

FIRST MEETING TO SHARE OUR EXPERIENCES

One month has now passed since our lives and routines have been changed, and I feel that we are growing as a community. We are praying more and we are helping each other, especially the more vulnerable. We are more focused on what is essential and on family life. We are more aware of our brothers and sisters all around the world.

I think that it would be useful not to lose the experiences we are having. For this reason, I would like to propose for all the parishioners an online meeting in which we can reflect and share experiences. I would like it to be focused on prayer and faith. You can prepare for the meeting answering one or more of the following questions:

- How did I live Holy Week?
- How are these new circumstances helping my life of prayer?
- Am I growing in my relationship with the Lord or not?
- What difficulties and challenges do I have now in my relationship with the Lord?
- How do I pray now?
- What lesson does God want to teach us with all of this?
- Have I been growing over the past month?

Fr Raffaele

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Val Talbot

Sat 11/04/2020 22:49

Dear Fr Raffaele

I just wanted to get in touch to thank you, Fr Luca, Fr Marco and Phil for all that you have done to enable us to still participate in the Easter liturgies. I have found it to be both a profound and humbling experience to be part of the Mass in this way. The intimate feeling of being so close to God when taking part alone has at times been over whelming.

Having been able to attend daily Mass has given many of us, who are not leaving home except for exercise, structure to our day.

Obviously, everything has been so different this year, and whilst I'm sure we cannot wait for our community to be back together, when we think back one of the highlights will be how we could still pray together [as we do now]. We have been so blessed as a parish to have you all with us.

Regards

Val

Elizabeth Layzell

Wed 22/04/2020 13:06

Dear Father Raffaele

Thank you for your email, invitation and for reaching out to us, even though we're outside your Parish; please know that we are very much in your virtual Parish and pray with you every day that we can.

I will try to answer your questions.

Am I growing in my relationship with the Lord or not?

This has helped me grow in my relationship with God by attending mass and read the children's bible to Timothy (which is something I've always said I'd get around to!)

How do I pray now?

As a family we always pray before meals and at bedtime, but having mass everyday means that whilst I'm kneeling when Mass is over, I have the opportunity, and reminder, to say my morning prayers during focused time with God.

What lesson does God want to teach us with all of this?

That faith is so important. I genuinely believe that all the rainbows around, whilst showing our support for NHS and other key-workers, is God's reminder to us that he is with us.

Have I been growing over the past month?

I feel that I am growing in faith, in love and appreciation for my family - especially those that I have not seen due to lockdown. This situation has definitely given me a chance to reflect on my faith, my relationship with God and what he wants us to appreciate.

Have a good day,

Liz, Sean and Timothy

Rachel Nunn

Wed 22/04/2020 09:16

Good Morning Father.

A few of your questions are ones I have been thinking about before you messaged!

Prayer has become so much easier at this difficult time/change and I feel much more connected with God. The lockdown has definitely helped my family and me.

I've learnt I was always "too busy" or "too tired" to really stop and pray, yet I never was. I was letting daily roles/chores get in the way when really, they weren't important.

I've always questioned why did I get my call from God when my daughter was a newborn, never slept, has bowel problems, comforting my son etc., yet again I've

become to realize it was the best timing and some things I wouldn't have got through so easily if it wasn't for God AND all of you within our parish. I feel truly blessed.

Best wishes

Rachel

Liam Brady

Fri 24/04/2020 13:08

Dear Father,

A few thoughts.

It's often hard to reconcile pain and suffering with a loving God. There has been a lot of pain and suffering in recent months which tests our faith.

I reflect on God's own sacrifice and the unimaginable suffering He put His own son through for us. Looking at the crucifix on the wall at home reminds me of that sacrifice and reassures me that we are not alone in this. He has suffered as those amongst us are now suffering.

From a scriptural point of view, I find 2 Corinthians 12:9 very comforting, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." It has helped me a lot in troubled times when I was ill last year and again now.

We are all in close quarters together now and one has a sense of the slowing down of time and the opportunity to redevelop family bonds with wife and kids that time didn't permit in the "old world". Pope John Paul said in a speech, "The future of your society, the future of humanity, passes by way of the family". That really resonates. When we all come out of this, I hope things don't change back to the old ways of rushing around.

Anyway, back to work and speak later,

Liam

Angie Cagampang

Thu 23/04/2020 21:04

Dear Fr Raffaele,

I have written my experience for you to share in the meeting. I might not have answered all the questions, but this is just how I felt.

