



Father Kevin
McKenna
Rector, Cathedral
Community

WELCOME TO THE CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY !

OUR PARISH ONLINE NEWSLETTER

Issue 14

May 22, 2020

ALONE TOGETHER IN PRAYER

Joan Workmaster

Back weeks ago, when the announcement was made by the State of New York that there would be a "pause" in our lives and the life of our state, I thought this would be a piece of cake. I live alone and I am used to entertaining myself. Since I am prone to making lists, I got busy making lists for the pause: do more reading, especially with Scripture; be more organized in prayer; and clean out all the files of paper that rest on the shelves, nooks and crannies of the house. Several weeks later I realized that none of that list was done, and I had lapsed into a melancholy state, feeling sorry for myself. With no contact with anyone, even talking on the phone was difficult. This imposed distancing was not as easy as I thought.

That's when I really started talking to God. I wanted to live through this in a better fashion than I had been. So I decided to force myself into a positive attitude by trusting fully in God's promise that

we will not be left alone; God's hand is always stretched out to us. So, since my neighbors had exchanged phone numbers a while back, I decided I'd call down the list.

I then discovered I was not alone; others were having great difficulty getting through this time of sequester. I have always believed that God shows himself in those around us, especially the people who seem less likely to be in need.

So now I start each day in prayer with my new-found friends. We check-in with each other and share our concerns about

this illness, but we also include what we perceive as illnesses of our world, our planet, our neighborhoods and families. No long conversations or discussions. We simply state our concerns and our desire to mend the torn rights and heal the wrongs. I think that as we pray and speak our needs out loud to each other we experience the hand of God giving comfort to us. Why didn't we think of this earlier? One of the group expressed her hope that, even when this is all over, we continue to "gather" in prayer.

We are all neighbors on the block. God has blessed us with an opportunity that would have never come our way without the virus. Just imagine what might happen if a small neighborhood group from a mix of religious traditions got together and kept on praying even when the immediate crisis is passed. We are not alone. God will not leave us. Rather God joins us, pulling us together, offering wisdom and solace to all.

*I live my life in widening circles
that reach out across the world.
I may not complete this last one
but I will give myself to it.
I circle around God, around the primordial tower.
I've been circling for thousands of years
and I still don't know: am I a falcon,
a storm, or a great song?*

~ Rilke

Since I was young, I have always enjoyed trains. And train stations. An aunt whom we visited in Canada lived near a rail road track and I enjoyed watching the steam engines (!) that barreled through the small village — the huge rumble, the puffed smoke, and the whistle! There was also a small town train station near my aunt's home where I could usually be found watching the passenger trains stop four times a day. On the walls of the station were colored posters of the "exotic" vacation destinations available on Canadian Pacific. I still visit former train stations that have been converted to other purposes — such as in Avon, New York, now the site of a pub!



I was recently intrigued to read about another "station" mentioned in the book *Keep Going - 10 Ways to Stay Creative in Good Times and Bad* by Austin Kleon. He starts this book (written before the Pandemic) with a question: "Whether you're burned out, starting over, or wildly successful, the question is always: How do you keep going?" He lists ten things that have helped him remain creative with a meaningful life. One of his items is "build a bliss station." He says: "You must retreat from the world long enough to think, practice your art, and bring forth something worth sharing with others." This is your bliss station, a place and a time for creative silence. He quotes Joseph Campbell: "You must have a room, or a certain hour or so a day, where you don't know what was in the newspapers that morning ... This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be."

Could this be the time and opportunity to create a bliss station, where you can clean out the mental clutter? As Thomas Merton says, "Without this housekeeping, we cannot begin to see. Unless we see, we cannot think."

This bliss station can be the place where you welcome God. And just between the two of you, see where you have been and where you would like to go - together. Where is your bliss station? You have to try to find it.

Christ's Peace...
Father Kevin