

I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and a healthy overall wellbeing. I must say that being of good cheer and with uplifted hearts may be a challenge for anyone at this particular time. This 'stay safe, stay home' and social distancing is an obstacle for us all: you may be feeling a sense of grief – the loss of safety; loss of face-to-face interactions; loss of jobs, income, future financial stability; loss of certainty; loss of freedom; feeling anger over the situation; confusion about all the reports you are receiving; denial that this just can't be so. You may find yourself bargaining... wanting to bargain that "if.....then....." You may be wondering over what to do and how to protect yourself and your neighbors, having no idea of when this will be over. All of this - even a time when we struggle with our faith and believing. Wow!!! Any of that is a lot to deal with. But we must name it and address it in order to have some power over it. We must learn to embrace the good times as well as the more challenging times.

This grieving we feel is a lot for anyone to deal with and it seems to sometimes come all at once. Grief that we are facing seems to have a life of its own – that unwelcome guest – that comes in surprise when we least expect it, is least welcome, and can overstay its visit. We all, as humans, need connection in order to thrive and grow. And when we are disconnected or disrupted in our togetherness, we can feel a deep sense of loss and grief.

Please know you are not alone! We here at St. Mary's are a community of faith and a community that welcomes all – and you are welcome to come as you are, with your grief, sadness, or even when you celebrate. Isolation and loneliness are not the same. Loneliness being the lack of companionship or a sense of belonging; isolation being separated from one another, especially when it is not by our own choice.

Please know you have a network here at St. Mary's to support you. Our DOORS MAY BE CLOSED, BUT OUR HEARTS ARE OPEN. We continue to connect through the phone, email, text and most importantly, face-to-face with ZOOM! Please sign up for one of our many offerings – Women on Wednesdays, Evening Prayer on Wednesday, Book/Bible Study on Sunday morning, and our Worship on Sunday's at 11:00am. It will certainly help with your sense of isolation, and your connectedness will hopefully chase away those moments of loneliness, reminding you that you are not alone on this spiritual journey.

Spend some time in prayer and reflection with our guide and the lover of our souls. Jesus who reminds us "Come to me all who are heavy laden, and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Give me a call and/or email me for pastoral support. If you are struggling, let me struggle with you. If your faith is lacking, let me believe for you. Let St. Mary's be the hands and feet of God for and with you. We are in this together – through this health care crisis and beyond.

God's peace and God's blessings be with you now and fill you with God's grace and love,

Rev. Susan+