

March 22, 2020
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We are not alone.

When we stop and listen, we hear everything. We hear our deepest thoughts. Can you hear them? What do you hear when you listen deeply? I can hear the pounding in my chest. I feel like I can hear and feel the uncertainty of it all. Am I doing it right? Am I keeping myself safe enough? Am I keeping my children safe? Am I washing all the fingers and the spaces in between? Perhaps the cleanliness of my hands is a metaphor for the cleanliness of my thoughts. I need to trust in the cleansing spirit that washes over all of us.

We feel our deepest feelings. We feel all the feelings, don't we? The rush to leave the house in the morning is no longer required for most of us. So we take our time and make different decisions about how to go about our day. We clean out a cupboard or do a puzzle. We cancel our appointments and we stay put.

Our children aren't in school anymore but they are still learning. Oh they are learning so much. But you know what? We are learning too. We are learning so much. We are watching them watch us learn. Just like I am watching you learn. You are watching me. We are watching each other.

And it is messy, isn't it? It is strange. It is uncomfortable. It is unknown. But in the messiness I am finding there is beauty. Do you see the beauty? People are walking the sidewalks? People are saying hello. People are going into the forests. People are running errands for an elderly neighbour. People are giving space and leaving space....in line-ups, and everywhere.

We are walking through the raw and ugly and torn, like Jesus' walk to the cross. We are wading through things that seem broken and uncertain. Some feel a sense of suffering. Like Jesus.

Panic, in its way of being confusing, can be frightening. It can try to pull us away from the help that God wants to give us. It is not coming from God. What is coming from God? St. Ignatius tells us: God's spirit "stirs up courage and strength, consolations, inspirations and tranquility." So may we trust in the calm and the hope that we feel. We might have to dig deeper than we've ever dug before to find it. We might have to fall to our knees and lift our hands to the heavens. That is the voice to which we need to listen.

"Do not be afraid," as Jesus said many times.

When things all around us are canceled, we cower in a corner and wonder what is next and for how long? But what I've come to understand is that love can never be canceled. Hope can never be canceled. Peace can never be canceled. Hope and peace and love are God-filled words. Promise-filled words. Words and thoughts and emotions that can never be canceled.

This pandemic may be a long haul; some of our friends and family may get sick and perhaps might even die. But oh how I pray this doesn't happen. So....we do what we can to help others, especially the elderly, the disabled, the poor and the isolated. May we take the necessary precautions; practise social distancing; and may we eliminate the spreading of the virus. But in all this, let us remember, and not forget the fundamental Christian call to help others.

“I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me....” Matthew 25

In my darkest of days I have not felt alone. You are my church family, and you've known me for over 16 years, I think. You have seen my “come apart at the seams” moments, and you've seen me trudge on through, because of God's hand leading me out of the valley. Through a pain that grows each day, I am sometimes left wondering how I will make it through to the setting sun of the day. But somehow, the light shines through the cracks and I am smothered with hope and peace and love. I am always looking for that light. Will you look for it with me?

I had a physio appointment a few weeks ago and I burst into tears. For weeks now I have been unable to straighten one of my arms. He pressed on a sensitive spot on my shoulder blade and found the release point for my elbow. It was excruciating. Then he taught me some stretches to open my chest and ways to sit and stand with a straighter posture. You see, my body is riddled with pain, and standing and walking tall is the last thing on my mind. I'd much rather hunker down, slouch over and protect every last precious resource of myself that remains. But in doing so, I created tension across the back of my shoulders which translated into reduced mobility in my left arm. I'm not sure why the tears came. Maybe because my arm finally straightened without pain. Or maybe because the stretches emulated a butterfly. Or an angel. Arms like wings, free to open wide... moving me to better places, carrying me to the next thing. And perhaps an opening of my soul. Or letting the world see my heart. The ache and dread and hope and light all interspersed. The rigidity and mobility blended into one. The fear and safety merged in love.

We cannot do it alone. We must be brave enough to ask for what we need and equally brave enough to receive. We must take that leap, and

trust that there are people who have the answers. People who can check in, over and over.

Honestly, it is so hard to be strong all the time. But I know, deep in my inner self, that there is wondrous grace in the raw and ugly Kleenex moments in a cafe at the side of the road. There are people with me on his journey. They are showing me the way. They are bringing me the Kleenex. They will learn for me and help me when my butterfly wings get tired.

What came from that 30 minute appointment is that there is no shame in how I feel. I felt safe. No shame at all. And may you know that when you awaken today, it is okay to feel what you are feeling today. We are worthy of our body and of our emotions. We are deserving of a love sometimes un-named, but a love that helps us as we move into health and wellness.

A song came to mind...one that our choir has sung...and one that I have danced to, when I was well enough.

“Healing is in Your Hands” by Christy Nockels

*‘No mountain, no valley, no gain or loss we know
could keep us from Your love.*

*No sickness, no secret, no chain is strong enough
to keep us from Your love, to keep us from Your love.’*

So here we are, my St. John’s family....in this little hamlet of Georgetown, tucked away in the safety of our homes. Venturing out, alone, to pick up a few essentials.

Our hands....once these hands could hold your friend's hand, or rest upon a shoulder. Once, these hands could pull open a door leading the way into a restaurant. Our hands....are now the gesture from afar, our hands are the hands of our souls. And I know, with every glimmer of light that finds its way into my soul, that our choir will once again sing this song, in our church, to a congregation filled to capacity. We will sing, side by side; because nothing can keep us from Your love, God. Nothing. And perhaps if the healing journeys line up, I too, will one day have the strength and healing to dance again to the music...and when I do, my butterfly wings will open wide, with no pain.

*'How high, How wide
no matter where I am, healing is in Your hands.
How deep, How strong
And now by Your grace I stand, healing is in Your hands.'*

Go gently this day, my friends. May the love of God, the grace of Christ and the unity of the Holy Spirit be with us this day, and every day. Life is short, and we know not how long our journey will be. Therefore, be quick to love, and hasten always to kindness.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Click [here](#) to listen to the song, and witness me dancing, once upon a time ago.