Holy week is always a special [time] in my family where we can be together for two weeks.

Celebrating this year's Holy week on my own was very difficult. My husband is in hospital, very poorly.

Not knowing what will happen, I turned to prayers as it is the only thing I can hang on to. I know that the Lord will always be with us, as He had been in the past challenges in our lives.

I have learnt not to ask God for what I wanted to happen, instead I ask God to just give me the strength and courage when I wake up in the morning and to face these challenges with Him.

The Lord is walking with us through prayers of family and friends. And every day I ask Him to be with my husband whatever happens.

Angie

Mahima Anthraper

Thu 23/04/2020 23:29

Dear Fr Raffaele,

We had a blessed holy week. Stations of the Cross is John-Paul's all-time favourite prayer, so we did a LOT of Stations of the Cross over the lent. On Palm Sunday we had our palms ready, hoping you will bless it during Mass (and when you didn't, we decided the previous year's blessing should be good enough to run another year). On Maundy Thursday we washed each other's feet, and broke bread at home. It is in our tradition to have a Passover meal at home. For Easter we made a pascal candle and lit it, as the candle in church was lit. Children enjoyed it all very much.

But we miss Confession and Eucharist so much, even though we attend online daily Mass. This time has made me realize how much I am dependent on Holy Communion for survival.

Jesus is there with us so much that his thoughts and presence have permeated to our every thought and actions at home. Sometimes I feel like Jesus has come out of the tabernacle and entered into our home to be with us, as we cannot go to him (unworthy though we are). This is definitely a time of trial as well as a time of tremendous consolation in soul.

Lots of love and prayers

Mahima Anthraper

Carlo Sabatini

Fri 24/04/2020 10:27

Dear Fr Raffaele,

I write this simple contribution, which I think will mostly answer to the question about the lesson that God wants to teach us with all of this.

Since the lock-down started, I have learnt that if we follow the little provocations and suggestions that God makes happen around us every day, we can be happier. I will explain myself; normally, we have desires, wishes, intuitions that are for something good, e.g. a desire of helping a person who might need us, the wish of reading something constructive, the intuition of helping another person, the wish of doing an act of kindness, etc. However, in our normal routine, which is often very rushed, stressful and anxious, we disregard many of these little invitations

we feel inside, thinking, "Yes, I will do it when I have time," and then we do nothing. Instead, this forced pause from our normal routine means there is more time for considering these little, daily suggestions God gives me.

For example, one time I was running for my daily exercise, and I saw a homeless [person]. As it can sometimes happen, I thought, "It would be nice to help him!" but I didn't have any money with me. The day after it was pay day; which was surprisingly bigger than usual, because of a tax rebate. Chiara, my wife, made me notice that sometimes she does some charity when she is given more money; therefore, I added 2 and 2, remembered of the wish to help the homeless, went out and withdrew some money for him.

Another time, from school we were told we could video-record ourselves reading books for the children, that they can access on our website. I immediately followed this suggestion. As I haven't yet created a children's books collection here, I decided to read the story of the prodigal son, which we read at the Stars of Abraham. After a week, inspired by the story of the saints you fathers read before the rosary, I decided to write myself a children's story of St Peter. I also illustrated it, put it on PowerPoint and sent it across for the website. It was an incredibly satisfying adventure.

I hope I managed to evidence how saying yes to the daily desires/intuitions that God sparks in me, brings me to an experience of fullness and happiness, which wouldn't be there otherwise. I also see how I could not say yes, I wouldn't have the strength and the clarity to do that, if I did not have the Church, who always reminds me to say this 'yes'. I mean the Church not as an abstract concept, but in the person of my wife, my friends I see on Zoom, you fathers with rosary and Mass, the Pope. The Church teaches me and trains me to make myself available for what God prepares, so that saying yes to him, I can be happier.

I really hope the teaching of God during this crisis can leave a mark in me, so that I will be more available to his initiative even when everything goes back to the normal, restless routine.

Have a good day,
Carlo

Anonymous

Tue 21/04/2020 16:48

Dear Fr Raffaele,

I am finding more time to say a daily Rosary although that may be partly due to my mother's example. She died in January constantly saying the Rosary up to the point of death, dying with her beads in her hands while we were saying the Glorious Mysteries.

