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The tree survives because it has adapted to the intruder — the cables. (Sue Paweski)



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Every morning, I wake thanking God for another day. Then, seconds later, I remember COVID-19, the social divisions in the country, racism, people without jobs, children going to bed hungry, the seething violence in our world, climate change that is wreaking havoc globally. I pray and try to focus on my ministry and the good work of dedicated women and men, of all races and faiths who work for others. And I am humbled.

During this strange time of the coronavirus, lives have been transformed in ways few imagined would ever happen in their lifetime. I have friends who have put their energies into gardening and raising vegetables. Some are working at home and juggling their children's at-home schooling.

The small gatherings at church are carefully monitored. There is no singing, yet we speak a masked, "Hello! How are you!" and are grateful to be in church again. Grocery store trips are quick and focused. I don't linger and wonder if I should purchase an item. I have a list and I know where to find what I need. No sauntering about.

In March, when we were first alerted to wear masks and distance, I drove around to family and friends' houses with "drive-by" waving. It was fun. Now it's not.

There is no thought of life returning to pre-pandemic times in a year or so. There is an awareness of the fragility of life. This awareness is making an indelible mark on our souls. I wonder how our lives will continue to be changed by the pandemic.

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Weather permitting, I take a walk around my neighborhood every day. I miss going to the gym and I need the exercise, and the walk grounds me. A walk around the neighborhood is familiar and gives me a sense of belonging. One day, I was sad and depressed because I missed seeing my family. I was saying a rosary to help calm me.

As I crossed the street, I looked up and saw a tree that I had passed many times before, yet I hadn't looked up at its unusual shape. It was the shape of the tree that revitalized my hope in these very difficult times.

Take a good look at it. The uninvited saws of the electric company had cut off branches so that the electrical cables could make their way through the tree. Cables interfered with the branches of the tree; yet that tree grew around the cables! It prospered. Its leaves cover the branches.



Just as my beautiful tree had to accommodate the cables to survive and thrive, so we must transform ourselves to live fully. (Sue Paweski)

The tree survives because it has adapted to the intruder — the cables. The tree is not completely altered; it has accommodated an uninvited situation. And, yes, that tree spoke to my heart. People can make changes and alter aspects of their lives because Creation is meant to survive if it is able to adapt to change.

The first step is acknowledging the need for change. When we resist the signs of the times, we leave ourselves vulnerable to the changes that will inevitably take place. We are left coping with situations rather than acknowledging the inevitable and working to avoid the dire consequences.

The climate has changed. Witness the fires, the hurricanes, the drastic changes in the seasonal temperatures — and some still deny and even exacerbate the world calamity! Reflect on the U.S. leaving the Paris Climate Agreement and the deliberate burning of the Amazon forests, the "lungs" of Earth. We are called to care for Creation because we are part of Creation. When we ignore the crisis of climate change and the pandemic, we jeopardize our existence.

We can change the trajectory of the pandemic and the change in climate by acknowledging the situation and then taking the steps needed to work through the problems.

Jesus' parable of the new wineskins calls us to rethink who we are in this different world. We are challenged to be "new" as a result of the pandemic, and in the face of the dramatic and sobering realities of climate change. We are called to look at our lives through a different lens. Our sheltering at home gives us the opportunity to reflect. How can we adapt to where we are now?

Jesus' message is to live in our world imbued with sharing love, mercy and justice to everyone. How are we living this now? Will we insist on putting new wine into old wineskins that cannot accommodate the new wine? Our lives have been altered, changed and turned around as a result of the pandemic and climate change. Our new reality cannot fit into our former modes of living.

Just as my beautiful tree had to accommodate the cables to survive and thrive, so we must transform ourselves to live fully. We have the ability, because of the grace of God, to bring a fresh perspective to our world.

Let us use this time of isolating to open ourselves to accepting the transformation that is taking place. We will need to grow in different ways to maintain our integrity. My tree attests to the truth of survival and transformation. The tree reveals the power to adapt to new realities. Our personal transformations can alter our world to grow and thrive in a new reality.