

Glimmers of light shine forth through the unknowns

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As a bereavement counselor, Christian life coach and spiritual director in St. William the Abbot Parish, Mary Ann Collett has journeyed with people who have suffered loss.

Since the pandemic, Collett – a member of the Howell parish – has also seen an increase in faithful turning to the group she helped cofound, the Catholic Women of Zion. The ministry, whose purpose is the evangelization of Catholic women, has been providing support through its website, including links to online Bible studies, Rosary groups, virtual conferences, daily podcasts and, more recently, a Lenten Reflection Group.

All of these outlets, she prays, will help the faithful find ways to remain spiritually positive as the hope of the Easter season arrives even while the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

“Lent is a time to be with God through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It gives us new hope to get to know who he is, but also to get to know who we are,” she said.

For those still searching, Collett hopes the Lenten season has helped bring about new ideas for change.

For example, there’s doing good for others, staying focused on prayer, and swapping tedious activities or distractions for tasks that bring fulfillment and joy.

After all, Collett said, both physical and spiritual loneliness is common for many, even if one is living in a house full of people – not to mention an increase in fear, anxiety and stress. “All this comes from the unknown,” she said. “Everything [people] are familiar with, they can’t get to.”

Instead, she suggests, build peace and a deeper trust in God by continuing to read Scripture, pray the Rosary or attend virtual Masses. She recommends taking one word or theme from the Sunday Gospel, and making it the focus of the week – to pray, think and reflect upon.

“Prayer,” Collett said, “is the sense of God’s presence. We need to find God everywhere. This is our hope.” She urged Catholics to take advantage of the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation.

“That is living in the Holy Spirit of Easter,” she said.

Focusing on the positives, Father Jim Grogan, pastor of Nativity Parish, Fair Haven, sees some silver linings in the past year, calling them “graces that have continued to flow.”

“We will never go back to having some things the same, but that’s not a bad thing,” he said, explaining that outdoor Masses have evangelized passers-by and livestreaming “makes the Church more approachable,” particularly for those parishioners who had not been able to attend in-person Mass due to needing assistance.

Looking toward the future, Father Grogan said he has seen a stronger balance of work and family develop that he believes will continue after the pandemic. “Family is the domestic Church, so the effect will carry over.”

He also suggests the faithful focus on two truths in order to keep hope alive: “the fact that Jesus is always with us, and that we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.”

“In the midst of all of our troubles, Jesus has been tremendously active,” Father Grogan said. “We get to know how much he loves us when we struggle.”

Managing Editor Jennifer Mauro contributed to this report.