

So how is 'social distancing' going for everyone? I hate it.....I'm fine all day by myself – until it comes time to eat. And then I want company! I DID do a ZOOM dinner with friends from DC, and I was surprised that it was in fact a pretty good experience. Not as good as being together in person, but not bad.

This pandemic requires adjustments from all of us. And while I have the things I whine about, I know they are nothing compared to those who are stuck in a single room in a nursing home, or worse yet, those who are on breathing support in a hospital room, hanging between this world and the next. There is always a way of readjusting our perspective if we are open to it.

As church, suddenly I find myself in a high-tech world, which I have entered kicking and screaming my entire life. I never was a big computer fan. But now Mass is 'on the website', 'streamed' with a variety of platforms including ZOOM, FACEBOOK, Children's Liturgy of the Word (the kids probably embrace this much better than me!), online Bible studies and more. We're trying to connect virtually. I want to connect FOR REAL. But I guess I have to admit that it is 'real' – at least as 'real' as it can be at this time. Better for a ZOOM dinner than no ZOOM at all!

Social Distancing is the new buzz phrase. With so many things cancelled or postponed indefinitely, we are very careful about stepping out the door. We don't shake hands; no sign of peace. Many wear masks. We wash our hands RELIGIOUSLY!!!! So we're hunkering down with at least a slight sense of optimism – IF we have hand sanitizer and plenty of toilet paper!

And the statistics all tell us that social distancing thing is the thing to do. We need to comply.

But we need to remember that GOD quite emphatically does not practice social distancing. It is not in God's nature to be distant. The central event in the story of salvation is the incarnation – God ENTERING INTO OUR WORLD, OUR EXPERIENCE, OUR VERY LIVES. He never left it – leaving us His Spirit, never departing from us, for He is EMMANUEL – GOD-WITH-US. God will not and does not distance Himself from us. God has not done so in the past, God is not doing it now and God will not ever do it. He remains constant; His love ever present. He holds His people especially close in times of suffering, whether we may 'feel' it or not. God's nature does not change. He IS Emmanuel. Always and forever. God with us.

This is a theme that runs throughout Scripture. God is near us, not distant from us. As St. Paul reminds us: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

In the weeks and months to come, social distancing will require us to make sacrifices and find new ways of staying connected. But as Paul reminds, God will be with us no matter where we are. (help and inspiration from the ministry team at HOMILETICS ONLINE)

Stay strong in He who is our Strength. He remains with us. Always. I pray for you every day.....may we continue to be a voice of comfort and support and strength to one another – and to our neighbors!