

Pastoral Care

December 2020

Issue 8

Pastoral Care Newsletter

Introduction

By Joseph Viti

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Chaplain 5146

Priest 5205

COVID-19 is the “Grinch” who stole Christmas. We are all familiar with the story, by Theodore “Dr. Seuss” Geisel, about a nasty, grumpy man who plots to steal Christmas from the people of Whoville. The people of Whoville all love Christmas. The Grinch succeeds in stealing all of the gifts and decorations the people of Whoville have prepared for their joyful celebration. As the people of Whoville become very distraught when they discover the material things of their Christmas are missing, a girl named Cindy Lou decides that Christmas is not about presents and decorations. It is about being together. Soon a number of people of Whoville begin singing. The Grinch hears the singing and wonders how it is possible people can be so cheerful after he worked so hard to bring about misery? As he continues to listen, the joyous emotion of the song “gets” to him. His shriveled heart grows three times its size. The Grinch then decides to return what he stole from the people of Whoville. He apologizes to them for his misdeeds.

That is exactly what these two articles are all about. Christmas is a feast that is larger than the way we celebrate it. Sr. Miriam, taking a personal approach, reminds us that the disrupting grief over of COVID – 19 reminds us to create peace by taking care of our own needs, staying connected with family and friends as best we can, being alert to problems we can do something about, and comforting a loved ones. God’s peace is present in actions that reach out to suffering.

Amanda draws upon scripture (Matt. 1:23) and theology to deepen our awareness that Jesus knows he is entering our world of those who mourn in lonely exile. “The Emanuel God (The God who is with us) wades fully into the human experience including the experience of struggle and loneliness...The brokenness of this world does not stop God from coming to make all things new.”

Both of these perspectives are encouraging, consoling, and meaningful during these times of stress, grief, and sorrow. Merry Christmas

Christmas 2020 By Amanda Horan

How do we *do* Christmas in the midst of a pandemic? This year, the COVID-19 virus took and continues to take so much from us. Lost jobs and homes. Lost peace of mind. Lost rituals and traditions. Lost celebrations. Lost lives. For some, no part of “normal” life remains intact. Yet, Christmas still comes. Christmas comes while we wear masks, physically distance, and limit gatherings. Christmas comes while we worry about what the coming months will bring. Christmas comes while we grieve what we cannot get back. So how can there be Christmas in the midst of a pandemic?

Perhaps for us this year, the well-known words of a beloved Christmas hymn might take on new meaning: “O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.” On Christmas, we celebrate the birth of God’s Son, who enters the world in the midst of those who mourn in lonely exile. As the writer of Matthew reminds us, the word Emmanuel means “God is with Us” (Mt. 1:23). God, in the person of Jesus, comes to be with us in our mourning and suffering.

Jesus’ nativity narratives witness to God’s embodied entrance into the world with all its brokenness and struggle. After the pregnant Mary and her betrothed, Joseph, separately receive miraculous announcements about Jesus’ conception, the pair travel some 90 miles from their home in Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census maintained by the empire (Lk. 2:1-5). In Bethlehem, Mary gives birth, and the baby Jesus is wrapped in bands of cloth and laid to rest in a manger because there was no room at the inn (Lk. 2:7).

Perhaps most jarringly, the news about Jesus’ birth spreads to King Herod with dire consequences. In his rage and lust for power, the king sentences every male child under the age of two to death in Jesus’ birth city (Mt. 2:16). An angel warns Joseph in a dream about the growing threat to his new baby’s life, and the young family escapes to Egypt (Mt. 2:19-21).

As the holy family awaits an end to King Herod’s looming vengeance, their safety comes in the form of a kind of exile. In Egypt, Mary and Joseph begin the work of raising their little child alone, away from their family and their home.

From conception to the first years of childhood, the Emmanuel God wades fully into the human experience, including the experience of struggle and loneliness. The joy of new life mingles with the grief of loss, the pain of separation, and the uncertainty about what will come next. Into all of this, Jesus comes. The brokenness of the world does not stop God from coming. In fact, knowing the world’s brokenness firsthand, God in Christ comes to make all things new. May all of us living in a pandemic-exile be sustained by a renewed coming of Jesus Christ in our hearts this year. O come, O come, Emmanuel.