I think I am praying more possibly thinking of those who are dying alone and for protection from this virus for my family.

I pray when I'm out walking, when I'm on my exercise bike and at different times of the day, but always at night before sleep.

I think that God may be teaching us to respect Nature as nature appears to be fighting back against all the pollution. The birdsong is wonderful at the moment and everywhere (apart from the supermarkets) is peaceful. To a certain extent we have had very easy lives so perhaps this time will teach us to appreciate our surroundings and what we have more.

I hope this goes well for you,
All Best Wishes

Lorraine Smith

Wed 22/04/2020 12:04

Dear Fr. Raffaele,

I have thought about the questions you have posed.

What difficulties and challenges do I have now in my relationship with the Lord? The challenges I face now are not with my relationship with the Lord but with myself.

With isolation being imposed on one it provides a lot of time to reflect and learn about oneself.

What have I learnt?

I cherish my freedom - which now feels challenged.

I cherish my simple daily routines which gave me pleasure and a sense of certainty and security - these have gone.

I cherish the connections I have with my family, friends and the wider community - this is now more difficult.

I cherish being able to comfort someone, be there for them, some of my friends have lost loved ones and I physically could not be there for them which I find very painful.

I cherish being able to put my arms around them; often no words are needed just that loving embrace.

I cherish feeling that sense of physical closeness which is no longer possible.

I cherish my relationship with the Lord. I know that He is there for me, but I also have a need to feel needed.

All these elements or I should say lots of them have left me with a sense of insecurity and fear.

What have I been doing to try and accept, grow and learn from this situation I now find myself in?

In terms of my faith I have had to go back to basics. By that I mean through prayer and a dialogue with the Lord.

When I open my eyes in the morning the first thing I do is to thank the Lord for being there with me during the night and for gifting to me a new and beautiful day. I thank Him for the bird song (4.30am!). I thank Him for the rising sun and

I thank Him because I know that He will be by my side throughout the day which will be rich in opportunities to do His work and I pray that He will give me the vision to see those opportunities.

During the day I have tried exploring how I can be there for and help others. I know that the joy of giving is a two-way very positive emotion. I went to visit my elderly friend (92yrs) who has been self-isolating for 8 weeks. Both her only son and daughter died last year so she is very much on her own. I took my Ukulele and over the garden hedge we sang "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine" together. It uplifted her but I also gained so much by being able to make her smile. As and when my iPad behaves, I have taken the opportunity to participate in the live streamed Mass and Zoom meetings which I have really enjoyed both for their spiritual richness and sense of closeness with my spiritual family.

I phone my family, friends and spend time listening to them and hear how they have spent or coped with their day.

I take the opportunity to [go] shopping for others who are unable to go out.

Finally, before I close my eyes at night, I give thanks to the Lord for getting me through another day and think about all the rich and positives things that have happened knowing that the Lord was by my side.

God bless,

Lorraine

Samantha Harris

Wed 22/04/2020 13:36

Dear Fr Raffaele,

I feel God is challenging me to find new ways or rediscover old ways of prayer and connecting with Him as the challenges of isolation go on. I usually try to pray several offices but now I need to be more creative, with lectio meditation and finding Him in nature walks near to my home and trying to go deeper into a silent union. I need to go beyond the words and imagery to connect with Him.

He has made me realise the answer to a question I have been asking Him for a couple of years, as this situation helps me to understand that I cannot live without community, as I now see how my faith is nurtured by being with other Christians. The variety of resources are so vital at this time even as the situation overwhelms me, it's good to know our Priests are available to talk, other members of the parish family can offer help, we can still make connections and plans.

God bless,

Sam

Dominic Lodge

Wed 22/04/2020 19:04

Dear Father Raffaele

As I have got older, I have become more contemplative. I have over the last few years valued stillness, meditation, quiet time with the Lord. I have rediscovered being in love with God.

Since the lockdown & not being able to celebrate the Eucharist with my parish family in person, I have spent time during the day to be still & enjoy, appreciate what is around me - a loving family, good and kind neighbours, the joy of connecting every day with my work colleagues through the work we do as NHS employees.

In prayer I have rediscovered St. Teresa of Avila & her prayer as follows has helped me in these lockdown days:

Let nothing disturb you.

Let nothing upset you.

Everything changes.

God alone is unchanging.

With patience all things are possible.

Whoever has God lacks nothing.

God alone is enough.

These words have brought comfort.

