

Introduction

My biography in July gave parishioners an opportunity to get to know their pastor. At the same time, the parishioners were encouraged to try to get to know each other better, especially during the precarious times in which we live. In the next series of writings, I am inviting us to get to know how our lives have been impacted during the pandemic, with the hoped-for outcome of setting our gaze toward the post pandemic.

Part 1: Crisis and God's Overflowing Grace

In Pope Francis' book, "Let Us Dream," we gain a better understanding of the pandemic in order to be freed up to look ahead. On the one hand, we must look back to identify what we have learned, and on the other hand, we must look to a new horizon in the post pandemic. This is not something that should be thought of as fiction, rather it is real and requires our full effort to move forward (Let US Dream, 1).

Francis identifies that the pandemic crisis which will not leave us the same if we really enter into it. In the story of the prodigal son, the younger son takes his inheritance early on. But he squanders it in dissolute living and is left wanting as the inheritance is gone. While he could be characterized as a rogue for his insensitivity to his family's wellbeing, God nevertheless chooses the wayward son in crisis to place God's mercy on display (Let Us Dream, 79-80).

In his book, "Faith from the Heart," Thomas Groome presents the flow of God's mercy not only from a paternal relation, but also in a maternal one, where the son's mother gets involved. Groome surmises that the mother in all likelihood told the father to hurry up and finish his dinner so that he could keep vigil for their lost son. This two-sided notion of God is reminiscent of Rembrandt's painting. When the son is embraced by the father, one hand is characterized as masculine, while the other is feminine. And seeing the lost son yonder on the horizon, the father goes out to him, such that, when the son attempts to apologize, the father cuts him off with a welcoming embrace. This was because the father knows his son's heart, just like God knows our hearts in the midst of our struggles (Groome, 104).

Questions:

1. *When you face crisis in your life, what gets lost in the shuffle?*
2. *Given the pandemic as crisis, is there something you would like God to welcome you back to?*