Opinion
Spirituality



(Unsplash/Jordan Sanchez)



by Christian Mocek

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I have a new addition to my nightly routine. After putting our son to bed, I venture back outside to gather up his toys from the day to put them in the garage.

Better parents than I would have their child do it — but in these days of pandemic, I've learned well the meaning behind, "choose your battles."

It's an Examen of sorts, gathering the remnants of the day and putting them back in their proper place: I remember my short temper when playing that game; I remember the way Simon cackled as we kicked the soccer ball around the front yard; I remember the new neighbor we met as I put away his bike that he took on yet another hour-long walk around the neighborhood.

Quarantine has been an unexpected spiritual practice in so many ways. It has offered me ample chances to practice my patience, ample chances to practice gratitude and ample chances to join in a sort of spiritual solidarity with those who experience isolation, loneliness and hardship when times are normal.

It has also, I believe, made me a better husband and father. I hope that I am more patient, attentive, physically and emotionally present. It has also made me quite aware of my faults when it comes to those two roles.

In addition to new routines, there have been many revelations along the way. I have learned that sometimes you just have to ask for help and also have the grace to receive that help. Because my wife, Gillian, has a chronic lung disease, and is now — much to our joy and excitement — 14 weeks pregnant, I have not been able to go about my life as I usually do.

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There have been angels surrounding us during this. Friends and neighbors who do our shopping, have meals delivered to us, drop off other supplies and overall look out for us in so many ways. On Good Friday, a neighbor hid eggs in our yard for Simon to find, and on Easter morning, another neighbor dropped off an Easter basket on our front porch.

We have been enveloped in kindness and love. I know we are lucky. And I know there are many who need that support and are not receiving it.

But the most important lesson I've learned is that there is much one could do with their worry. If anything, quarantine has taught me that worry doesn't necessarily lead to hopelessness and inaction. But it can and perhaps should lead to the opposite. It can bring new routines, new ways of living, of being together and of helping one another.



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Because the truth is we are living in a difficult time. And I hope that when this is over, we can say it was hard. I hope we can say we were afraid. That we were anxious. That we would rather never go through it again.

I hope we can say that even though we were anxious and scared that we did the best we could. Because even if our best is baking a meal for a neighbor, dropping a note to a friend, calling our elders or saying a prayer for one in need — that's good enough. That's better than we were before. And better than we were before is where we want to end up when this is all over.

Every story has a beginning, middle and end. And though we are unsure which chapter we are on now, there will be an end. And when the end comes, I hope we weep for those we lost and continue this new way of being together in their name.

But for now, as the chapters go on, I'll continue to pick up my son's toys every night and think about our day. Hopefully each day is a little better, filled with a little more patience, a little more joy and a little less frustration.

And eventually day by day my life — our lives — will look better and more connected than did before. And that will be the best we could have done for those we lost much too soon.

[Christian Mocek is the director of annual giving at St. Meinrad, a Benedictine monastery, seminary and school of theology. He lives in New Albany, Indiana, with his wife and son.]

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