

If anything has steadied me in these “Pandemic Times,” it is providence. As I write today I do so out of a spirit of deepening peace and a quiet joy...a sense that this is where I am and where I need to be. March 20 held a new experience for me of being laid-off from full-time employment at St. Scholastica Church. It was and continues to be a sobering experience because of the uncertainty of a future for anyone ministering in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. I’m feeling that “the writing is on the wall,” and that is disconcerting for me who likes to know. Yet, God has provided daily insights that settle me. Two keys ones have been, “Patty, don’t run ahead of grace,” and “Your love and your grace are enough for me.”

But, on the other hand, it’s been a natural cause of joy to figure out ways to continue to be with the people of the parish I love deeply through group and individual emails, e-cards and phone calls. Our shared faith and dedication to one another and beyond has been a profound expression of who we are called to be as church. We share a sincere longing to be with one another again, as well as a painfully deep hunger for the Eucharist. My call to pastoral ministry and that of the volunteers I work with is genuinely alive! While my role as a church musician is non-existent right now (very hard for me), my call to comfort bereaved families and encourage and re-assure all the parishioners I can is quite active. And in knowing where my heart is these days, “Visibly in all things do I see the wonderful providence of God.”

Our local community (Carol, Paulita and I) has truly been a blessing beyond measure. Our generous daily time of shared prayer has formed the core of our home. Our home is squeaky clean now in having cleaned and worked alongside each other in that venture. Our meals have been shared in a deeper spirit of eucharist. Because we are with each other so much in this time of confinement, we are witnessing the presence of Christ in each other all the more. Our affirmations of and responses with each other reflect genuine love and concern. And we laugh with each other...so important at this time to keep up our morale.

Personally, I am so grateful for the gift of time to be still with God in contemplative prayer, to be more aware of and delighted by the unexpected blessings that each day holds, to get out in the fresh air by walking in the nearby cemetery, to be a bit kinder to myself by getting sufficient rest, to be able to slow down (without guilt) and savor the present moment. At times I am sad and anxious, yet I am not afraid. As these times are tempering my need to control, I am experiencing a new freedom in God’s time and way. I hope the same is true for you as you read this. I bless you with all my power to bless and hold you all in my heart and prayer! —Sr. Pat Baker, CDP