the regulations and provisions that come to us from the governmental, civil and ecclesiastical authorities. We can control this pandemic with the powerful help of God, but also, if each one puts the best of himself, thinking of the common good, the good of another and not just himself. We all have to collaborate and support each other. If there is virus that we have to kill is the virus of selfishness! We all have to give something to get ahead...

- Mother, with the words of Father Joseph Kentenich, we ask you:
"Just as your Son healed, stilled hunger and comforted the sick while here on earth, go with him quietly through our midst, giving your blessing and helping us with the arm of your unlimited motherly power" (Heavenwards 507).

Fr. Martín Gómez A., Youth Shrine, Friday, March 13