



Participants in our humble group asked that I share with you a few of the thoughts that came up at our first virtual encounter since social distancing began – an offering in case it is useful as we all try to make sense of our coming weeks in the face of COVID. I tremble a little to send it, hoping not to over-step, but to let you in on a piece of what your parish/cathedral has been up to.

We invited a sharing of "what is stirring" in the midst of all this. I noticed that on waking, I could not quite situate myself in the day, the coming week, or the world. This morning was completely different from the one before. Upheaval, uncertainty, shifting sand. And each person in the group had some way in which this was true for them as well. The number of words is generally few.

Themes that arose included the safety that is home; fear for frail friends; hard decisions about plans made long ago; the significance of congregating, worship, and fellowship; and the true meaning of lent and of crucifixion. Yes, a lot of territory, not many words, and a time of silent contemplation.

We ended feeling as though our church has a huge opportunity here, and that's what we wanted to share with you. This is a moment when it may help to frame the all-consuming fervour of logistics as a piece of a sacred journey. One thing we sometimes touch on in this group is the importance of the spiritual sweet spot at the centre of every paradox. And this crisis raises many paradoxes, maybe more for the church than anyone else.

***Hands that reach out to care – hands that reach out could kill***  
***Gathering that quenches loneliness – gathering that brings fear***  
***Wine and bread that feed soul – wine and bread that threaten the body***  
***A time like no other to "do church" – a time like no other to stay home***

And the list goes on.

And in the midst of every paradox is the opportunity, if we hold that space patiently, for the truth of love to bubble up. Holding the space between in silence, stillness, solitude allows spirit to flow in and answers to flow out.

And so we noticed some questions arising like:

***What would happen if we spent time in reverence to, rather than consuming, the elements?***  
***What would happen if we spent time calling every frail person, assuring them it is OK to stay home, and offering to call again?***  
***What would happen if we could not count on our usual rituals for now, and discovered new ways to express what is Holy and important in this new reality?***

So, I leave you with those. It was a rich time. Thanks for listening. ■