Voices of Sisters
Horizons
Coronavirus
Spirituality



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April 3, 2020

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I'm not going to lie. My levels of worry and stress are fairly high these days. As I sit to write this article, the state in which I live is entering week three of most people working from home and students not being in school. I am over a thousand miles away from my elderly father, who lives alone in a state that is not known for taking the pandemic very seriously. People I know are becoming ill without the ability to be tested. Many others I know are immunocompromised and concerned.

On a larger scale, I worry about children who are at home in unsafe environments because of lack of resources, addiction, neglect or abuse. For so many children, school was their safe haven. I worry about immigrants and refugees who may fear being tested because of their legal status. I worry about those who live paycheck to paycheck who will not have those paychecks for many weeks or months. People in rural areas that were already suffering from a lack of health care options. Those on the front lines, health care workers, grocery store employees and other workers who put their lives at risk every day. My list of worries is long. I'm sure yours is, too.

And so what are we to do? Or, better yet, how and who are we to be?

Last Friday, Pope Francis led us in praying for the world in his *Urbi et Orbi* blessing. And what an amazing prayer that was. The Gospel used for the prayer was Mark 4:35-41 — the Calming of a Storm at Sea. In his meditation on this passage, Francis stated:

> Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting in you. This Lent your call reverberates urgently: "Be converted!", "Return to me with all your heart" (Joel 2:12). You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing. It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others. ...
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> Faith begins when we realize we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we flounder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives.

> Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God's strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.
>
> The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith.

Last week, there was a meme going around on social media that stated, "This is the Lentiest Lent I have ever Lented." This Lent, more than ever, we are being called to a faith that purifies. We are stripping away so much — social interaction, physical touch, Eucharist — we are left with the presence of God in our solidarity, words of encouragement, our shared humanity, the coming of spring, phone calls, video chats, emails, and the care and concern we show to one another.

This does not take away worry, necessarily. However, worry does not have to lead to hopelessness or despair. The worry we carry can lead to empathy, kindness, gentleness, and selflessness.

If we allow it, grace will conquer hopelessness. We are an Easter people. Yes, I realize it's still Lent. But we know how this story ends. Life and love have the final word. Death and darkness are not the end of the story. And we do not walk this journey alone. We cannot lose sight of that. It is what will get us through this time — together.

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