



***Who Would Have Thought...a New Normal***

By Dorothy M. Zambito  
Locust Valley CLC

For me, like so many others, 2020 began without much fanfare. I had celebrated the beginning of the New Year with some friends and family, wishing each other good health and happiness in the year ahead and remembering with gratitude God's gifts to us. January continued with rather mild temperatures and little snow and we were happy about that. My Christian Life Community was able to celebrate three birthdays of members as we have done in the past. In February, with Lent approaching, we were getting ready for our parish Bible study to resume and it did. Being a people who enjoy celebrating with each other, we had a festive Mardi Gras dinner with lots of food, drinks, laughter and hugs. We also paused to think/pray about Lent and our preparation for it. Little did we know...

The weekend of March 14-15 was the first indication that life and church gatherings as we were used to, had begun to change. Church attendance in my parish had dropped by more than half. By the next afternoon, the announcement had been made that all Masses were cancelled for parishioners until further notice. We who celebrated daily Mass together for many years were dumbstruck. It was at this time that we, seniors especially, began our period of quarantine, sequestering, hunkering down, isolation. For me this is Day 53: no attendance at Mass and no Eucharist; no visitors, no shopping, no visits to the homebound, no cooking at the Soup Kitchen, no physical grieving with family at my sister-in-law's funeral, etc. Each of us can compile a list of personal losses. How have we responded to this experience of the coronavirus in our midst?

Once the coronavirus pandemic emergency was announced, all of us were thrust into a 'new normal.' Although some of our daily actions changed immediately, others were discerned or prescribed for as days and weeks passed. For many, the mandate was to continue working from home. For others there was no job as more and more were 'furloughed.' All of us were encouraged to be safe for the benefit of ourselves and others by social distancing and better hygiene. We, as faith filled people turned to websites and TV to 'celebrate' Mass. Zoom and conference calls have become means to celebrate birthdays, have family visits (even on Easter), hold CLC meetings and even carry on editing sessions. In many ways the new normal has given us time for deeper prayer and reflection. It often leads to discerning a simpler life style. Have any of us not thought about better use of 'things' or conserving what is at hand or sharing with those in need or being creative about food choices and preparation?

For many others the new normal means cancellation of classes, of sports, even of graduation ceremonies and festivities. The new normal for many youth and young adults means study and class work online. It may include doing more chores at home. Hopefully, it includes families joined around the dinner meal. As I listen to my grandchildren, I hear their groaning about missing friends and concerns about what the future will bring.

The new normal for healthcare workers, even seasoned ones, comes with physical and emotional stress and even danger. Their hospital work and load are beyond their past experience. Most are dealing with an unknown enemy. Within my family are two physicians and a nurse who provide direct care to COVID-19 patients. One daughter works to keep her Nursing Home, filled with high risk people, virus free. Still another works to provide thousands of bagged breakfasts and lunches to economically depressed families in the Bronx - a new normal.

New normal can be evidence of loss, but it can be a place of grace and growth. Setting aside non-essentials can lead us to reflect on the true meaning of our lives and how the Lord is reaching out to us today. The new 'homebound' rely on technology not only for entertainment but also for growth in awareness. I think of the many resources that keep us informed about the Church, the suffering people around the world, the ways we can protect our earth, etc. Global Sisters Report, NCR, Ignatian Ministries and Earth Beat are a few examples. I have benefited personally from the many sites that provide commentaries on the daily Gospel. Scripture has come alive in new ways. Among those contributing to this are Loyola Press, Bishop Barron's *Word on Fire*, NCR's *Pencil Preaching* and Franciscan Media.

In the midst of the pandemic, what does your new normal look like today? How is the Lord calling out to you to minister to the poor, to families, to youth and to creation?

***Let us join together in beseeching our loving God to halt the spread of the coronavirus, to heal those who are suffering from it and console those who have lost loved ones because of it. May we be energized by the Holy Spirit to be attentive and do all that we can in this time of need.***

**This issue of GO!!! focuses on the following:**

**“How are you living as a Domestic Church during the CORONAVIRUS Pandemic?**

**What are your consolations and desolations?”**

## MANRESA CLC

**Dolores Celentano** has been making virtual (phone) visits to her hospice client as well as friends, conference calls for organizations and attending Web/Zone get-togethers with family. Quite a change from formal meetings. But it's all good. She has been able to use the computer for more in depth spirituality experiences. Nice !! She even found a 30-Day At Home Retreat by Fr. Mark Thibodeaux. Dolores met Fr. Mark more than 20 years ago when she was serving the national community. Dolores is very thankful to Fr. Dan Fitzpatrick for his wonderful meditations during the Easter Season. She is asking for prayers for her son-in-law Jay in FL, who was expecting to receive a kidney from her youngest daughter in GA, but instead, is fighting the intrusion of non-Hodgkins lymphoma at present. Wishing all safe, healthy times ahead.