With every blessing

Dominic

John Williams

Thu 23/04/2020 17:12

Dear Fr Raffaele

I would like to share something of a blessing which came about in a nursing home in Holy Week. It is about Michael, a new Catholic, who I normally visit regularly, with no family and who was received into the Church, very late in life, 5 or 6 years ago. He had been receiving the sacraments weekly from Holy [C]ross.

I telephoned, on Holy Thursday, and we talked about the streaming of Mass. I then asked to speak to the matron about it. She agreed immediately to arrange for him to participate in the coming Mass on Easter Sunday. And it happened.

His disabilities had prevented him from attending Mass for 2 years or more. It seemed almost like a miracle to him that this should suddenly be made possible.

He is admired in the home for his obvious strength of faith. He said at the time of Bishop Philip's parish visitation how much he wished he could meet the Bishop's

challenge to us all to bring at least one new soul to the Church. What he is doing in the remoteness of the home will surely bear fruit.

Just before the lock-down started, I began reading the inspirational book “A song for Nagasaki”, not expecting to find striking comparisons between events then and now. I soon reached the point where the atomic bomb had fallen and destroyed much of the historic Catholic district of Japan, including the Catholic cathedral. I discovered that tens of thousands of Japanese Catholics had been killed in the 1600s as traitors for asking for baptism by abandoning the national religion. The Japanese hero of the book (Nagai) demonstrated the love and strength of the Catholic faith he had turned to from his own religion, and then atheism, along the way. He and his family then quietly lived the faith to a level rarely reached by any in the West. This allowed him to view this catastrophic event, brought about by mankind, in the light of God’s wisdom, and to explain it to his own people, and eventually to the whole Japanese nation.

A glimpse into how this was possible is the use he made of some well-known words of Christ as a mantra he found himself repeating as he managed to stagger from the epicentre into the countryside to rejoin his family. The words were, “The heavens and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away”.

Our current event is at least as great a disaster, but heroism is found everywhere, and God is ever present to guide us through. (I then bought the book that Nagai quotes as the biggest influence in his conversion).

Regards

John Williams

Kamila Nadaska

Fri 24/04/2020 09:07

Dear Father Raffaele,

I can only say about my lockdown life as a mother if that’s enough.

I carry on mostly the same things we did before and just maybe a little bit more.

I feel that God gave us an extra time which I don’t want to waste. I try to follow the liturgical year with my children and do lots of art activities related to the gospels, Holy week or other special celebrations (like Divine Mercy Sunday).

Now, with the month [of] May coming, we have been preparing Mary’s garden in one corner of our garden. The girls have chosen the spot where we will do it and they have started weeding it.

But I would share today our Divine Mercy chaplet which I put as our daily prayer now. We offer it for the souls who died because of corona virus. Many of them were unprepared to meet our God. To make it more meaningful for the children, I had an idea to make a picture of Heaven. I encourage my children to draw a picture of one person after we pray a Divine Mercy Chaplet. They can count how many people are happy now in Heaven because of them.

I also manage to pray whole rosary with the children because of our Zoom meeting. They absolutely love seeing other people there and waving at the end. Before, during our evening prayer, we prayed only one or two decades of rosary. I felt that it was exactly enough for them as they usually do lots of other stuff during rosary like gymnastics, jumping from the window to the sofa etc. During the Zoom rosary, they don't do this because they have a respect and you can see them.

Also, praying the holy rosary as a whole community is amazing. We wouldn't have prayed it if there hadn't been a corona virus.

And I feel that our shepherds didn't abandon us in this situation and they are present here... for us.... waking us up in the mornings and putting us to bed in the evenings.

God bless,

Kamila

Shirley Griffin

Thu 23/04/2020 11:07

Dear Fr Raffaele,

Holy week for me was a surprise, it was as special as always because I was able to attend all the Triduum services, and still felt the sense of belonging even though I was alone.

This time of isolation has, for me, been a time of reflection: I have always known God is present in my life, and that Jesus walks beside [me] each day, but think it was something I took for granted, but these past few [weeks] have helped me understand that we are never alone.

I have found myself remembering long unused prayers, and little quotations that are particularly relevant.

I pray for those who do not have the solace of knowing our loving God, and hope that they will find the peace that knowing him can bring.

Many thanks for all your caring works.