Coping With Loss 2020 by Sister Miriam

“Lord make me an instruments of your Peace,” words from the prayer of St. Francis are most appropriate in this time of worry, anxiety, confusion, and extreme loneliness due to the prolonged effects of COVID 19 especially as Christmas approaches.

Yet, Christmas is the season of peace. We sing “Let there be Peace on Earth and let it begin with me” or “Joy to the World the Lord has come” and we anticipate fun days ahead. However the CORONA 19 Virus is lurking all around us. How will we find peace?

Things that would normally be peaceful and good for us, for instance family gatherings, church attendance, shopping trips, vacations, eating out with friends or having family or friends to our homes for Christmas are all dangerous today. As we approach the Christmas season our biggest question is how do we celebrate in a safe way yet be careful not to spread the virus. An even bigger question is how are we going to keep our own spirits and the spirits of our family and friends positive and upbeat? How will we cope with loss and grief from COVID 19 especially during the holiday season? This year 2020 is the most unusable year of all. We want to be joyful, but we must also deal with loss and grief.

It is important to grieve. We see grief affect people differently: loneliness, anger, guilt and sadness. It robs people of peace. We need to own the grief and accept it and move on from it. We must be gentle with ourselves. There is no right way to grieve.

Grief can also cause positive feelings like gratitude for our family, friends, and jobs. It can call us into a time of prayer and reflection that enables us to accept and realize God’s wonderful love for us. All this brings us to the gift of peace.

In a booklet called, “Grief During COVID 19 - Coping with Loss” there are many suggestions to help us through this unusual time. Some important actions to take during this COVID 19 Virus to help ourselves and others in this time of grief and isolation are:
TAKE CARE OF YOU OWN NEEDS: Express your feelings, be kind to yourself, get plenty of rest and stay healthy. **STAY CONNECTED:** Stay connected with family and friends through phone conversations about family activities, traditions, favorite foods, and favorite places you have been. **BE ALERT TO PROBLEMS:** If your grief is depressing and causing you to be uncertain about the future, seek professional help. **COMFORT A LOVED ONE:** Be a good listener, help with chores, errands or meals. And most importantly, ask how you can help.

When all is said and done we can be an Instrument of God’s peace. We can make a difference to someone else which will come back to us also as a gift of peace.
May the peace of Jesus be with you in these pandemic times.



Alumnus/Corner

Where Are They Now?



Rev. Dr. John Malone
Chaplain and Spiritual Care Coordinator
(Hospice)
Southwest General Hospital

*There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot.
Ecclesiastes 3:1-2*

Greeting SVCMC Family,

The year of 2020 has been filled with many changes and challenges, which included me serving the St. Vincent family as a Resident Chaplain and graduating the program the fall of 2020.

I’ve since continued serving in the local church ministry as a Senior Pastor of Faith Alliance Bible Church in Cleveland. I was excited and grateful to have been offered a position at Southwest General Hospital as a Spiritual Care Coordinator (Chaplain) in the area of Outpatient Hospice.

I have the opportunity to continue my journey of providing spiritual care for the patients, families, and staff of Southwest General, while coordinating services and programs that focus on spiritual care. I remain grateful for the education and rich experience I received from St. Vincent Chaplain Residency Program. I truly miss the St. Vincent family, you will always hold a



Calendar of Events

December 2020

- 16-17 Christmas Luncheon
- 21 Christmas Service
- 22 Integrated Care Clinic
- 24 Christmas Eve Mass
- 25 Christmas Day No Mass
- 26 – 01 Kwanzaa African celebration

January 2021

- 1 New Year’s Day
- 18 Martin Luther King Jr, Day
- 22 Zella Hall

Newsletter Editors:

Sister Miriam Erb, VP Mission and Ministry
Joe Viti, ACPE Educator/Director of Pastoral Care
Rev. Sibi Kuriakose, Staff Chaplain/Asst. Director of Pastoral Care
Amanda Horan, CPE Student Resident