

***"Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer." Romans 12:12***

The last time I was physically present in Holy Spirit Church was the evening of Friday, March 13, 2020. It was the third Friday of Lent; and as I have done since I was a teenager lead by my maternal grandparents, I was at Mass followed by Stations of the Cross, an integral part of my Lenten observance.

Earlier that day, I had a final meeting with my staff at the office and set forth the final plans for how we would continue to accomplish our work and remain fully functional from home for the duration. I had spent that week calming co-workers who had become panicked about riding public transportation; wiping down the common areas of the office in the early morning before everyone arrived and at the end of the day after everyone had left; listening to news reports; speaking with those in leadership positions at the New York City based hospitals my office supports; making sure my parents were well stocked with food and the essentials; and all the while, trying to remain grounded and prepared to face this unknown, invisible predator that lurked among us.

The physical church has always been a place of refuge for me-a place where I can sit in reverent silence and open my mind and heart fully to the Lord in thanksgiving; in desperation; in need of forgiveness; in need of clarity. That evening, I did not realize that my "place" of refuge would soon be taken to a new locale.

The following Sunday and every one since, I have streamed Mass live on Facebook, as I quickly brushed up on modern day technology and no longer scoffed at social media. I continued watching my Best Lent Ever dailies with Matthew Kelly; and then, headed out the door for an early morning walk to clear my head and prepare for the day ahead-work responsibilities; checking in with family members; watching the numbers-the death toll rising, the number of people infected rising, the number of people I know personally or tangentially testing positive rising; and yet, ever-grateful for maintaining my health and my income.

It was on those early morning, daily walks that I found my new "place" of refuge-in the fresh smell of the morning air; in the sweet chirping of the birds; in witnessing rabbits and squirrels scamper about uninhibited; in the budding trees and flowers; in the steadiness of the wind; in the light of the new day-engulfed in the beauty, the hope, the peace, and the promise of God's creation.

I pray that each one of you has been able to find your own place of refuge amidst the turmoil of this unprecedented and most surreal time- a place that reminds you and helps you to **"rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer." (Romans 12:12)**

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