God Bless you always

Shirley

June Wilson

Thu 23/04/2020 07:09

Dear Father

I would like to answer how I spent Holy Week based on a talk given by the Bishop of Nottingham. Holy Thursday, I made an offer of myself, concentrating on the words of the last supper, giving Jesus my anxieties, worries etc. Good Friday, I told Jesus my hopes and desires, kissed the crucifix and said thank you. Saturday,

I made an act of contrition, let God's light bless me. Sunday, I concentrate on the Baptismal promises.

Am I closer to Jesus? Yes, but wanting to get closer through Mary and eventually finding the answer with St Faustina. If she had a dialogue with Jesus himself and still needed Mary, then I do too.

Best wishes

June

Jane Crowe

Wed 22/04/2020 20:44

Good evening Father Raffaele,

I am a parishioner at OLQA.

Firstly, unlike some of my friends without a faith, I have no fear of the situation. That is because I believe God is in full control. Like everyone else, I have no idea what the outcome will be, but I know this is part of His plan, and we are safe in His hands.

Secondly, because I no longer have to run around with 101 commitments, I find I now have time to just be, and reflect on life and my purpose in it. I pray more, and I enjoy my faith more, simply because I have more time to talk to God. For me, He feels more present in this situation than I felt He was before, if that makes sense.

Kind Regards,

Jane Crowe

Maria Appleton

Wed 22/04/2020 18:24

Dear Fr. Raffaele,

The reciting of the rosary has made me realise again what a wonderful prayer it is and I feel it somehow connects me more with my parents and sister who have passed on. I use the rosary beads that they bought me from Lourdes when they went during my mother's illness. It's a prayer we should say more often than just doing so in May and October. I will try to continue it after we are all back to normal.

The feeling of peace I feel is because by sharing Mass and the rosary with you all, I know we are not on our own and the Lord and his mother are watching over us.

Many, many thanks and Gods Blessings on you all

Maria

Moira Moriarty

Wed 22/04/2020 15:27

Dear Father Raffaele,

Jim and I have discussed the topics and these are some of our feelings.

We have really valued the services from Holy Cross and thank you all for the work involved.

It is not just being part of the Mass or service but of feeling part of the community. We have come to realise how much we value being part of a supportive, warm faith community.

This period has certainly helped us to focus on the importance of faith, family and friendship above all else....and of course, hope, which leads us forward.

Our prayer has become deeper with more time to reflect, a greater awareness of the world around us and of the wider world who are suffering just as much or more than ourselves. There is much to pray about.

At times it is difficult to understand God's 'role' in this situation...why is He allowing such suffering?

There is a conflict between praying for His help yet knowing that He could take this all away.

We need to trust and believe that this will gradually bring about a change in our values and the way we live.

It is interesting that it has taken this crisis for key workers to be appreciated and valued; let us hope that this perception continues and influences young people in their choices for the future.

We have reflected on the fact that our freedom has been curtailed, yet in some ways we feel more 'free'.

We have perhaps become more creative, thoughtful, supportive of others and are learning again to enjoy simple pleasures.

Keep well,

Best wishes,

Moira & Jim

Lynette Washford

Wed 22/04/2020 12:13

Dear Father Raffaele

I have found this period of self-isolation a time of growth in my relationship with God. I have been able to sit in His peace and enjoy His presence. I have especially been aware of Him in nature. Nature goes on whatever is happening in the World. In the midst of death new life is blossoming. It is amazing what I have seen over the last month, how the trees have changed and come to life, flowers bloomed, birds, bees and butterflies appearing, the different types of birdsong, textures and shades of colour. Everything is vibrant with life. This is God's Creation.

I know my neighbours much better now. In my flats we have become a Community who are there for one another. This is truly a blessing. God is good and He is bringing good out of this terrible situation. He speaks into the midst of it.

Don't get me wrong, this is a horrendous situation we are in, with so much loss and suffering. People are suffering in all sorts of ways and we all just want it to end but God is bringing good out of it.

I have my down times when I long for company, especially if I am in pain. I long to see my children and my grandchildren and to give them a hug. I long for my Church and my Community and to be able to receive the Sacraments again, but I am very blessed, I have a computer, I can join the Mass on the live stream and other things as well, I can see my family in this way, there are many who can't do that, particularly the older people. I am also very blessed that I can go out for my walk every day and the weather has been truly a blessing.

I have been able to spend more time in prayer and Bible reading and interceding for others, this also has been a blessing as has been speaking to people on the telephone.

