

Launch Out Letter (LOL)

April 2020



Jesuits Central & Southern

A Lenten Reflection

The theme is suffering, and the suggestion is to focus on loneliness and to link this to Lent.

I immediately think of the pregnancy and birth of my first daughter. Forty weeks of pregnancy, including forty days of Lent. This dearest baby was born one year after marriage, and the birth occurred on Easter Saturday 2002. The husband, who I had met rather unexpectedly, through a colleague I was teaching with, was the result of a rather short, whirlwind courtship. He was already in RCIA and becoming a Catholic. He was attending daily Mass, praying the rosary and seemed to be earnestly nourishing and developing his faith in

God. I had prayed regularly and often in St. Joseph's church in Takapuna, (along with my cousins), "*Holy St. Joseph dear St. Anne, please find me a husband as soon as you can.*" This man, it seemed, was the answer to prayer!

It was the eve of Good Friday, and I was hoping and praying, that the now overdue baby would arrive. We lived in Auckland, and I had been keeping vigil at the casket of Bishop Pompallier, which was resting in St. Patrick's Cathedral, due to the exhumation from Puteaux in France. I am not sure where my husband was, but he had the car, and so I had taken a bus from the North Shore over to St. Patrick's Cathedral. The next day, a most precious baby was born. The pregnancy and the birth of the baby were, by the grace of God, natural and delightful. The husband's faithfulness, however, began to decline and along with this, so too did the hope-filled Catholic marriage.

With vanquished expectation of a steady and loving marriage, now with *two* small children, no job, no husband, and no home, I could only solely depend on God. There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens Ecclesiastes 3:1. God provides saintly and merciful people on our journey. My faith has always given me the strength and courage to go forward with hope and optimism that God will guide us through all we encounter.

We see in Matthew 26, that Jesus' dearest friends, who had assured Jesus of their loyalty until death, did not stay awake to support him in the garden of Olives, even though Jesus had desperately asked for this. Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss, and the other apostles abandon Jesus when faced by the authorities. Jesus, surely, must have suffered terrible loneliness, being deserted by his friends in whom he had trust.

Despite that we all endure loneliness and suffering, the Caritas theme for Lent 2020, "**Renewed by the Spirit**", from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate – Rejoice and Exult*, continues to encourage us and calls us to encounter God and to let God guide us. God will always give us the strength to live out our journey of faith and help us to continue to seek out others to join us on our way.

Patricia Lynch



Mike Kline

Alone – but not Lonely

In his 1966 hit song “I am A Rock” Paul Simon sings of being a rock and an island, of being isolated in a room where he is untouchable and he himself can touch no-one. The song finishes with what may be an explanation with the words that a rock cannot feel pain and an island cannot cry. The words imply self isolation, that is a shutting away of oneself so there is no contact with anyone else.

For the last couple of years I have had the privilege of being able to take Holy Communion to residents of a retirement village. As I walk around I see all sorts of loneliness manifest itself and I’m not just talking about the Catholic people I visit.

I have seen people who have been put in there and get an obligatory weekly visit, who get little support from the family that visit. I have seen people who are often visited by family and yet appear to still feel lonely, people who receive few visits and yet do not appear to feel lonely. Others who are locked in their bodies and cannot move and are totally reliant on someone coming to visit them and yet still others who cannot remember who or when their last visitor was even if it was only a few hours ago. There are many variations of loneliness, the worst of which is when a person feels so alone they decide enough is enough and so make the decision to end their own life. Yes! Loneliness can lead to depression and even to thoughts of suicide.

Thankfully we do not have to reach that low when we have our faith. Our faith means we are never alone even if we find ourselves in one of the previous mentioned situations. Hebrews 13:1-7 gives us a good insight to this. Not only does it say “**I will never leave you nor forsake you**” it tells us how to treat others. What confidence we can take we can take from those eight words, we will never be alone. I can see this in the people I visit at the retirement home. The beam of light on their face, the warm greeting of “have you brought me communion today”, the thanks and appreciation of having Christ himself come and stay with them. Their joy is reflected in the stories they tell, the prayers they pray, one even sings she is so happy. They have taught me a lot – you can be alone but not lonely. It is a privilege to serve in this way and to bring their Lord to them.

One lady goes out of her way to visit other residents and make them feel welcomed. Unfortunately, she has seen a few pass away which causes her pain and to cry; unlike the lyrics of Paul Simon’s song she is neither a rock nor an island but an imitation of Christ.

Week 1 of Lent has a line in a suggested Prayer of the Faithful that says “*remind us when we feel alone that we are part of the Body of Christ.*”

Kevin Crighton



Readers Digest Canada

Happy Birthday!