**Mary Ann Parise** shares her thought for Pentecost.

The Heart cried, "I hurt."

"You will heal," the soul whispered.

"But how?" the mind asked.

And the Spirit sighed, "In time  
you shall see it part of all."

**Dolores Harden** is finding how daily routines already in place continue to shape the day during this lockdown. Hearing Mass daily on the internet keeps the seasons and rhythm of the liturgy in living awareness of the Body of Christ, the Church. The Daily Mass on Word of Fire (Bishop Barron) opens the Scriptures. For example, this Easter season the Acts of the Apostles proclaims Jesus as "Lord and Christ" in words that can deeply "cut to the heart." Dolores is grateful to her parish priests, Fr. Fredy and Fr. Ariel of St. Joseph and St. Mary Immaculate, for Sunday Mass. The online retreat by Fr. Mark Thibodeaux, *Ascending with Ignatius*, takes us through the discomforts of the *Spiritual Exercises* gently. Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, is forever the guide and goal. Dolores H. continues to serve through writing letters daily, sharing ideas, receiving as well as giving. Music, particularly learning and practicing piano music, radiates beauty and order into the world. The clear, focused thought of CLC is group service. As with us all, Dolores loves family and friends from the miracle of FaceTime, even celebrating the 5<sup>th</sup> birthday of dear great-granddaughter Sofia, and the 1<sup>st</sup> birthday of dear great-grandson Reece. May all be well and be able to come together soon.

**Karen and Bob Giardina**, as with most individuals, have had to greatly reduce their activities due to the virus. The St. Athanasius outreach program has been temporarily put on hold. Also, Karen's volunteer work at the local library and assisted living programs have been cancelled. Both Karen and Bob have been involved at St. Ephrem's scripture group and Easter preparation study, but those also were stopped. We are keeping busy doing daily prayer and meditation. We are also involved with the retreat led by Father Mark. Fortunately, we have been able to do spring yard work for which we are most grateful. We look forward with faith to the day that we will be able to meet with our group in person. Good health to all.

**Evelyn Codd** writes that the Catholic Faith Network has the recitation of the rosary followed by Mass at 8am each morning. This is how Evelyn starts her day. She is self-isolating. Evelyn's 9<sup>th</sup> great-grandchild was born 4 weeks ago and she cannot wait to hold her – Quinn Marie 9 lbs. 11oz. 22 inches. Evelyn goes for walks, weather permitting. Her church is closed except for private prayer, and she stops in after her walks. There is something very consoling, sitting in an empty, dimly-lit church talking to God.

## ST. AEDAN CLC

**Rosanna Vales:** I was privileged to experience consolation despite desolation surrounding me. Just before COVID-19 pandemic, our community was studying *Moment by Moment- a Retreat in Everyday Life* by Fr. Eugene Merz and Carol A Smith for our bimonthly meetings. Interestingly, the chapters touched on suffering, hope, a new dawn, Christ the Consoler, in service of others, peace and promises. All this was happening during Lent when Catholics were celebrating the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. Sadly, the pandemic caused closures and cancellations of church rituals and services. I missed going to Mass and doing the Stations of the Cross. Even the festive Holy Easter celebration was cancelled. Christ rising from the dead symbolizes our hope for salvation. Grief and devastating events from the pandemic added sorrow to the isolation and feelings of helplessness were felt not only locally but all over the world. It was tragic to suffer alone. No one was allowed to visit, not family or even priests to administer last rites.

These sad events contributed to my desolation: feelings of isolation, uncertainty, fear, grief, worry, vulnerability, being deprived of Sacraments. It reminded me of the sufferings of Jesus on the way to Calvary. As in Christ's resurrection, hope and consolation burned inside of me. Faith, hope and love instilled trust that this too shall pass, that there will be a new dawn and a new beginning waiting for us. Because of social distancing and lockdowns, people had more opportunities for family bonding. There's less pollution because people stayed home and traveled less. For me physical distancing and lockdowns provided spiritual liberation because they provided unlimited time for prayers and soul-searching. Although I wasn't able to attend Mass inside the church I experienced virtual mass, sometimes 2-3 times a day via TV, cellphone or computer. I had more time for Catholic programs online from resources such as EWTN, Aleteia and others.