Yes, there have been many Blessings in this time, I hope that I will continue to grow and these blessings won't be lost when we eventually come out of this and get back to some sort of normality.

Best wishes

Lynette

Joanna Azavedo-Parker

Wed 22/04/2020 06:48

Dear Father Raffaele

People talk about these difficult times and actually the flip side is that we are given the opportunity to recognise the small things and enjoy the simpler life. I talk to Jesus every day and very sporadically. I will sing or pray a Hail Mary or the Hail Holy Queen which is my favourite prayer, at odd moments. I find myself singing in prayer and praying out loud but quietly whilst queuing at the supermarket every week. Other people are on their phones but I stand, slowly moving forwards saying a decade of the rosary or singing the words "God I look to you, I'll not be overwhelmed, give me vision to see things like you do. You're where my help comes from. Give me wisdom. You know just what to do". It's one of the songs I was going to use for the play.

The lesson I think God is teaching is that we have not appreciated what we have. We have abused our world and the people in it. This is time to listen more to Him and to show our love for our neighbour. I've always felt that challenges are opportunities in many ways and the obvious one is to lean on the Lord...

I forgot to say that work is impacted hugely.

It is vital as Christians that we don't wear our faith like a coat which we leave at the door on a Sunday. I take my faith and literally wear it every day and this situation has highlighted the need to listen to clients and residents more rather than force them into a process to suit the business. It's a challenge I have faced since working with EBC for two years almost. Now it is accepted that we have to treat people as individuals. I pray that this is a lesson the Council learn for the long term and not just for now. This situation has enabled me to bring Jesus to the public on occasion in a call. Or to a colleague when I check in on them. Three months ago, I would have eventually been told to stop. So, there is a lot of good that can come out of this in my work world and I am sure I am not the only Christian there.....they just need to be brave enough to be visible. Everyone knows that with Joanna comes Jesus at EBC. Everyone should know this.

Joanna

Edith Bosman

Fri 24/04/2020 01:14

Hello Father Raphael,

Holy week is a favourite time of the year for me. A time to experience the Passion of Christ with other parishioners. During this time, I always feel as a parish we are closer connected, because we focus on Jesus and his love for us. I missed being with everyone at Holy Cross Church and I found that difficult, however I was thankful that all the priests worked so hard at making the services for Holy week possible. I was able to participate in every service. Even though it felt like Quentin and I, besides the priests were the only two in church, I knew that there were many more parishioners following the live stream services.

Somehow, I felt that I had extra time to say my prayers. I listened to praise and worship songs daily and this has helped me feel closer to The Lord. I look forward to receiving the Holy Eucharist again, but I welcome the beautiful spiritual prayer we say at mass every day.

My biggest challenge is reading the scriptures, but I am going to go over the scripture readings for each mass and the homilies as they are recorded. I am enjoying the homilies and paying more attention to them. I have developed a stronger desire to strengthen my faith.

Thank you

Edith

Clare Lasker

Fri 24/04/2020 11:32

Dear Father Raffaele,

Just a few thoughts on how these new circumstances are helping my life of prayer. I feel I am praying now more than usual and focussing more on Jesus and His sacrifice for us which was emphasised by the Holy Week liturgies. I am now more conscious of what I am praying for and with more sincerity. I also remember to give thanks to God for all I have and especially for the privilege of daily Mass and the Rosary. I feel that my faith has been strengthened by the present circumstances thus enabling me to realise what are the most important things in life.

With best wishes

Clare.

Steve Docherty

Fri 24/04/2020 11:15

Dear Fr Raffaele

We have been considering your questions. Each day the homily at Mass has one or two key points which we can then meditate on, take time to consider the messages, and as such pray in a more informal way, raising the mind and heart to God. As you know prayer can be thought of as saying formal prayers like the Our Father or Hail Mary or perhaps asking God for something, but having thoughts and messages to consider make for prayer to also be a conversation with the Lord. You, Fr Luca and Fr Marco are all good at putting these messages to us and we thank you for that. We have found this an uplifting way to take us through mid-morning each day.

Best wishes

Steve and Kathleen

Veronica Nanson

Thu 23/04/2020 15:24

Dear Father

Before the Coronavirus, like most other people, I had become very materialistic about life, and took everything for granted, but hadn't been aware of it.

