

The faithful are rising to the challenge



Well, now. These are certainly some different times. I normally travel a bit like a maniac. Because I have platforms to share news and commentary, I have long felt it a little bit of my responsibility to make sure I am seeing and hearing as much as possible. It's sometimes wearing for an introvert, but it's really an honor and a privilege to get to meet people and listen to them, tell a few of their stories and learn from them and share some of their wisdom. Even on a given day, the number of people I am able to interact with can be amazing – and sometimes overwhelming, but always blessings, even when things are unexpected and challenging and even painful.

Even when I am having a relatively simple day, the number of people I will pass in a commute or a walk between Mass and my office can be distressing. It's impossible not to see the suffering in people's eyes, even as they walk to whatever business they are getting to, as they swear on the phone, as they sit on the concrete, way too familiar with being ignored.

But now life is very different. Many of us are in self-quarantine and shelter-in-place scenarios of the sort I don't think we even considered would be a part of our lives a month ago. It's a bit stunning. For the first hours and days, I didn't even know who I was. While I constantly crave quiet, there seemed something so unjust about this, especially when I think about the people who don't have any semblance of it.

As I made the occasional phone call to get a 90-day-supply of medication, schedule a teledoc appointment and order a backup wifi device, representatives were uncharacteristically talkative about their lives. One woman with a chronic

condition shared her fears for her own health as her doctor told her there would be no visits indefinitely. She explained how every waking hour is about work because the demand is so great. She also shared her concern for her mental health as she lives alone in an apartment and really misses the freedom she was used to and the fellowship of people at work.

Another person helping me out said she had to go to the office because working from home wasn't possible. She assured me they were maintaining the 6-foot-distance rule, but the quivering in her voice made the worry obvious. And how about all those people who have been making deliveries for us? Along with the doctors, nurses and everyone on the frontlines of this coronavirus crisis, they are nowhere near feeling like they are living an extended snow day. There are teachers who are learning a new way to teach. And there are the families who are in close quarters, for no one knows how long, confronted, perhaps, with everything they have been avoiding. In some cases, all of the things that we used to do to feel like we had meaning and purpose are gone. Your success at work looks different now, and perhaps it's jarring.

Let's pray it all can be healing.

Isn't it something how home-schooling families have a whole new respect now that education is suddenly looking different in the United States? Priorities are changing. And some of what we are watching has caused a newfound respect for the value of all human life. Unless we are purposely doing reckless things, we are all innocents in the face of this coronavirus.

And isn't it amazing how we are coming together? Even if it is online, many people seem to be gathering for prayer. Priests are getting creative, prudently using their pastoral discretion to care for people in these challenging days. The drive-through confessions, the drive-in Eucharistic adoration! Jesus cannot be withheld, even as Masses are being offered

without congregations present and we can only spiritually receive Our Lord in the Eucharist.

God is present in these days. We must let him show us so that we can show him.

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