As part of my ministry I buy used books to bring to work to provide inspiration to patients in the psych ward. Since I work night shifts, sometimes I don't get a chance to offer emotional therapeutic support and encouragement. I'm hoping that these books (bibles, motivational and inspirational) can somehow touch the heart and provide comfort to patients, their families and staff. I hope and pray that this plague will build resilience, creativity, resourcefulness and a more Christ-centered world as our new dawn.

**Lorna Ligon** expressed her consolations of getting closer to God and she had time reflecting on scriptures. Her desolations were not receiving the Eucharist sacramentally and not having an active participation in the community due to quarantines. There were too many deaths from this pandemic, dying alone, and not seeing families in their last moments.

**Cynthia Dela Rama Tan** shared that her desolation was not receiving the Holy Eucharist sacramentally. She missed the visitation and receiving the Eucharist every day. Her consolation was that spirituality our Lord comes into her heart through the virtual Holy Mass.

**Tina Bermudez** said her desolation was not being able to receive Holy Communion sacramentally. During this trying time and quarantine her consolation is that she has grown so much closer to Him. Phrases that struck her most as she contemplated: Be still and know that I am God. This too shall pass. Faith, Hope and Trust are not just words to be uttered but words that I have to apply in my everyday life. Reflect, meditate, listen and stay focused are what I used to lessen distractions in my prayer life.

**Lourdes C. De Castro** is deeply grateful and united with members for their wonderful insights and significant contributions. She shared some key points as she examined herself on how was she living as a domestic church during the coronavirus. She treated this pandemic as a worldwide sabbatical leave that everyone has been given to grow and improve internally. What is it that teaches her about herself? What are the good and not good she has learned about herself? What challenges her to change to be a better person day by day? The way she looked at COVID-19 is that it is God's invitation to have an intimate knowledge and revelation that *God is love, full of mercy and compassion*. This pandemic is a *grace* that

she shouldn't waste. The *love, mercy and compassion* that she received from God must continually be shared with her family, community, at work with her elderly clients, with marginalized individuals, with less fortunate children, with the indigenous community and all God's creation. Keep moving forward for the better and inspire others seeking the MAGIS (more) for Christ as men and women for others. Her desolation is when she's in darkness, doubt, feeling alone in this journey especially during low moments of quarantine. The overwhelming bad news includes death toll cases of COVID-19, listening to the cry of the poor who are suffering from the unjust situations and the devastated wounded earth. Amidst the turmoil her faith and fervent prayer are that all of these shall pass and Thy will be done. The CARE ACT Movement in the US and SHARE THE LOVE Movement in the Philippines and globally are truly consoling. They add the nonstop sharing of thoughts and prayers of the community through text brigade, the sharing of food among members whether sick or not, and the ongoing check in through social media. We even pass around COVID-19 humor to cheer up everyone. Her greatest consolation is knowing that *God is love and with us* in good times and hard times. *St. Ignatius reminded her also to find God in all things whether in consolation or desolation.*

**Jim and Perry Cooney** expressed their desolation of not being physically at the Mass and not receiving Communion, and having the feeling of helplessness and uncertainty in isolation. Our consolation is this isolation is a blessing by providing us a lot of time to reflect, pray, rest, appreciate and enjoy each other's company. We have all the time to pray, virtually attend Mass in different parts of the world and enjoy the homilies. We listen and read Catholic media and read the Bible. We do some chores we never had time to do. We are thankful our families are doing well in isolation and for CLC. Hopefully everything will come to pass favorably knowing Jesus, Mary and Joseph are always there for us. We can only pray for everyone.

**Liway Evangelista** narrated that she and her husband were in deep sorrow at the death of her father-in-law, Ceferino Evangelista last April 24, 2020 followed by his interment on May 16, 2020. He was bedridden before the pandemic. She admitted that her quarantine time was hard in the beginning, but she got used to it and felt closer to God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary. She realized that no matter how you plan your life, God is in control of everything. Going out to do essentials was a challenge. Now she is trying to focus on how she can help people especially in the Philippines and in their parish. Though sometimes she gets exhausted, helping others is her mission and she is happy doing it. Her desolation was not being able to go to church and missing the Holy Eucharist. Her consolation is attending virtual masses, praying together with the family through Zoom and having everyone in the family in good health.

**Francis and Tim** are savoring the beauty of stillness within their personal journey and always express their gratitude whether in consolation or desolation. ***IN GOD WE TRUST.***

## **SAN LORENZO CLC**

God writes straight with crooked lines. Our community's biggest challenge is to convene when members are dispersed the world over. During the fall our members go in different directions. A couple goes to Bulgaria and another to Vancouver, Hong Kong and Manila. Those remaining stateside commute to San Francisco, Albuquerque and Raleigh. Only four remain here in the metro area.

