



Moving Forward in Hope

Dealing with Isolation

During the grey of winter, we can at times feel isolated or be affected by seasonal affective disorder. These feelings may affect our ability to pray as we would like to. One of the ways to manage these feelings is to focus on our connection to God and to one another.

In her book *Sacred Therapy: Jewish Spiritual Teachings on Emotional Healing and Inner Wholeness*, Estelle Frankel says "spiritual healing is essentially about breaking out of the narrow prison of our own personal heartbreak to enter the heavenly palace of compassion and connection. It is about how the human heart can be broken open, so that the veils that keep us separate from one another and from our connection to the divine can be removed." I believe it is in our prayer and healing connection to one another that we sense the presence of God.

The story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as told in Luke 24: 13-35 illustrates the process of how we can recognize God's presence when we feel down. In this story the two disciples are walking away from Jerusalem on the way to Emmaus. Luke says the two were conversing and debating. I imagine they were trying to figure out what had just happened. They had been following Jesus and He had been crucified. I'm sure their hopes and dreams had been shattered. When Jesus appeared to them on the road their eyes were downcast and they didn't know who he was! Clearly these two disciples were so depressed by what happened to Jesus on the cross that they didn't even recognize him as they walked back home. So, Jesus went through the scriptures – the unfolding of Salvation history and that evening celebrated what we now know as the Eucharist in the sharing of the meal. The two disciples said "Didn't our hearts leap for joy" as they recognized Jesus!

We too can remind ourselves of God's presence by our spiritual practices of being inspired by scripture and participating in the Eucharist. Our hearts can leap for joy through making a connection to each other.

During the grey of winter, we are inspired by the light of Christ who walks with us even if we don't always recognize him!!

Tips for dealing with isolation:

Check out our new website for prayers and faith based support: catholicmh.org/chicago

Establish a daily routine.

Routines provide structure and stability. Going to bed and waking up at the same time and starting the day off with an activity such as prayer or watching daily Mass online can be very helpful.

Stay connected. Schedule routine check in calls with a family member or friend. Having it scheduled and part of a routine might be easier than making spontaneous calls.

Keep warm lines handy.

The Mental Health Crisis Helpline: 988

Crisis Text line- text "HOME to 741741

The NAMI HelpLine
1-800-950-NAMI (6264),
Text "HelpLine" to 62640

Friendship Line- 24 Hour
Hotline/Warm-line:
1 800-971-0016