

There couldn't be a more perfect reading for us right here in the middle of a two-month quarantine.

It's morning now, the first day of the week, and the doors of our houses are all shut tightly. Our churches are locked, and our vehicles mostly sit idle in our garages.

We can't go outside, not far anyway, we can't mingle with our friends and family—we are afraid for our lives. And even in our isolation – Jesus comes to us. Jesus comes right through our locked doors and stands with each one of us and says, “Peace be with you. I am here.”

It doesn't matter that we can't leave our homes. It doesn't matter that we feel afraid. It doesn't even matter that we don't know what to do.

Jesus is with us. Locked doors won't keep him from us.

Neither will the coronavirus.

I'm going to be honest with you—this hasn't been the easiest time for me. Can you relate?

I am by turns

- working feverishly,
- enjoying the birds at the suet cage
- craving crunchy salty things, or fruit, or *chocolate*.
- Feeling calm when I'm leading prayers
- Feeling near tears when I'm frustrated with technical issues
- Feeling excited when I see your faces
- Being bone weary several times a day

And here's the weirdest thing. Sometimes I feel I'm not doing enough—but more often I feel like I can't stop working.

And I desperately want Jesus to enter through the locked doors of my heart and say, “Peace be with you. “

I got a chance this week to talk to my friend and mentor Danny Schieffler, who is my spiritual director now, and he asked me what I was doing that made me happiest in this time of enforced change.

I didn't even hesitate.

I told him, "I can't even believe how much I'm loving doing Noonday Prayer every weekday, and Compline twice a week."

I am loving having to stop whatever it is that I'm doing at five minutes to noon, and being able to read scriptures and pray. I can't put it off—I'm live at noon on Facebook, and I HAVE to stop and pray.

- No matter if I'm doing emails.
- No matter if I'm in the midst of a funk.
- No matter if I want to or not.

I get to pray.

"Peace be with you."

And I feel it. I feel God. I feel YOU. And I am opened.

Here's the thing—what really is the mission of the Church? I'll give you a hint. It's on page 855 of the Book of Common Prayer. It's in the Catechism. What is the mission of the Church?

It's to restore all people to unity with God and with each other. And—wait for it---- Its mission is to pray, and worship, and proclaim the Gospel. To promote justice, peace and love.

Sometimes in my PCV life—pre- Corona Virus life—I would find myself praying and worshipping only on Sundays- and some Wednesdays.

And even then I was really leading worship—not ACTUALLY worshipping. It's as hard to lead worship and actually worship as it is to – well—be instructing people how to physically plant a garden—and actually doing it.

With one you are concentrating on the experience of someone else, in the other you are actually concentrating on your own experience.

These are both good things. But they are not the same.

Monday – Friday and before bed twice a week, I'm setting aside what I would normally be doing and just reading prayers, and sitting in the presence of God. I am worshiping. I am breathing in God's peace.

I am forced to SLOW DOWN.

I don't do that well.

But I'm trying to have mercy on myself. Give myself breaks. Because I need it. We all need it.

I'm beginning to think that this enforced time apart might all be part of the Spirit's plan: to give us space to reconnect with the power that created us and everything that is.

To give us a newfound appreciation for each other.

To give us a chance to reorder our priorities.

I didn't have an altar in my home until this began. I didn't enjoy uninterrupted sleep. I didn't know the names of the birds outside my window—much less see that they have different personalities.

I'd forgotten how much I loved the Canticles in Morning Prayer.

I realize that I prefer homemade food.

What else is God trying to tease out of us?

It doesn't matter how much we are afraid to go out these days. It doesn't matter that we've locked more than just our doors. Jesus will come to us anyway.

He'll just walk into our space like he belongs there. And he'll say, "I'm here. Peace be with you. "

Amen.