News
Opinion





by Stephanie Yeagle

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syeagle@ncronline.org
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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.

A kind man in our neighborhood Walmart had two large bottles of hand sanitizer. He cheerfully gave me one to purchase.

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

It is helping me to take my attention off of myself and concentrate on other's needs and be creative about ways to serve. Also, it's helping me go deeper to pray and act to work on root causes.

ALOMA MARQUIS

Nacogdoches, Texas

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A group called NYC Shut It Down has set up a volunteer operated free food delivery program in New York City. it has been great to see secular and people of faith like myself, to help others in need. We have been delivering food and groceries to many families in need.

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

I am Catholic and I also follow the religions of my black and indigenous ancestors. My faith in God always inspires me to love others, especially those who are in need.

FELIX CEPEDA

Bronx, New York



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One of the daily Mass attendees at St. Irenaeus Parish in Park Forest, Illinois, has started a daily connection with others. She asked us if we had petitions we want to pray for. Right away, folks emailed her with their requests. We now have the family connection that was developed at weekday Mass to rely on during this time of being in the house. What a loving family I have here. At 87, it is so important to know they are thinking of me.

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

Lent was the perfect time for this to happen. I had made the effort to be humble and now we don't have a choice.

THERESE GOODRICH

Park Forest, Illinois

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A few weeks ago, I ventured out to my local grocery store to buy some supplies for my family. We were bracing ourselves to be at home for several weeks. It had only been a week or so since we had all become familiar with terms like "flatten the curve" and "social distancing," but my neighbors and I already walked through the store afraid to touch anything and, sadly, afraid of one another. It was overwhelming. When I finally made it to the checkout, I observed an elderly woman try repeatedly to pay for her groceries. Each time, the clerk responded: "I'm sorry,

your card has been declined." The woman in line in front of me, and behind the elderly woman, swiftly shoved her own credit card into the card reader. As soon as the elderly woman left, the woman who paid for the groceries turned back to me and said: "In times like these, you just never know what someone's situation might be."

KATE MITCHELL

Brookline, Massachusetts

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Three experiences stand out. First, it was the day I learned the small business I work for faced a decision: lay off five employees or ask everyone to reduce hours and pay 20%. The 20% solution was chosen. That day, my husband walked to the end of the street to get our mail. An older woman, Betty, whose husband died last year, was in her driveway. Betty shared she had sold her home and moved into a retirement center. Betty had rooms of furniture in her garage and house. She asked if we wanted any furniture. This past July, our daughter had moved to Baltimore with her bedroom furniture leaving her bedroom empty. Thanks to Betty, the vacant room is now outfitted with a double bed, dresser with mirror, high chest of drawers, night stand and two lamps. Second, we started "happy hour" outside on the driveway with social distancing — people seated on blankets or chairs — greeting neighbors walking dogs, babies in strollers, children on bicycles and scooters, or simply out exercising. Third, before our small faith community began online liturgy using Zoom, I scheduled an open Zoom meeting to enable anyone who was not familiar with Zoom to connect, confirm they had audio and video and practice interacting online. We ended up with 38 people filled with gratitude being church in a new way.

KATHLEEN GIBBONS SCHUCK

Blue Bell, Pennsylvania

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Our winter in Florida was cut short by our desire to be near our primary care doctors and our children and grandchildren in New England. Our northern next-door neighbor, Jim, took a day off from work to pick us up at the airport. He was willing to give up a day's pay to pick us up because "It was something I wanted to do." Phone calls and texts to and from family members and friends have been blessings in

abundance.

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

Daily morning meditation has focused on portions of the daily Mass Scriptures with prayer for those with the coronavirus, those who have succumbed and their loved ones and care providers.

RAYMOND A. LAMBERT

Clearwater, Florida

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I have been hiring four students from a family to do yard work on my 2 1/2 acres. They worked two days for me recently, keeping social distancing. I asked if they could return the next day as rains were arriving soon. Their mom texted me that the family had a dinner commitment and could not come. Instead, she would like to gift me with the family of five coming one weekend for 1 1/2 hours to do yard work. This would be in thanksgiving for me being kind in hiring her children and honoring God because there was no Mass to attend.

PATRICIA J. COLLINS

Lebanon, Oregon

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A friend of mine is a successful developer who owns a number of commercial retail properties. He has told his small tenants that they do not have to pay rent for the month of April and for tenants who are part of national franchises, he will match dollar for dollar any amount of help the national company provides.

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

Faith is a journey that is shared with others. That is what community means. It is what gives me hope.

JAMES PURCELL

Los Gatos, California

[James Purcell is an NCR board member.]

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A warm loaf of bread, fresh from the oven dropped on my porch, went far to making me feel part of a loving community. I have been sending humorous notes to people I know can't leave their senior living places.

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

I know that God loves us all the time. Having this be in Lent leading to Easter and with the whole world coming back to life, puts the connection of everything into high relief.

CAROL A. PAROWSKI

Richfield, Pennsylvania

***

A staff member of a local homeless shelter was out shopping for the needs of the shelter guests, and as you can imagine, had a large order. At checkout, she was informed there was a one item limit because of short supply. But, one by one, everyone in the checkout lines purchased every item in her cart for the homeless shelter and they got what they needed.

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

Nothing can defeat faith — not isolation, not a limit of one item purchase, nothing!

MARGE MATTICE

Green Bay, Wisconsin



(Courtesy photo/Franciscan Sr. Fran Glowinski)

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I take a walk each day with the eyes of my heart open to see signs of both spring and kindness. One day, I saw lovely encouraging signs in windows, a table with five planters awaiting whatever they would be host to. Chalked on a sidewalk was "Enjoy your walk" with a sunflower. Neighbors have been encouraged to put stuffed animals in their windows for children to "find" as they walk. This child in her 70s loves seeing them, too.

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

Our shared faith alone, more than anything else, grounds me in compassion, contemplation, patience and working for justice. And keeps my soul sane and gentle in the face of so much hatred, ignorance and misunderstanding.

(Sr.) FRAN GLOWINSKI, OSF

Wheaton, Illinois

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I have been very sensitive to the suffering and dying of COVID-19 patients. I couldn't think of any way to help people already admitted to hospitals. One can't even get in to visit them, of course.

So I called the local fire department, which employs many first responder paramedics to take people to local emergency rooms. I got the department receptionist and asked her what supplies the fire department needs. She thought a minute and answered, "We need toilet paper."

She and I arranged that I would order toilet paper from to deliver it directly to her at the fire department. I am so happy to able to help!

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

I pray the rosary plus my own intentions. I emerge with clarity, better moral understanding and deeper faith. I thank God for this.

PAULA LENCZYCKI

Grayslake, Illinois

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Our confirmation and first Eucharist candidates have been coloring in the wonderful image of Our Lady of Refuge that Oblate Br. Mickey O'Neill McGrath sent out. They

are sending it, along with a note of gratitude, to all those people who work in the health care profession. They are being posted in hospitals and in homes. It has been an inspiration to read all the wonderful letters and responses this has generated.

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

I am a lay pastoral minister. My faith enables me to know that in all suffering, God is with us and gives us not only strength but other sometimes surprising gifts — insights, experiences and meaningful encounters with others.

CHRISTINE WAY SKINNER

Newmarket, Ontario

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