I went to church almost every day, and said my prayers at night, kneeling at the side of the bed. Also saying prayers during the day. Perhaps whilst driving my car or in the kitchen, garden, whenever I wanted to have a talk with God. I tried to think of other people in my dealings with them. In other words, I tried to love my neighbour.

Then came the Coronavirus.

There is a saying that every cloud has a silver lining and I feel we are proving this to be true.

It isn't easy to be confined to our homes, but I now really appreciate the work others do to make my life comfortable and very worth living.

I appreciate the efforts of all the NHS staff. The carers in our community who look after the elderly, disabled and those recuperating from operations. The dustbin men who stop our streets being overrun with vermin.

For the first time in a long time, I see neighbours shopping for those unable to shop themselves. Although people cross to the other side of the road to comply with social distancing, they often shout a cheery Good morning or Good afternoon. Neighbours giving a smile and wave to each other. Through modern technology families are making more of an effort to stay in touch. Before there was always the feeling that we could always visit, but now, there is an awareness that those we took for granted, may not be around for that visit.

My family and friends have taken on a greater importance. We text each other 2 or 3 or even more, times a day.

Every morning I attend mass, via the internet and in the evenings we say the Rosary and can ask questions or just make a comment about our day. I am so grateful to you, our amazing priests for your dedication. I have learnt much about the Saints in our churches, that I knew were there, but never took the trouble to find out about. About the visitations of Our Lady and her love for us. Again, my ignorance shone through. The children's Story Time, before the Rosary, me almost putting my hand up to answer the questions and enjoying the sheer fun of all being together.

The world, or my part of it, has become quieter, more peaceful. The air quality has improved, I have noticed more butterflies, heard more birds singing...

In concluding, my relationship with God feels stronger than ever. It has changed, I feel a closeness, a peacefulness and a joy which I had lost sight of.

Veronica

Sandra Hubbard

Fri 24/04/2020 09:26

Hello Father,

I have to say my recent communication with you and your fellow priests, talking and joining your masses, made me reflect and brought me closer to God. I do feel the more a person puts into their faith the more they get out of it. I do feel God is always there whenever one turns to him - like a parent to a child - listening, encouraging, supporting but ultimately understanding choices are theirs, for them to learn from, wise ones and not so wise.

With kind wishes,

Sandra

Pauline O'Neill

Sun 26/04/2020 14:40

My reflection: NURSING IN AN NHS HOSPITAL of DECISIONS

Which Patient? Which Consultant, Which SHO, Which Nurse? Which treatment?
Which Drugs? Which PPE, Which Room? Which Entrance? Which Ambulance?
and on and on

The Constant is God Our Father, The Constant is the Liturgies, The Constant is
Our Parish Community

Eric Lasker

Fri 24/04/2020 16:34

Dear Father Raffaele

My love for our Lord has always been there, but it has grown in depth and awareness of opportunities to serve him. The cynicism when being goaded by our unwanted friend is becoming much less frequent, because at that moment I say an impromptu prayer which more often than not helps.

The power of God can be overwhelming, reducing me to someone of slight importance, especially when I think of his unending universe in its beauty.

Eric

Madeline Wood

Thu 23/04/2020 12:13

Dear Fr Raffaele

In these weeks I have found a lot to be thankful for. After 2 very busy years it has been welcomed to have a slower pace of life. Prayer has been essential in getting through this period. Trust in God and surrender to the process brings a calmness. For me meditation is the way to deepening the relationship with God and to continuously count our many blessings.

It has been interesting to reflect on how it is possible to grow in faith without being able to physically go to Mass and receive Communion. It has underlined for me that the central aspects of faith are a deep personal relationship with God which in turn leads to Gospel values at the heart of all we do and say. That means caring for our neighbour as ourselves. We can't go to God alone.

With our prayers and thanks to you all

Madeleine & Barrie

Fr Raffaele Cossa

Conclusion of the meeting:

After listening to your contributions, I would like to highlight four points that you touched on.

1. Prayer. The relationship with the Lord is something we are discovering, something we desire and something fulfilling. We shouldn't lose this!
2. Friendship. We are discovering the value of friendship, of sharing and of being together. We see that we need others.
3. We are accepting the circumstances with positivity. We are learning that saying 'yes' to circumstances brings peace and consolation.
4. We are discovering that there is a place, the Church, where we can be ourselves, where we can share our happiness and sadness, joys and struggles; a place where we are helped in our journey.

Have a good evening!