

How are you getting on in self-isolation?

Are you finding time to be with God? Although I know he is always with me I am now much more consciously aware of his presence and support - but that wasn't the case in the early days of lockdown.

My initial response was to rush around being very busy - really a continuation, or more so, of my pre-Covid-19 lifestyle : Wanting to serve others; needing their company - my way of compensating for the loneliness and alone-ness of 10 years of widowhood; and wanting to feel that I still had a purpose. My to-do list was full of 'oughts' and 'musts'. I was reminded again of my own mortality and found time to make sure all my personal papers were in order.

But having done all I could in the outside world I then as an 'over 70' did follow Government guidelines to stay at home. I felt guilty that I wasn't pulling my weight, that I had left others to put themselves at risk.

So then there were the 'oughts' and 'musts' and then 'really do I have to' of life at home. There was no one but myself to make up my 'to do ' list each day and check that it was done.

Then Easter was suddenly upon me. I normally like to immerse myself at Easter and travel the road with Christ to the Cross - increasing my Bible study and prayer through Lent and especially in Holy Week. But the Lent course I was leading was shutdown just when it had started and I was still busy with outside pressures in Holy Week. I came to Easter unprepared and with most of my focus still on the practicalities of life in lockdown.

I suddenly had to improve my technology skills beyond email and facebook - use new communication platforms; search for online resources to inspire and feed my soul. But I missed the discipline and fellowship of Easter worship and activities - the Last Supper, the Good Friday meditation , the building of the Easter Garden, making the church beautiful for Easter Day, the anticipation of the Easter Vigil and finally the glory of communal worship on Easter Day. Online resources fed my brain but not my heart.

Since then, with the glorious weather I have gone into a guilt-ridden 'holiday mode' mixed with some gardening and domestic jobs. I was supposed to have gone on retreat to complete the final stage of the Ignatius Spiritual Exercises, my first 'holiday' for 8 months. You might say - well you could have done that at home - but I needed the separation from home, the focus with fellow retreatants and help from my spiritual guide to journey on. I am also one of those people that cannot stay inside if the weather is glorious - and have marvelled in the daily signs of advancing spring - God is definitely with us in fulfilling all the promises of this season of hope.

Throughout I have of course been greatly concerned for all those who are suffering, for all those who are caring and risking their lives, for the world-wide spread to much poorer countries and conflict zones, for all those with financial worries, for the future of the world economy. But also marvelling at God-given human ingenuity, uplifted by community spirit and thankful for so much generosity - and sustained by the many communications from family and friends.

Now over four weeks into the lockdown I am, at last really getting consciously closer to God - 'being' is taking over from 'doing'. I can beginning to look to the future - what type of society will come out of this crisis? Will the co-operative community spirit and generous giving of time and resources be maintained? Will all the gains for our environment - cleaner air, less traffic, reduced burning of fossil fuels, reduced carbon dioxide emissions, and nature reclaiming our urban areas - will all those just be a blip on the inevitable path towards a planet that is too hot to support life as we know it ?

And will I be able to go on holiday later this year - or is the lockdown my holiday for this year?

I go back to the mantra I had at the beginning of all this - be sensible, be flexible, be adaptable and above all TRUST GOD.

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