News
Opinion





by Stephanie Yeagle

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We are in a time of self-quarantine, shutdowns and lockdowns and social distancing. As we isolate ourselves amid the coronavirus pandemic that is bringing sweeping changes to our daily routines, how do we find hope and connection? NCR asked readers to share a story of a kind deed they have witnessed or participated in. We also asked readers how their faith helped them to deal with the crisis. Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

I am a member of Nextdoor, where people can email each other for many different things. I have been delighted when I have read so many messages where people write something to this effect, "I am Susie, I live in this suburb, let me know if you want groceries or milk. I shall go to the supermarket and leave the goods you want at the front door." Someone left a note of the ninth floor of an apartment building saying something to this effect, "I live in Apt. X, give me a call or knock, if you want something."

In what ways, if any, has your faith helped you to deal with the crisis?

I miss going to daily Mass and being a pastoral visitor at the hospital, but I have more time to (hopefully) listen to God and pray to his mother.

GABRIELLE JARVIS

Canberra, Australia

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This morning, as I retrieved my newspaper from the driveway, a couple passed by walking their dog. We greeted each other and the woman asked if I needed help getting groceries. I assume they are neighbors although I don't know them. This act of kindness lifted my spirits! She doesn't know me and yet reached out to offer help.



In what ways, if any, has your faith helped you to deal with the crisis?

Our son, who has a pacemaker, called last night and sounded tired and sick. What a worry! Could he have coronavirus? This morning he sounded much better. I prayed when I went to bed until I finally fell asleep. Thank God I have my faith to help in this time of such fear and worry.

MARGIE LACHMAN

Beaverton, Oregon

***

My neighborhood in Seattle, Washington, has an email group through which we neighbors communicate even though we don't all know each other personally. I think this recent exchange speaks for itself:

On Mar 10, 2020, Shelley wrote:

Anyone in need of some toilet paper? I have some extra and am willing to share. It pains me to think that people may not be able to get it.

Shelley

On Mar 10, 2020, Jan wrote:

Hi Shelley — I'm locked down in Italy, where I work part of the year, and I'm in quite an emotional state watching this crisis unfold not only around me in Rome, but also in Seattle, which is home. I just wanted to say that the generosity your message brought tears to my eyes. The only way through this is together. You are a wonderful neighbor.

Sincerely,

Jan

JAN VALLONE

Rome, Italy

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As parish staff, I called upon an elderly woman yesterday. I asked her how she was doing. She told me that she was watching Mass on television. And she said that her neighbor bought her groceries. When she offered to pay, he refused to take any money from her!

JOHN SIMPSON

Seattle, Washington

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My grandnieces' mom did a remarkable thing. She wanted to help her friends' catering business, which had to cancel all events at short notice for who knows how

long. She also saw a need for feeding seniors who are home bound.

She came up with a wonderful idea to have the community sponsor healthy meals, prepared by the caterer, and delivered free to seniors. She used social media to put out the call and had a good response. She brought together a crew of healthy workers and volunteers, contributors who sponsor meals and seniors in our community.

In this way, she saved her friend's business and has been feeding some of our vulnerable elders. She also gave many people in our community a way to serve and be included in a positive response to this crisis. One of the grateful recipients is my dad, who is 88-years-old and has dementia. All I can say is wow, and thank you!

In what ways, if any, has your faith helped you to deal with the crisis?

Pope Francis put out the call for people worldwide to pray the rosary March 19. I spread the word among our parish by text and message. It was wonderful to belong to a greater prayer community, even electronically. Many people I contacted expressed gratitude for being connected and being part of this communal uplifting in prayer. Our diocese had just called off all Masses and events two days before. Now some of us would like to set up an online parish prayer group.

ALYCE DODGE

Honolulu, Hawaii

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I am an 85-year-old widow living in an apartment on my own. My family lives near me.

Two days after the coronavirus became known, I received an email from a neighboring apartment offering any help I might need with shopping or any other need. Immediately this offer was repeated by six other apartment owners. This made me feel so secure and happy with my situation.

All over Ireland, people have rallied round each other and I get happy emails from friends all through the country. We are a great nation!

CLARE HUNT

Dublin, Ireland

***

A couple in their 80s are regularly delivering Meals on Wheels in an area where driving long distances is a way of life. They have adapted to the pandemic by calling ahead and hanging the package on the door handle while knocking. They will stand at a distance if the recipients wish to have a short visit.

In what ways, if any, has your faith helped you to deal with the crisis?

Praying vespers with an emphasis in prayer for the safety of all the caregivers and audibly asking the Holy Spirit to increase our hope.