With the pandemic's social distancing protocols, we found ourselves more connected with each other through the magic of Zoom on the internet. We even opened a group viber account to share spiritual insights. Once in a while it is used to exchange jokes to relieve sequestration blah by text messages.

We met first through Zoom arranged by Ms. Ann Marie Brennan on March 24. We were very much consoled sharing how we found/felt/experienced God during the initial stages of the lockdown. Fr. Dan even joined us and we ended the meeting with his blessing and encouragement to persevere assured of His presence. Later on through Viber we prayed a novena to St. Therese of Lisieux for a cousin of a member intubated because of the COVID-19. She pulled through!

### **Jose Lim**

Lenore and I have now been in quarantine at home here in Manila for 40 days. When we go to Vancouver in ten days' time, we will have to undergo another 14 days of mandatory quarantine. By the time we are done with quarantines, we will have been in physical isolation from everyone for over two months. That would be the longest retreat we will have experienced in our lives.

Much has changed in our daily activities since the lockdown. Much of the routine we have now adapted under the conditions of strict quarantine has actually been quite refreshing and welcome. We are enjoying the luxury of time, space and quiet to pray and to reflect on our relationship with God and with others.

COVID-19 has really brought home the message that amidst the uncertainties and threats to our health and well-being, it is only through a deep faith in God that we can truly find comfort and assurance. The necessary precautions like practicing social distance, wearing masks, regular disinfecting and washing our hands will help, of course, but in the end, the best protection is Christ's saving grace and salvation.

The deadly reality of the virus hit home when Lenore's close friend and schoolmate contracted the virus and passed away in the hospital a few days ago. It was very sad that none of her friends and relatives could visit her while she was in the hospital. When she died, there was no wake to pay our final respects. Yesterday, via Zoom, her dear friends in different parts of the world heard Mass and prayed for her soul.

Another desolation from the lockdown is the awareness that millions of daily wage earners who live day to day are not able to go out of their homes to earn a living to feed their families. These are the small-time street vendors and hawkers, domestic helpers, drivers, gardeners, store clerks,

barbers, nail salon attendants and countless others in the service sectors. Most of them live in small crowded rented spaces with their families and because of the forced quarantine, they are not allowed to go out of their homes, even to breathe in the street. Yesterday, a retired soldier with mental problems was shot dead for not heeding the call of the police to stay indoors.

There are also consolations to be thankful for. They include being able to participate with a group of friends to raise funds to buy PPEs (personal protection equipment) for the frontliners in three local hospitals, where they are in dire need. In our condo complex, workers such as security guards, maintenance, and sanitation personnel, have not gone home since the lockdown for practical reasons. All mass transportation has been suspended. They are temporarily housed in spaces available like the function room where food is served. It gives us consolation to share food and other essentials.

Lenore and I have become more diligent in hearing Mass on TV daily and on Sundays. We hear it together with the family and grandchildren who are located in different parts of the world through the use of the internet. Every day, Lenore has a list of friends and relatives that she reaches out to just to show that they are remembered. Now that she has learned to use Zoom a little, she has been scheduling group meetings with her circle of friends, alumni from her grade school, high school and university, as well as with her artist groups.

If there is one important reminder that the threat of the virus has pointed out to us, it is that relationship with God and with our family and friends is what truly matters in life. None of the worldly things that often preoccupy our time matter at all in the end.

### **Cora Custodio**

Blessings from being quarantined:

1. More bonding with family and friends through FaceTime and Zoom.
2. More calls, texts, and emails about group prayers and novenas, and information especially on COVID-19, scientific and otherwise
3. More jokes
4. More movies watched on Netflix.
5. More time to listen to or attend masses from churches all over the world.
6. More time to declutter and to clean the house of unnecessary things.
7. More time for quiet reflection and being alone with God. More time to learn to separate the grain from the chaff.

### **Bel Encarnacion**

May I just say that with the desolations, let us count the consolations. There are always two sides of a coin. So with life, let us accept the bad with the good. It seemed to me the quarantine has given the people a chance to do good to others in a way that we are doing this not only for ourselves, but for the sake of humanity. Notwithstanding that, the economy suffered. This is the other side of the coin. Let us count the many consolations that the evil COVID-19 has done to us personally, to the world, to nature, to man's heart, etc. It is devastating and healing at the same time. God works in mysterious ways. Amen

## **Deacon Leandro Centenera**

Because we are seniors, our doctor sons have ORDERED that Tessie and I live our "exile in this valley of tears" as a domestic church of two. Except for our walks in the neighborhood, we have not ventured too far from our house. Our sons, daughters-in-law, and parishioner friends have taken care of purchasing our groceries and other items we need.