Catherine Gibbs, 31 March, a day short of April, why not? Happy birthday to our dear Catherine who has generously supported Launch Out for many years.

Updates

- Thank you to Catherine Gibbs who kept encouraging the ADW to livestream or post a mass from Cardinal John and for Lucienne Hensel for going out of her way to deliver a video camera to Viard before lockdown time. The recorded mass of Cardinal John last Sunday will not be possible without the help of these amazing ladies.
- Thank you for those who attended the Examen for Life in the time of Covid-19 by Mary Jackson Kay last 25 March. There were around 10 who attended. I received encouraging emails. I’d like to encourage any one from the Launch Out Community who may be interested in running a Prayer Moment some time within this lockdown period. You can get in touch with me.

- I am wondering if we can run some webinars via zoom during this Lockdown period. One that is in the bag is a webinar on Alpha by Chris Walkderine on 15 April, 3:30 PM. I'll email the details next week. It could be a webinar, a Prayer Moment (a half-an-hour prayer like we did in Mary's Examen), or a group discussion.
- I am hoping to catch up with each one of you. I am thinking of starting next week. Let's give this week some rest. I also need to settle myself in this new normal.
- We have another round of email reflection-discussion, share your insights. Some may prefer to share their insights individually rather than in group, that is fine. I did receive many positive comments about reading the reflections of those who have shared. So, thank you for sharing.
- It most likely that our 01-03 May retreat will be cancelled but leave that in your calendar for now. I will make the cancellation official by 15 April.
- This is a stressful time for most of us, get in touch with your Spiritual Director if you can. You can either skype, zoom or make a phone call.

The Contagion of Hope- Excerpts from our Collective Reflection

*You can catch it anywhere—by word, or even by a smile,
it can live in any circumstance and can linger persistently even on hardened hearts,
it has no vaccine, no one is immune.*

On 16 March, I sent an email to everyone inviting you to share your thoughts on the coronavirus epidemic turned pandemic. Some of you shared generously to everyone and some sent me private emails. Here are some excerpts:

- ❖ It is interesting don't you think that when the sun is shining, and our world is smiling and we are all relaxed and getting on with our day to day living - we don't share emails to celebrate God's blessing on us! And yet - God is right there with us in those times. So too these times. God is right here - right amongst this messiness of our existence right at this moment. —*Jude McKee*
- ❖ I really love the quiet neighbourhood. You can hear all the gorgeous bird songs - thrush, blackbird, fantail, greenfinch, sparrow, kereru, starling, seagulls, tuis, swallows. Each walk is quite a sonic treat- *Catherine Gibbs*
- ❖ When I think about the leadership that's necessary now, I think of the prophet Elijah. He learned to remain open and trusting in God even when his world was very challenging with many voices clamouring amid the chaos at borders... God enters our lives quietly and in unexpected ways. As leaders it now becomes important to listen and wait in expectation of how this 'new normal' will change each of us and then respond with openness to the powerful opportunities that will flow our way. Enjoy another quiet day on planet Earth. —*Catherine Gibbs*
- ❖ But despite the growing darkness outside now we can make some real light. So, let us think of ways that we can live in this bubble. —*Vicky Raw*
- ❖ But through all this we have so many scripture verses to reassure us and to take away our fears and anxiety, of course the most well-known will be Psalm 23, then there is Psalm 91, Genesis 18:16-33 and Philippians 4:6 just to name a few. Hebrews 11:1 describes our faith while Ephesians 6:10-20 tells us about the “whole armour of God” for our spiritual fight and should we ever face isolation perhaps our mental fight as well – *Kevin Crighton*

- ❖ I am reading “Sharing Wisdom” A process for group decision making by Mary Benet McKinney and this phrase resonated with me, “..we all have different pieces of the wisdom and that we acquire the total wisdom the Spirit wishes to share with us only as we gather those different pieces.”- *Chris Walkerdine*
- ❖ To be poor is not to become good. Poverty is availability. It is to be that void, that nothing, on which Te Wairua Tapu moved at the beginning of the world, and still does move. I am incapable of being good - my soul is a mass of faults and contradictions - but when I know I am nothing, then through the eye of that needle God can do what he wants to do. It is when I think I am something that my life backfires on me. James K. Baxter - Jerusalem Daybook- *Quoted by Lisa Beech*
- ❖ Indeed, we do need to try to discern what God is saying in this to us and to Creation. Now that we have no Masses, for the near future at least, we will each need to seek God where God may be found. This may be an opportunity to grow in our relationship with God, and to see where God is leading each of us—*Margaret Bearsley*



When he had finished eating, he said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch”.