

Reflections on the pandemic – John Schuler

What I first remember was back in March of 2020 and hearing the first cautions against some virus called COVID-19. I had a deep sense of unease as there were cautions, but nothing really specific. March was the last we would go to a restaurant for many months with quick in – quick out runs to the grocery store. The store was void of many items that reflected the urgency to do something to guard against the virus: disinfectant, gone; disinfectant wipes, gone; household cleaners, gone; hand sanitizers . . . you get the idea. I was able to get some Clorox and Google a solution for homemade sanitizer. We wiped down all the groceries and everything we touched: the car door, the steering wheel, the door to the house and washing hands right away. I'm still using the homemade sanitizer today.

But what filled a need for a routine in the new pandemic shutdown and that longing for a spiritual string to our Hope was a daily streamed Mass from Bellarmine. While other parishes were scrambling for scarce resources caused by a huge demand for such equipment, Bellarmine was able to stream right away. I guess being part of a university with many technical hands on the issue, they began to stream a 5 PM Mass daily. It was a calming, centering habit. The camera eye was just in front of the altar and gave a front row, pew, seat to the Mass. There were different presiders and helpers that became familiar and had an intimate, almost homey feel to the Mass. But I did miss the Eucharist. This became a quieting, calming part of our day. It helped us stay strong and not loose heart.

We were vaccinated in January of 2021 and fully vaccinated by the end of February. The mist of the pandemic was beginning to lift, but slowly until more people became vaccinated. Then the powers that be suggested it was safe enough to venture out and begin to go to Mass in person with masks and social distancing. That was a wonderful moment, to see people we knew and cared for again. Then the day came when we didn't have to wear a mask and we felt safe enough to do so. Faces! Familiar faces! We saw smiles and grins and received the Eucharist again.

God does walk with us. As the Psalmist says, “Be strong and take heart, all who hope in the Lord.”¹

¹ Psalm 31:25