Fortunately, these past two weeks, we were given the blessing of having our youngest grandson, Phoenix (age 8), stay with us for a couple of days each week to give his parents a break. After praying the rosary one afternoon, (complete with the Litany of Our Lady), Phoenix remarked that "his jaws hurt after all that praying!" But he added, "But it is good to pray, right?"

## **What are the consolations (Road to Emmaus) and desolations (The Empty Tomb)?**

**The Road to Emmaus:** Having the key to our church (and with our Pastor's permission) I have shared the Holy Eucharist with some of our parishioners in the neighborhood. They bring their own pyx. Thus we are able to receive **Our Lord SACRAMENTALLY - Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity** on Wednesdays and Sundays as we celebrate the Mass through the televised Masses. What an immeasurable BLESSING! The rest of our days is spent on **3 Ps**- Praying, Painting and ... Praying some more. Wife Tessie also does **3 Ks** - Knitting, Cooking and Keeping up with me!

Our living room looks like a mini-Sistine Chapel with all the paintings that I have done. I have attached a picture of them below. Very innocently, Phoenix asked me one day, "Abuelito, what will you do with all these paintings after this thing is over?" Our parish priest has approved that I place 2 of the wood paintings in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament of our church. As for the rest, I will probably turn our living room into an Art Gallery ... that is, if my wife will allow it!

Another "Road to Emmaus" occasion concerns Phoenix who will be leaving for Arizona with his family this month. Our pastor has given me permission to give Phoenix his First Holy Communion on May 10, when I will also celebrate the 22nd Anniversary of my Ordination to the Diaconate. While many are "hungry" right now to receive the Holy Eucharist Sacramentally, here we have an innocent boy of eight receiving our Lord for the first time in his life.

As the saying goes - God does not Choose the Qualified, He Qualifies the Chosen.

**The Empty Tomb:** We have had several desolations; some friends and relatives are seriously ill or have passed on. We are devotees of Padre Pio whose most famous advice to his spiritual children is: "Pray, hope and don't worry." Incidentally, do you know that there were Saints who lived at the time of the Spanish Flu - Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto died from the disease. On the other hand, Padre Pio contracted the virus but recovered from it. It might be worth asking for his intercession during this time. Padre Pio, Pray for us.



From left: Two versions of the Immaculate Heart of Mary  
 Our Lady of Penafraancia (Patroness of Bicolanos)  
 Our Lady of the Philippines  
 A small version of Immaculate Heart of Mary (on top)  
 Our Lady of Lourdes w/St. Bernadette (under)  
 Our Lady of Lourdes  
 Our Lady of Fatima

### **Lea Agoncillo**

As soon as I wake up at 6AM, I say a short prayer of thanks for giving me a good night's sleep and waking up to a beautiful day. I watch daily Masses via YouTube, pray the 4 Mysteries of the Rosary and say 200 Hail Marys every night with my "Kasambahays."\* I don't want to spend my day in idleness so I make time for spiritual readings.

Given the current situation, my family decided to suspend rental payments until the ECQ\*\* is lifted. Once in a while, I am able to give assistance to those tenants who come to me for financial help because the relief goods which the government promised do not reach them; I take advantage of the opportunity to give them some spiritual advice.

I have been using the ECQ productively, in fact, I am able to share my talent in baking and cooking with my "kasambahays." There is never an idle moment for me.

[\*-household help; \*\*enhanced community quarantine]

## **Hermie Santos**

As we shelter in place fearful, anxious and uncertain of what will transpire with this coronavirus situation, it is consoling to think that the apostles were in a much similar situation. They were hunkered in the upper room in desolation as their teacher/master/leader had just been crucified as a common criminal and they were not able to do anything. Making it worse, one of them denied Him and another betrayed Him. Soon, however, it would be Pentecost.

While awaiting our own pentecost, I used the downtime to read more. I found rereading Fr. Thomas Green, S.J.'s *Weeds Among the Wheat* very uplifting. While the book's primary focus was on discernment, it dealt with consolation and desolation, too. I was assured that this desolation many of us were experiencing could not have come from God but might be His way of showing us that we had been "tepid, slothful, or negligent in our exercises of piety." (sp.#322) I was encouraged to pray more and wait patiently for His free gift of consolation which would surely come.

