News
Spirituality





by Stephanie Yeagle

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syeagle@ncronline.org
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NCR recently asked how to keep spiritually grounded in a pandemic crisis. Readers responded with how they deepen their faith life and spiritual practice by discovering new prayers and rituals or participating in livestreamed events. You can share your response by filling out this form. Answers have been edited for length and clarity.

As in the olden days, we take refuge in prayers as only God can be our source of strength in these trying times. Our parish has started a novena to St. Roche, just before the community quarantine was pronounced. These days we are doing it in our own houses. Daily at noon and at 8 p.m., bells are rung and everyone is invited to pray the *Oratio Imperata*. Every morning, our parish priest and his associate pastor goes around town to have the Eucharistic procession while the rosary is being said. Our townfolks responded by lighting candles in their windows (as in the days of old). Very recently, I have started to bring out the statues of St. Roche, St. Anthony and Our Lady of Lourdes and place them in the window fronting the street from 6-7 p.m. It is good that national networks in the Philippines bring live coverage of daily Masses just like EWTN.

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

The petition at the end of every novena is coming very true to me: If this is God's will and if this will bring good to our spiritual lives. In God alone is our strength; in God alone we find refuge.

APOLINARIO JOHN BOCAR

Eastern Visayas, Philippines

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For the last few weeks, my family has been hunkered down at home (I am a nurse practitioner in the Philadelphia area and have been working three days per week, some of those days in the COVID testing tent). On Sundays, we gather to share Liturgy of the Word and we conclude with a hymn. I read Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr's daily meditations which have, for me, shed beautiful insight into the meaning of the current suffering. The Taize community in France is now offering their evening prayer service online. I plan to join that daily, as I find Taize music very prayerful.

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

The current crisis began unfolding in my community right at the beginning of Lent. For me, it has made this Lenten season more real. Living a more simple, ascetic life (albeit one that is forced on me at this point) has removed some of the distractions of "normal" life and has given me more time to focus on God. This current pandemic is a reminder of my mortality. I am grateful every day for my life and my health, and am reminded of, and comforted by, my complete reliance on God's grace.

MIA HOLMAN

Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

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My husband and I meditate with a candle between us every morning and at the end of our silent prayer of meditation, we say our petitions and bless each other by extending our hands in turn to each other. This ritual keeps us from feeling alone and afraid and very much connected to the Holy Spirit.

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

Our faith in a loving God has helped us to stay anchored and still. I like to say the blessing at the end of mass during my day, "The Lord is with me, and also with you."

DIANE HEWITT

San Pedro, California



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Now that we are sheltered in place, I have been attending livestreaming Mass every day at Don Bosco Marian Shrine where I grew up. Having moved away 30-plus years ago, this is familiar and comforting. While I miss the physical communion, I'm very grateful for the spiritual communion.

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

No fear. "Be still and know that I am God" tells me God's got my back and, no matter what, we're good to go. Of course, using the good sense God gave me to follow hygienic practices and professionals' instructions plays an important part, too!

VALERIE POTTER

Crystal, Minnesota

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As an oblate of St. Meinrad Archabbey, I of course am comforted by the knowledge that the monks are praying for me. I have also found the Liturgy of the Hours to be a real treasure.

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

Since the Liturgy of the Hours is based on the church calendar, it helps me experience the cycle of birth, death and resurrection through the year and, given the different character of the various psalms, the smaller cycles of birth, death, resurrection, desolation and consolation in the hours, days and weeks. It has made me more keenly aware that nothing this side of heaven lasts forever.

BOB MISKELL

Fishers, Indiana

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The Prayer of St. Francis de Sales (Patron of Journalists):

Be at Peace

Do not look forward in fear to the changes of life;

rather look to them with full hope as they arise.

God, whose very own you are,

will deliver you from out of them.

He has kept you hitherto,

and He will lead you safely through all things;

and when you cannot stand it,

God will bury you in his arms.

Do not fear what may happen tomorrow;

the same everlasting Father who cares for you today

will take care of you then and everyday.

He will either shield you from suffering,

or will give you unfailing strength to bear it.

Be at peace,

and put aside all anxious thoughts and imagination.

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

I see my six siblings drawing on our Catholic faith in the same way. It's showing me that it's always there, even if we rarely show/see the outward signs.

JAN PENLESKY

Waukesha, Wisconsin

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I am a practioner of Fr. Thomas Keating's Centering Prayer which I do twice a day for 20 minutes. Sitting with God in silence has quieted my mind and body of unnecessary anxiety. I have been doing this for 11 years. NCR, America magazine, U.S. Catholic, Word of the Day, Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr's daily meditations, Monasteries of the Heart, Call to Action, FutureChurch, Franciscan Media and Fr. Henri Nouwen, all provide uplifting and thought provoking articles, meditations and current updates on world affairs and also include podcasts. I am looking forward the live streaming of Holy Week and Easter. Many of the groups I used to attend in person are now moving to Zoom meetings to maintain the connection. I walk every day in my neighborhood paying attention to Mother Nature and I find myself taking pictures of flora, fauna, clouds, sun and moon. Everything in nature seems to be speaking to me in a very positive and loving way that I have not been aware of before.

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

I am not afraid. My faith is strong that all will be well. I actually expect to live a long life. My mother was 93 and her sister was 95 when they died. I have always talked to myself. I still do, several years ago someone told me that actually I was talking to God because God is always present and listening. I like that concept, so I now know that God is always with me, listening and guiding me. I know I am never alone.

CAROLE MORALES

El Cajon, California

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I attend Mass through YouTube. The Mass is celebrated beautifully and allows me the opportunity to listen to the readings of the day and a brief reflection provided by

the celebrant. I also receive updates from Contemplative Outreach and Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr.

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

I keep asking myself, "what is God's message" in these days? What am I being asked to do? And when possible, I send spiritual messages out to my religious community and my friends on Facebook.

(Sr.) SUSAN MCCARTHY, RDC

Mt. Vernon, New York

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Reading and re-reading the Psalms 23 helps me maintain perspective. Reciting it gives me calm when anxiety wants to dominate my thinking.

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

It hasn't. The church is a theological disaster and its leadership in the U.S. is a shameful example of non-leadership. Thank goodness for Pope Francis!

GEORGE A. LANE

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

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It has been especially comforting as a daily Mass attendee to have one of our parish priests offer Mass from our sanctuary each day. It has made me realize how much I have taken this privilege for granted. I have also been able to pray the rosary in a relaxed way without the usual madness of rushing somewhere. I have resurrected some of Archbishop Fulton Sheen's talks. I forgot how powerful and funny he was. God has slowed me down and in the quiet, I have been drawn closer to him in ways I had forgotten.

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

My faith tells me that his grace is enough for me and I place my trust in him rather than give in to fear.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina

This story appears in the **Tell Us** feature series. View the full series.