

BRING FAITH TO LIFE. FIND LIFE IN FAITH

Impact

DO NOT BE AFRAID. BE PRESENT.

Every person is precious in the eyes of God.

June, 2020

Have you noticed? The longer we have sheltered in place, alone or with family, the more we have recognized our need for others. We long for a loving embrace, friendly handshake, quiet conversation, or shared experience at a concert or ball game with hundreds or thousands. In our often-individualistic, self-reliant culture, we have suddenly realized that we are not meant to be alone.

Perhaps being forced to stay at home has led us to understand that one of the greatest gifts we can give or

receive is presence, the simple act of being with another - family, friends, our faith community, or those who are most vulnerable. Even in this time when we maintain physical distance from one another, we can and must be present.

We may not be able to receive Christ's Eucharistic presence at this time, yet the Lord is still with us. And we can offer Christ's presence to others through our presence with them.

EVEN ALL THE HAIRS ON YOUR HEAD ARE COUNTED. SO DO NOT BE AFRAID.

It may feel odd to think about presence when we are physically absent from so many whom we love and miss. Yet, how creative we have become in being present to one another at this time! We know in our hearts this is essential. Being with and for others is what we all need. It is the way God created us, we who were created in the image of God who in his triune nature is relational.

Driveway visits, virtual social time, fresh-baked bread left on the doorstep with a handwritten note, a long conversation on the phone or video call – this is how we are present to one another right now, even as we hope for a time in the future when we can linger with that loving embrace for which we long.

In the gospel passage we hear on June 21, Jesus is preparing to send the Twelve out on his mission of love, to be present

to those they encounter. They are sent to heal, forgive, and share the good news of the coming of God's kingdom. The mission has its risks, of course. They will face rejection, persecution, and hate. Jesus tells them, and us, that there is no need to fear bodily harm, we should only be alarmed by that which can kill the soul.

We need not fear because we are precious in the eyes of God. This seems an especially appropriate message for us to hear this month. There is much suffering and death in our midst. Many are weary of the separation, worried about loss of jobs, grieving the death of loved ones. Jesus speaks to us today. Do not be afraid.

Recognizing that we are "fearfully, wonderfully made," the gift of self, our presence, is a true sign of the care and love of God for each of us. That gift cannot be diminished over time.

Do not be afraid. Be present to others. Every person is precious in the eyes of God, including you.

TAKE A CHANCE. START NOW. PUT GOD FIRST.

Jesus has a challenging message for us to hear today: put God first. (See Mt 10:37-42, the Gospel for June 28) Jesus tells the apostles to love him more than their father, mother, or children. That sounds harsh. Extreme. And in some ways, it is. Discipleship is an extreme way of life. And an extremely meaningful way to live. There is deep wisdom in Jesus' words. "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Mt 10: 39)

Putting God first immediately sets into motion a re-ordering of our lives. The things that are most important come first, and the ways in which we use our time and resources are a sign of what really matters, who really matters, in our lives. Jesus does not want us to ignore our family or friends, but wants our relationships and all that we do to be rooted in our loving relationship with God.

There is more. Jesus wants us to live for God and for others. Our relationship with God will become the filter through which we determine our priorities. Isn't this what has been so challenging in the need to stay at home, maintain social distance, wear masks, and take precautions in the ways we interact with others? We do this in order to protect the most vulnerable among us, and not overwhelm our hospitals and medical providers. We "lose" freedom of movement for the sake of others, and in doing so we "find" life, the self-giving way of life to which Christ calls.



IMPACT THIS MONTH

Renew your resolve to put God first in your life.

Invite the Holy Spirit to inspire you to re-order your life so that God becomes the filter through which you determine your priorities.

Risk giving of yourself for others.

Trust that the Lord is with you as you live more fully for God and others.

FAITH 2020

by Leisa Anslinger

We were recently video-chatting with our daughter and grandchildren. They had gone to a park for a hike, and Patrick was disappointed that he couldn't play on the playground. He sighed and said, "I just want it to be normal again!" I think many of us can relate to five-year-old Patrick. We just want it to be "normal" again. People talk about the "new normal" or, as I recently heard, the "now normal."

We might yearn for what seemed normal a few months ago and yet, we know that life has changed and will not return to the way it was. Even when the pandemic passes, which at some point it will, things will not suddenly return to their pre-pandemic state. Part of our mental, emotional, and spiritual adjustment must be to accept this reality. Change is part of life. And that is especially true for we who follow Jesus Christ. The life of discipleship is by its very nature a life of change, of on-going conversion, of becoming more like the One whom we know as Lord and friend.

This has led me to appreciate that life should ever be "normal," if normal means complacently accepting things as they are. Just as Ordinary Time is not intended to be "ordinary," but rather is ordinal, counted time, marked by the mystery of God's love and our call to discipleship, every day is meant to be sacred, holy, holding the profound possibility of God's grace. May this life, marked with the fullness of God's love and grace, be our normal, now and into eternity.

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.