**+ REST IN PEACE +**

Ceferino Evengelista, father-in-law of Liway  
Evangelista,  
St.Aedan CLC, April 24, 2020

Teresa Xuan Phan, mother of Fr. John Lan Tran, S.J.  
CLC National Ecclesial Assistant,  
May 20, 2020

Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, S.J.  
Past World CLC Ecclesiastical Assistant,  
May 20, 2020

## NORTHERN NEW JERSEY CLC

Technology has made it possible for **Marianne and Dennis Cummins** to be active participants in parish prayer: rosary, Stations of the Cross and Mass. The live streaming of Mass from St. Ann's Parish, Fair Lawn has given them a sense of being closer to Christ and to each other. Zoom has made it possible for the Cummins to meet with their "Arise" faith sharing group, Faith Center Board, as well as the Pastoral Council.

The desolations for Dennis include not being able to receive Communion, and to see and talk with the priests and other parishioners each morning. For Marianne one of the desolations is the anxiety that one of them might contract COVID-19 and the implications of that. She shares Dennis' desolation in not being able to be with family and friends, and the pain, suffering and death of so many worldwide. An unknown future is also one of Marianne's desolations.

Consolations for Dennis and Marianne include: Gratitude for the ability to deal with the effects of sheltering in place: especially a large safe home and for those who do the grocery shopping for them; gratitude for front-line workers who have jeopardized their lives to care for others; gratitude for our priests and parishioners who have streamed worship for us; gratitude for the time to slow down and focus on personal growth in various aspects of daily life. Marianne and Dennis pray that in the not too distant future we may be together and embrace each other. Until then they will continue to pray for all in their communities and meet virtually.

**Mary Flammer** enjoys the streamed Mass from St. Elizabeth Church, Wyckoff. The reverence of the presiders has helped Mary to appreciate the beauty and wonder of the divine liturgy in a new way. With their inspirational homilies she looks forward to participating everyday. Since the reception of Eucharist is not possible, she has to be satisfied with spiritual communion.

**Peter and MaryAnn Macaluso** are also sharing daily Mass and a Holy Hour with St. Ann's, Fair Lawn, Wyckoff and Seton Hall. Miles do not matter. They're engaged, journeying together with God. Peter quotes St. Augustine, "God would not permit evil to exist, if He was not good enough or wise enough or powerful enough to bring good out of evil." Peter has also used the time at home to complete an article to be published in *The Troubadour*, "Franciscans and the Origin of Equality and Individual Freedom." Peter reminds us of what St. Anselm wrote, "Let us live with uncertainty as with a friend. To feel certain means feeling secure; to feel safe is unreal; a delusion of self. Know that we do not know is the only certainty."

**Vivian Stepanian** admits she is impatient for life to return as it was six months ago. She has a certain anger toward this virus, that has forced doctors and nurses to give their lives for their patients. Her desolation is also for all who have died without the presence of their families or a priest. She is very grateful for God's love for her. God is her consolation during this hard time. Even when she finds it difficult to pray, God gives her the grace to persist. During this time, Vivian has a greater appreciation of the gift of life, and despite the "stay at home" mandate, she has lately great peace and a happy heart. She is also very grateful that her relatives in Lebanon are safe.

**REPORT FROM ANN MARIE BRENNAN, METRO NY CLC PROMOTER  
CLC Groups at Loyola Retreat Center, Saint Francis Xavier NYC  
and Saint Catharine NJ**

Perhaps the last time we met together in person was at the CLC gathering at Fordham University in the St. Ignatius Lounge and then to hear the enjoyable, inspiring talk by Fr. Greg Boyle S.J. of Homeboys Industries. Even then, there was some sense of the virus creeping in as we gave arm bumps instead of hugs, and the staff made periodic wipe downs of the light switches and doorknobs. That was on March 8. On March 11, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 to be a pandemic, and over the next few days, we moved to home confinement and careful strategies of social distancing, masks, frequent hand washings and strategic shopping trips for food and other essentials. Schools closed, and significantly, churches closed. Never in our lifetimes has this happened. We have been navigating new territory.

The five groups in NJ and NY have continued meeting online using Zoom, and while not nearly as good as gathering together, it has offered valuable interactions and a sense of connection and community during this experience of pandemic.

**Saint Catharine Church, Glen Rock, NJ**

We now have two CLC groups at the parish of St. Catharine's in Glen Rock, NJ. The newer community has been together since January having done the "Come and See" program and now progressing through the various kinds of Ignatian prayer. Both groups are meeting by Zoom, of course, and we experienced some glitches on the Zoom call last Sunday. We were able to test out the discernment qualities of patience and surrender. The group passed the test! St. Catharine's parish has been offering online Masses which provide some sense of continuity and connection in the sharing on the homilies. However, a common feeling amongst all is our longing for the real presence of our Lord in the Eucharist.

