



The Marianists

Reflections on Easter - And Small Acts of Faithfulness

- In the Shadow of Covid-19

By **Tom Wendorf**

“I just want to stay home.” I’ve often said or thought that while having to go someplace else. These days, shadowed by the coronavirus, we live with the imperative: “Stay at home.”

As a Marianist brother, I enjoy a level of security I never considered in my youthful discernment: employment, good healthcare, a beautiful home and a community to share my life with. The pandemic has made clear how many people don’t have this safety net. At the Marianist Novitiate community in Dayton, Ohio, we are doing our best to be aware of and share the burdens and changes this pandemic has imposed on the world.

My most heroic tasks during this Easter season are grocery shopping at Kroger’s, teaching three University of Dayton courses online and trying to live our common life faithfully — even when I feel like holing up in my room with my own quiet desperations.

During the unfolding weeks of social distancing and social awareness, our dinner and community conversations have changed. Eating meals and praying together have changed, too. Our daily rhythm of prayer, more than ever, is part of our work for the world. We’ve also added two afternoons of praying the rosary for healing and transformation — small acts of faithfulness — but I believe in the efficacy of God’s grace in and through them.

My community also decided to make 50 bagged lunches every Tuesday for our local St. Vincent de Paul Society and “Food for the Journey,” a program that offers weekly meals to neighborhoods in Dayton. Again, these are small tasks that we can do from home.

In his often-quoted sonnet, “When I consider how my light is spent,” 17th-century British poet John Milton, who had grown completely blind, wonders at his inability to act — to respond to the needs of “this dark world and wide.”

Recalling the Gospel parable of the Talents, and yet moved to ask what God can really expect of a blind man, Milton hears the reply of patience: “They also serve who only stand and wait.”

We, as a community, are humbly discovering how we can serve by staying at home and waiting. Being an introvert and living with a community of caring brothers, I can easily do my work from home and stay in one place.

But so many people must stay home at life-disrupting costs, amid uncertainty or illness. Others cannot stay home because they serve and care for people in hospitals and grocery stores. Some remain homeless or fear losing what homes they have.

It’s in humble solidarity with these people, near and far, that we home-bound brothers at the Novitiate continue to work and pray. We’re in a pandemic, but it’s Easter still. And the living mystery of Christ Risen for and among us—it’s everything.