

The 4 “P”s of Spiritually Thriving During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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While just about everyone realizes that life is now in uncharted territory with the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic, many people of faith are inviting others to both consider the seriousness of the present health scare but also to see this time as an opportunity to do the right thing and to not act as victims. Many believe how Christians respond in this time of crisis will redeem the reputation of the Church to a culture that has lost faith. This crisis invites all of us to act and respond like Jesus.

I offer what I call the 4 “P”s to-do strategy to not only survive the pandemic but to spiritually and humanly thrive in it...whatever might come.

The first “P” is **PLAN**.

Every individual and family needs to have a plan, a schedule of how they will maneuver each day and week. I suggest that a conversation about the plan for the up-coming week occur on Sunday with everyone’s buy-in. Plans can be flexible. If the plan is not working, it can be adjusted. Planning, however, brings structure and creates normalcy.

In your plan, schedule the time when everyone will get up in the morning. This pandemic is not vacation. It is the new norm for now. Some refer to it as the new now! Everyone in the house should shower and get dressed. No lounging in pajamas and sweatpants all day. Have a daily schedule that includes meals, study, work (navigating the use of computers and other devices), food shopping, errands, economic issues, etc. Having a plan each week will keep everyone sane.

The second “P” is **PRAY**.

Prayer needs to be embedded into the daily schedule. I feel it is the most important part of the day. In fact, our prayer should be asking God to bless our plan and to show us alternatives if it should not work out. In addition to morning and evening prayers as well as meal blessings, a prayer could be offered before everyone begins their study or work. The family could halt their work in time for all to watch the live-stream daily Mass before eating lunch. On Sunday mornings, the family could watch Mass live-streamed from their home Church, they could pray the Stations of the Cross as they are lead from their parish or some other location, later in the day the family could pray the Rosary, or listen to one of the prayer opportunities on Catholic Community Radio.

Additionally, a day or two before Sunday Mass, the family could read the up-coming Sunday Gospel selection (www.USCCB.org), and then reflect on what that reading means in their life, as individuals and as a family. There are many opportunities to pray. In our prayer, in addition to including intercessions for ourselves, and our loved ones we bring to prayer those who are ill with the coronavirus, those who have died, and all the researchers, medical professionals who are working to find a cure, as well as first responders. Schedule in prayer!

The Third “P” is **People**.

In order to thrive, our spirituality needs to connect us to God but also to people. In the few times that we might find ourselves out in public, respecting social distancing, can we be friendly to others, a smile, a wave, a word of hello? They and we are both created in God’s image and likeness (Gen.1:27). Therefore, there can be no blaming or shaming in regards to the virus. No one is a pariah. Instead, because we seek Christ in people, how can we find new ways of staying connected with others? This pandemic is a time of isolation and loneliness for many especially senior citizens, the ill, and the poor. Can we build into our schedule opportunities to connect with others, family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, those without families? The means of doing this are many: telephone, Facebook, WhatsApp, FaceTime, texting, to name but a few. In conversations with others, in addition to asking: “How are you doing?” also ask, “Is there anything or anyone that I can be praying for right now?” Invite them to join you in prayer right then or bring their need to prayer later. So, stay spiritually healthy and stay connected.

Additionally, in order to be people-focused in this time of economical difficulty, can we, even with our own economic concerns, give to organizations that serve people with a spirit of true Christian hospitality? Food Banks, local soup kitchens, hospitals, and your parish Church, to name but a few, are all responding to people’s direct needs. Ecclesiastes 11 reminds us to cast our bread upon the waters and it will be returned to us.

The fourth and final “P” is **PLAY**.

The coronavirus is serious. This is a time to observe that faith and science are important conversation partners. We need to be serious in the ways that we respond to the medical and government directives to care for our own health and the health of others. If we are going to be healthy and holy, we also need to periodically, or should I say, daily, schedule in time to have appropriate fun, to play.

Perhaps everyone in the house after concluding his or her work and studies, take a break. The backyard would be a wonderful place to go and while respecting appropriate social distancing, breathe in the fresh air. Does the garden need watering? Are there outside chores that need attention? Can the children play basketball in the driveway? Is there a lounge chair in the shade to curl up with a book? Additionally, designate one evening a week to serve as “game night.” The family can play Bible Trivia or some other appropriate board game to play together. Can one evening be designated as “movie night” where family appropriate movies are selected, watched, and discussed? There are many movies depicting the lives of the saints.

Do not forget the use of technology when planning your fun or play time. I spoke to a woman who was planning a Zoom dinner party over the weekend. She and her friends would usually meet monthly for dinner. Not wanting to miss this important ritual, this month they will meet from the safety of their own homes, all eating different meals but eating and conversing together. How creative! The opportunities to play for one’s mental and spiritual health are numerous. Do not forget to schedule in some play.

Lastly, keeping informed about the latest news is important, but do not watch the news all day. For many, it depresses them. In your planning, schedule news “check ins” several times during your day to stay informed but do not have it on your screens all day.

Ok, maybe there is one more “P.” But unlike the previous four this one is not an action per se but an attitude. It is a gift for which you can pray; the fifth P is **Patience**. Let us be patient with one another...with everyone. In fact, let us pray for a double dose of it!

I pray that these “P”s serve as a source of holiness for you and your loved ones as we not only survive the Covid-19 virus but as all of us thrive as disciples of Jesus Christ.

In closing, since Catholic Churches, around the US, are closed, and individuals cannot attend Masses and receive the Holy Communion, may we pray an **Act of Spiritual Communion?**

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.