In the original St. Catharine's CLC group, we are praying with the book "*Finding God in Each Moment*" by Mertz and Smith. This has offered rich reflections on the various qualities of discernment in the progressing "moments" or "stages" in relationships with God, with others, in groups, and with the world. It is a wonderfully rich group guide with deep reflective questions and we recommend it highly to all CLC groups. George Carbone has been able to serve at the Sunday Masses which have been livestreamed for parishioners with help from Pat Brennan. Peter Mayer and his son John, have discerned a call to respond to the needs of the undocumented in Paterson, NJ by helping at a food pantry three days a week. They are provided with masks, temperature checks, and gloves on arrival and 6 feet distancing is maintained at all times as volunteers move about the center filling and gathering the bags of food. They report a three-fold increase in the number of people in the community seeking food assistance, as many in this vulnerable population have found themselves without work. Lynn Mayer, a nurse practitioner, has been responding to the call to work on hospital wards as needed, some with COVID-19 patients. Our college-age children have had to return home from college and complete their studies online. The Peace Corps sent all volunteers home, and so Paul Brennan returned home from his assignment in Namibia. He and sister Sarah have formed a little garden business and have built raised garden beds for several neighbors. Paul developed this interest in Namibia impressed by a local gardener who demonstrated the magnificence of God's generosity to us—beginning with the little seeds, becoming plants in abundance, and providing nourishment for us!

## **Saint Francis Xavier Church in NYC**

The CLC group at St. Francis Xavier “meets” on Sunday evenings. Before we met in a parish room and now we get a view into one another’s living room or rooftop spaces! A special moment during these meetings occurs when through the open windows and rooftop, we get to hear the 7 pm banging of pots-n-pans and other street sounds of cheering for the essential workers. It is a very poignant moment! The group is now reflecting on the meaning of discipleship and the models of Peter and Mary. St. Francis Xavier parish continues to offer an abundance of events such as online liturgies, Zoom rooms before Sunday Liturgy for “fellowship,” Taize prayer, webinars and more.

## **Loyola Retreat Center in Morristown, NJ**

The two groups from Loyola Retreat Center have now been together over 16 months and are finding a good groove in the processes of spiritual conversations, practices of the awareness *examen* and sharing various prayer practices. Most recent topics were on social sin and social analysis. One couple had just completed a pilgrimage to Jerusalem before the pandemic closed borders. Their experiences on location where Jesus walked, preached and ministered give an added dimension and life to some of our scripture reflections.

The pandemic has not stopped the Morristown CLC members from continuing their involvement in spiritual and community activities. Members are praying the Rosary and Stations of the Cross daily with the Loyola community, and meditating with daily reflections from the center. Several in the group participated in and/or facilitated a Loyola retreat that had to move online; the retreat filled up within a week and was a big success! A second retreat has already been scheduled since the first one was so valued and well received. One member ran an online book discussion that was so popular that it needed to be broken into two groups. Another member is pursuing a certificate in Jesuit studies at Boston College. Members are serving the community during this time in a variety of ways. Their activities include sewing and distributing masks, and making and delivering sandwiches to soup kitchens. One member is delivering meals and schoolwork, while supporting families in an area that has been severely hit by the virus. When Catholic Charities put out a desperate plea to support their Food Pantries which were completely bare, a CLC member ran a contactless, curbside drop-off food drive, which was an overwhelming success. Yet another member has put in countless hours, working on the development and improvement of wireless providers that are trying to keep up with the new demands placed on them in a time when so many schools, services, and businesses have had to move to an online environment. In a recent Zoom meeting, CLC members talked about how important this group has been in helping them continue through their daily routines and service projects in a prayerful manner, always recognizing that what they do must be done with joy and love, and be centered on Jesus, and how that motivates them when they start to become tired, afraid or frustrated. Though they long to meet together in person, the groups voiced how valuable the support, prayers and faith sharing of this community continues to be, in spite of the physical distancing.

## Reflections on Care for all God's Creation

This year is both the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day and the Fifth Anniversary of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Both anniversaries have opened reflections on the urgency to care for all God's creation. Members have facilitated and participated in webinars during *Laudato Si'* Week. During this time of pandemic where we have had to dramatically change our lifestyles, we get a sense of the radical changes needed to address the climate and environmental urgencies. Making these changes, we see that it is possible to make radical shifts in our lifestyles and that each of us making these shifts does contribute to making a BIG difference! Hope is alive in these strange times!

