

St. Nicholas News

Francis Street Parish, Dublin 8. ---- 01-4530387 ---- 01-5611390



Fourth Sunday of Lent 22 March 2020

I'M A NUN I'VE BEEN SOCIAL DISTANCING FOR 29 YEARS



For the past 29 years, I've chosen to practice social distancing. Of course, I and the 17 other nuns I live with don't call it that. We are formally called cloistered sisters, meaning we never leave our walled-off monastery in Summit except for doctors' visits or perhaps shopping for a specific item. We don't go to parties or weddings or out to eat with friends. I often go months without leaving our 8-acre home. The coronavirus is forcing many people in New Jersey and across the world to stay home, limit outside contact – and in a way, start living life like cloistered nuns. Of course, this virus is not good. Sickness never is. And I understand that this sudden shift in our society is frightening. As someone who has lived a life of separation, I'd like to share from my experience how you can make the best of it. First, you need to establish structure. Your normal day-to-day lives have structure imposed on them from the outside;

you have to catch the train at a certain time to go to work, you have school recess at the same time every day. These things give you a sense of consistency and rhythm. Now that you are stuck at home, create a schedule for yourself and your family. At the monastery, we wake up at the same time every day and get fully dressed (no pajamas). We have planned time for prayer, worship, work, eating and fun. Our days usually have a peaceful rhythm. This might take some experimentation; each household is different and for many, it might be the first time they spend an extended period of time with roommates or family. Second, be intentional and love others. It is easy to get caught up in making sure you and your loved ones are safe and your needs are met. We are in uncharted territory and these reactions are understandable. However, we should fight against self-centered urges. Call older people in your neighborhood and ask how they are doing, if they need anything. Give the gift of your time. Cook meals with your family and play games. It is interesting that a lot of people are frightened by this extended time at home because the core structure of society is the family unit. Maybe this is a good opportunity for all of us to strengthen those family bonds, and our efforts will have an effect on the wider community. Don't hide from roommates under the guise of needing to work; get to know them and learn to enjoy their company. At the monastery, the prayer bell rings and it forces me to stop working and to focus on why I'm really here. It reminds me to leave the project at hand (whether that is making candles or soap, operating our gift shop, gardening or working in the kitchen), and join my sisters. The projects that I am working on aren't bad; they are good, but sometimes I can allow myself to be too busy. The monastery is not an apartment complex. We are an intentional community and it takes work to become one. It takes a deliberate way of life. It means learning to listen, forgive and accept each other. Third, use this time for self-reflection and relaxation. "I need a vacation to recover from my vacation!" people say. Well, this could be it. These weeks are your opportunity for a more quiet, simple life. Every day after lunch, my sisters and I take a 90-minute break of "profound silence." We don't move around the building or talk. We stay still. We read, pray or reflect. Sometimes, we will do a hobby quietly. Sometimes, we nap. People say they want peace and quiet. Then when it is thrown in their lap, they panic. They don't know how to be alone. They are afraid to confront their "shadow side," the hard truths about themselves that they don't like. They fill their lives with noise to run away from their emotions. Life isn't meant to be rushed. Use this time to get to know yourself. Stop. Be still. You can either waste this period of social-distancing and be frustrated, or you can choose to make it the best it can be.

Sister Mary Catharine Perry has been a cloistered nun with the Dominican nuns in Summit, New Jersey USA for 29 years. Their website [here](#).

Courtesy [NJ Advance Media](#) reporter Cassidy Grom

NOTICES

Child Protection

If you need to contact the Child Protection Rep in the parish, please ring 01-4530387. You do not have to give your name. Simply give a contact phone number.



Day of Prayer and Action

Church leaders in Britain and Ireland have urged Christians to take part in a National Day of Prayer and Action about the coronavirus on Sunday 22 March. The call, issued at midnight last night, states: "Whether you are continuing to worship as congregations or not, we have the great privilege and freedom to be able to call upon God, wherever we are, individually and corporately, for healing in our nation." People are asked to light a candle in their window at 7 p.m. on Sunday "as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ". The call has been issued by the presidents of the ecumenical grouping Churches Together in England: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the RC Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, the Moderator of the Free Churches, the CTE president for the Orthodox Churches, and the CTE Pentecostal president. It is also supported by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Cytûn, the Church of Scotland, and the Evangelical Alliance. As well as calling for prayer for the Government and those working to contain the virus, such as health-care workers, and those who are most vulnerable, the statement lists some actions that Christians might take: "Alongside your prayers, take the opportunity to telephone or email someone who is isolated, buy some additional food for your local foodbank, or offer to deliver shopping for an elderly neighbour." The statement urges churches to follow Government health advice: "Wisdom and flexibility about worship gatherings are a key part of our Christian discipleship during this period."



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Penitential Rite

The Lord is our light and our life. As we begin our celebration, let us call to mind his love.

You are the light of the world, challenging us to be Light for one another. Lord have mercy

You are goodness and healing, challenging us to Heal one another. Christ have mercy

You are love, destroying death, bringing new life, challenging us to be Life, for one another. Lord have mercy

May our great and gracious Lord, have mercy on us, forgive us our sin and bring us to life everlasting. Amen

A reading from the first book of Samuel

The Lord said to Samuel, 'Fill your horn with oil and go. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen myself a king among his sons.' When Samuel arrived, he caught sight of Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed one stands there before him', but the Lord said to Samuel, 'Take no notice of his appearance or his height for I have rejected him; God does not see as man sees; man looks at appearances but the Lord looks at the heart.' Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen these.' He then asked Jesse, 'Are these all the sons you have?' He answered, 'There is still one left, the youngest; he is out looking after the sheep.' Then Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send for him; we will not sit down to eat until he comes.' Jesse had him sent for, a boy of fresh complexion, with fine eyes and pleasant bearing. The Lord said, 'Come, anoint him, for this is the one.' At this, Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him where he stood with his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord seized on David and stayed with him from that day on.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

Psalm

If you are reading this online, you can listen to the psalm [here](#). To come back here hit back button in browser.



Gospel Acclamation

Glory and praise to you, O Christ ! I am the light of the world, says the Lord; anyone who follows me will have eternal life. Glory and praise to you, O Christ !

A reading from the Gospel of John

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?' 'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered 'he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.' He spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man. and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam (a name that means 'sent'). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored. His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' 'Yes, it is the same one'. Others said, 'No, he only looks like him'. The man himself said, 'I am the man'. They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been a sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see'. Then some of the Pharisees said, 'This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the sabbath'. Others said, 'How could a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' 'He is a prophet' replied the man. 'Are you trying to teach us,' they replied 'and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!' And they drove him away. Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir,' the man replied 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You are looking at him; he is speaking to you'. The man said, 'Lord, I believe', and worshipped him. Jesus said: 'It is for judgement that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight turn blind'. Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him, 'We are not blind, surely?' Jesus replied: 'Blind? If you were, you would not be guilty, but since you say, "We see", your guilt remains.

This is the Gospel of the Lord: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Prayer of the Faithful

God our Father and Mother, your love rescues us from fear and calls us to live in the light of your generous love. We are grateful. Lord hear us

Lord, in these difficult times help us not to be ruled by fear, but by a spirit of generosity. Lord hear us

We remember all who have died, and especially those who have died from COVID 19. May their families and friends find comfort and peace. Lord hear us

We thank you Lord, for all who are working so hard to keep us safe. May their courage and generosity inspire us to care for one another. Lord hear us

For the elderly in our community, that they may have our practical support to help them through these difficult times. Lord hear us

In silence we pray for those who need our help and support. Lord hear us



Our Father: Listen [here](#)

Concluding Hymn: [here](#)