Also talking freely within our community (three senior adults) about our anxiety and reminding one another about the basic issues of frequent handwashing, reminding one another not to touch our faces and keeping surfaces clean.

(Fr.) MICHAEL CHAMPLIN, OP

Webster, Wisconsin

***

I live in a 55-plus community of independent living elders. As our community is located on a golf course, I witnessed a husband and wife driving their golf cart through the community spreading cheer. The wife used soap bubbles, a smile and a cheery word to lift the spirits of those of us who were out walking in the sunshine. This act of kindness really lifted my spirits.

In what ways, if any, has your faith helped you to deal with the crisis?

"Where two or three are gathered together, there I am in the midst of them." These words of Jesus have provided me comfort when I gather together with my elderly neighbor to pray with others attending an online Mass. This way of Mass participation feeds us both.

JERILYN E. FELTON

Tigard, Oregon

Advertisement

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I am an elderly widow and alone; I have not been out of the house for two full weeks. I actually love the solitude, as it gives me uninterrupted time to do my job: pray for my family and the world and give thanks to God for everything.

However, I am apart from my six adult children and their families. This morning, my son in the Washington, D.C., area called to check on me, and he felt inspired to suggest that we do the morning prayer and day's Gospel readings.

We began with morning prayer and then read the Mass readings for the day; it was a wonderful bonding experience and uplifted us both. The choice of this early morning exchange was so much more calming and beautiful than the usual go-to-the-bad-news. And it has connected our family; we'll continue this and see if we can't have a family meeting online for morning prayer and the Mass readings.

RUTH D. LASSETE

Carmel, Indiana

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Yesterday, as my husband, other volunteers and I were working at the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry, two cars pulled into our parking lot. We met them at the door, asked them not to come in and then asked what they needed. They said they did not need food but would like to make a donation and handed us a $1,000 check. They were from the Wakefield United Methodist Church. They wanted to help and knew we already had a process. I asked them to pray for us, but instead the minister lead a prayer for us all. It was a miraculous moment. We, Christians, were joined together in Christ.

In what ways, if any, has your faith helped you to deal with the crisis?

I now spend daily time in adoration in addition to my usual rosary and prayers. This, along with serving the poor, has given me calm. I have not felt such joy since I was on a mission trip to Honduras. We must trust in the Lord and share our love.

CAROL MINETTE MILLER

Wakefield, Michigan

***

We frequently eat meals out, and due to local restrictions can't. So, I have been writing greeting cards, putting in $40 in cash and giving them to my favorite restaurants to give to affected waitstaff and kitchen workers anonymously. It's modest financially but also hopefully encouraging. I have also challenged friends who are able to do the same.

BRADLEY A. PRITTS

Ann Arbor, Michigan

***

I hesitated about going to the grocery today; but I needed milk and a few other things. I left my apartment in a distracted frame of mind and when I got the milk and other items and went to the cashier line, there was a woman ahead of me with a loaded cart.

Then I touched my pocket and realized I had left my wallet at home! I asked the cashier if I could stow my items under her counter and she said yes. I went to put items back in my fabric bag when suddenly, the woman ahead of me in line said she would pay for my groceries so I didn't have to go home.

After thanking her, I asked for her address and she said no, Then I said I will pay it forward and she said good. I plan to give some money to our local homeless shelter.

MARY J. PFANDER

Kettering, Ohio

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We are in our 80s and live on a farm. Our neighbors live about 1/4 mile away. Last week, they called and asked if we needed anything and came by later with the grocery bag, which they hung on the outside door.

We are thankful for the telephone, the internet and television. We exchange regular calls and emails. I remind everyone that it's the love of our families, our friends and especially our God that will bring us through this. I pray that families take time to enjoy being together, playing games, sharing cooking and clean-up chores and telling stories.

In what ways, if any, has your faith helped you to deal with the crisis?

We know our God is always with us, leading and guiding and loving us. It is in being kind to each other that we experience God's love and care.

JUDY SCHINDLER

Hector, Minnesota

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After being forced into home isolation from family, I started this website — https://whosneedinghelp.com/. I spread acts of kindness daily while keeping myself upbeat. We're giving away all we can and the website is nothing but creating acts of kindness and spreading how to help.

In what ways, if any, has your faith helped you to deal with the crisis?

My believe in God has, without a doubt, brought me through this very trying time. I have severe epilepsy and am a three-time cancer survivor, my adoptive daughter has severe autism and epilepsy and my wife is sick with endometriosis and complications. Our faith is our power.

MIKE ROBINSON

Santa Barbara, California

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