## WESTCHESTER CLC

The Westchester CLC has successfully met twice with the help of Zoom. Thanks to Netta Sloboda and Ann Marie Brennan we have reflected on two of the Gospels of the Easter season.

**Nancy Rodriguez** is teaching science to 6<sup>th</sup> graders online. It is not Nancy's favorite way to teach!! One of her consolations during this time has been Father Dan's reflections that come each week.

**Joan Woods** enjoys praying daily Mass with Bishop Barron or his associate. Her desolation is the treatment of the indigenous in North America and in South America during this pandemic.

**Netta Sloboda** has enjoyed praying the Mass with the community of Transfiguration, Tarrytown. She has also been praying the Liturgy of the Hours.

**Helen Long** is also working from home. (She would rather commute.) Her desolation is the homeless in New York City who have no resources or access to soap and water.

**Pat McCarthy** links up with a Mass streamed from Toronto. A Jesuit frequently presides at the daily Mass. During the "stay at home" mandate, she has been organizing photos. This task has brought her deeper gratitude for the gifts of faith, family and companions in CLC.

**MaryAnn Cassidy** has enjoyed a 30-day online retreat called "Ascending with Ignatius" given by Mark Thibodeaux. Her consolation is that her family is safe and able to work at home. Her desolation is the tremendous loss of life and suffering worldwide.

**Ellen Delaney** prays the Mass with the community of St. Agnes Cathedral, Rockville Centre, Long Island. Her consolation is the gift of awareness of God's tremendous love for her; of God's gift of forgiveness freely and lavishly given. Her daily prayer has also brought her an awareness of the need to be more physically active.

## LOCUST VALLEY CLC

**Carol Meringolo** writes that COVID-19 has impacted my spiritual life in a very powerful way. Daily reception of the Eucharist is a big void. However, stretches of time became available for prayerful reflection on scripture and seeing God in all things. Interaction with family and friends on a face to face basis was severely impacted. My immediate family and my CLC group live in close proximity to me and I was blessed with almost daily contact. COVID-19 ended that freedom which I took for granted. My volunteer work with the soup kitchen ended, and I worry about our guests and the other volunteers. I pray that God will protect all from this deadly virus.

**Nancy Head** has added her TV and computer to her domestic church because of COVID-19. Her morning routine consisted of praying at her dining room table and then going to Mass where she met George, Dorothy and Carol. Breakfast at local establishments with George and Dorothy usually followed. The TV or the computer is Mass, but there is no substitute for George, Dorothy and Carol. Spiritual Communion substitutes for the Eucharist. Bible study at St. Gertrude's was postponed indefinitely. She misses it and being a Lector, Eucharistic Minister and bringing Eucharist to the homebound. The consolations have been some wonderful homilies by Father Dan and most of the homilies on TV as well as more time during the day to spend praying or doing spiritual reading.

**George Willett** writes that change, particularly major change, has usually been my enemy. This is the case in being confronted by our pandemic and the consequent problems it has forced upon us, especially regarding our spiritual life. In my case the abrupt cessation of attending daily Mass and receiving the Eucharist was unexpected and even astounding. I never dreamt such a thing could happen. Before the change, each day began at 6am. I opened our church by 7am, set up for Mass and then sat in my favorite seat for over an hour of prayer time, until Mass started. After the change my day begins two hours later. I attend an online Mass from St. Andrew Apostle Church in Maryland. A big plus is that the Mass is wonderfully presented. The celebrant, Fr. Dan Leary, is a great homilist and I can actually hear each word. Of course, a big minus is the inability to receive the Eucharist.

I must point out that, after more than two months of the new routine, there seems to me to be a degree of consolation, an assurance that God is still very much with us, helping us to adjust to our new situation. Without a doubt I have more time for prayer at home, with no distractions. I can read for hours. There is a bit of silver lining to be found.

In addition to change in our spiritual lives, we have been very hard-hit by being separated from our families and friends. Our entire Locust Valley CLC has, with very rare exceptions, been present at Mass every morning. Following Mass, Dorothy, Nancy and I proceed to our favorite restaurant for breakfast. Accompanying our eggs we discuss many matters and, quite often, they concern CLC current affairs and things related to the editing of *Harvest* and *GO!!!*. This, of course, is a thing of the past. However, we have learned how to edit using telephone conferencing. Only yesterday we held our first CLC meeting this way, and it was very successful. We're learning.

This is a difficult time, but it certainly is not a hopeless time. God is with us. It may seem a strange concept to accept at this particular time, but what we do now may very well be All for the Greater Glory of God.