

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In May of 1997, I was assigned to my first parish as a pastor in the Diocese of Sens Auxerre in France.

I was saddened by the religious indifferences these people had. Since it was 15 years since they had a regular pastor, only an occasional priest came to say Mass. Therefore, Mass was not important to them.

It's sad to say, but only two people attended my first weekend Mass and this scenario of saying that Mass in an almost empty church has remained with me ever since. During the Eucharist, I often closed my eyes and imagined the pews full with people but opening my eyes was a great disappointment.

Right now, I am closing my eyes to imagine your faces in front of me, filling our beautiful church. I hope it won't be long before I see you sitting in the pews in front of me.

Circumstances have changed dramatically over the past few weeks. People have been working from home; schools are no longer opened; grocery shelves are empty; socialization is minimal. I pray that you remain healthy and the days are numbered when, once again, I can open my eyes and see your faces and we all can greet one another in church as a congregation.

Back to the gospel... Jesus cured a blind man's sight and, yes, Jesus can also heal us.

My friend, Tico, from Tahiti told me a beautiful story of how he was cured from an incurable disease.

Tico was scared to have surgery that he badly needed and during every Eucharist, he prayed to Jesus from the bottom of his heart, "Lord say a word and I will be cured."

After a time, he went to visit his doctor and was surprised to hear that there was no sign of his disease; he was cured! A miracle! Tico shared his story with me with great emotion. We need to let Jesus act on behalf of our lives and believe that He can heal us, also.

In the Eucharist, Jesus invites us to a special meeting; a feast of love, where the food is hidden in the form of a small host. It reminds me of Marta Robin, who was a lady born in 1902 in France. She received an extraordinary gift. Marta did a lot for the new evangelization, but became paralyzed by a mysterious illness. Despite her immobility of being confined to a bed, she was able to give advice to the needy. She accepted all her suffering and love for Jesus and for sinners. Marta only received Holy Communion as food for over 50 years. She amazed the doctors, how someone could survive for over 50 years receiving only Holy Communion.

Does this surprise us? No, it shouldn't because Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats it will not be hungry." Jesus wants us to ask for help and He will never refuse us if we are perseverant and pray to Him. He waits every day, in our prayer, in the tabernacle, in the Eucharist, in confession. He keeps reaching out to us. Pray to Him; He will hear you.

I continue to keep you all in my prayers and am looking forward to being together with you soon.

Amen.