



The Padre Pio Fraternity The Secular Franciscan Order The Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region

**How can a fraternity be a fraternity if the brothers and sister can't meet because of the COVID-19 illness?
How are we coping?**

What is the illness? Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Older adults and people who have severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease and those with weakened immune systems seem to be at higher risk for more serious COVID-19 illness if they become infected with the virus. Learn More about who may be at higher risk for severe illness.

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often. There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.

In North Carolina, a statewide Stay at Home Executive Order 121 from Governor Cooper is in effect and directs people to stay at home except to visit essential businesses, exercise or help a family member or friend. Gatherings of more than 10 people are banned and everyone should stay at least six feet apart. K-12 public schools statewide are closed until May 15. However, online learning at home has been established at home. Efforts have been made to ensure all students have a computer available. A break have been given to people who are unable to pay utilities during the pandemic.

What lessons does God want us to get from the corvid-19 pandemic? I believe it's the same message he has been teaching through Jesus in the Bible. Jesus was compassionate to everyone He met. He sought to be an example to us concerning what was truly necessary in life to get us to eternal happiness. He was an example of love, compassion, and doing what was right (righteousness). It's all in the good book. What is important to God is found in Matthew 25:31 - 46 or John 4:7-12 -7 or 1 Corinthians 13:4 -13. Read these and you will find out what we can truly learn from social distancing and being alone. Perhaps, we can learn from the creative ways our brothers and sisters spend their time alone.

*Father Casey Cole, OFM stated, "This Easter, maybe more than any other, we are able to identify with the Christians of the first Easter. Like them, we are celebrating in our homes, behind locked doors, confused, heartbroken, and a bit afraid. Jesus had a message for them and he has the same message for us: **Do not be afraid.**"*

Lee Cunningham, OFS our Minister wrote, "**This is really a vibrant, caring, helping fraternity. I'd love to hear what you've been doing so we can share it.**" Well here it is:

1. Due to the fact that I am both on Advair and Albuterol, I am being very cautious. Thank God I have home delivery for groceries and I also get my medicine in the mail. My children have been very sweet about checking in with me every day. We do a lot of face time and Zoom. One of my grandchildren even had a Zoom birthday party. That was the only time I cried during this whole mess. I could not physically hug, kiss and play with him. Due to inactivity, my day is filled with prayer and spiritual reading. For TV, I found two shows on Netflix about Hasidic Jews that were both informative and entertaining. I actually bought a **mezuzah** from Amazon to hang by my front door. This is what is written on it: *"Hear O Israel, the Lord God is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments I give you today are to be in your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorpost of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6 - 9."* The Jewish tradition is to touch the mezuzah, say a prayer and then kiss your hand every time you leave or enter. What a neat reminder to live for God. The other thing I learned was to thank God every time you eat or drink anything. Another "habit" I started. I have been supplying food and money both to Oak City Outreach and the Interfaith food shuttle. I am reading "The Three Ages of the Interior Life" by Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. God always brings good out of evil. I am living a more contemplative life and find myself suited for it. *By Jeanette Cottone OFS*

2. We've taken advantage of the weather and downtime to "wake up" the **Sharing Garden** at our parish, Holy Cross Catholic Church in Durham. For Anna's Virtual CROP Walk activity last week, we rounded up a few parish volunteers and reorganized the garden, building seven new beds. We now have 29 in our parish's garden, with new easy-walking paths between them. About 10 of the beds have been planted with veggies for Catholic Charities Durham Community Food Pantry (DCFP); the rest are 'rented' by parishioners and other gardeners. About seven beds are available to rent; you're welcome to join us! We also are coordinating the collection and delivery of canned and packaged foods from the parish for the DCFP, which anticipates tremendous need when it reopens for clients this Wednesday. Here's a link to details about that, for any of our Durham County fraternity members: <https://holycrossdurham.org/blog/Parish-News-Blog/Catholic-Charities-Durham-Community-Food-Pantry-Reopens-April-15>. Anna has been helping with parish communications, getting the word out about virtual Mass opportunities and posting our pastor's Easter season homilies, while Phil has been providing spiritual direction and visits via phone. And last night, we played Scrabble, via iPhones, with our eight-year-old granddaughter and her parents; they live in Arlington, VA. Ah, the joy that technology can offer! Peace and good health to all -- *From Anna and Phil Rzewnicki, OFS*

3. I've been living in **isolation** here in Leland. Fortunately, on most days I can spend some time out in the backyard or sitting on the patio. I go to the supermarket once a week to resupply. I long to gather in worship. I am concerned for our country and its economy, for the young people coming after us. My regards to everyone at Padre Pio. *From our former Minister Stan Driscoll, OFS*

4. What can I say? **"Livestream"** just isn't the same as the "real thing"— your hugs, warmth, smiling faces, the love and joy you exude. And yet, while at times feeling "socially distant" from you all, my heart feels very close — Through prayer, and in faith I know that the Holy Spirit keeps us united, connected, in a bond of friendship and love that cannot be separated. I really miss you all—you are my family and I love you. *From David Shick, OFS*

5. My clinical work has gone mostly **telehealth**. My policy work has multiplied like loaves and fishes. My children have returned home, and are stuck with me! I have jumped on a pogo stick, walked on stilts, rollerbladed, biked, scootered, and played frisbee, badminton, soccer, and board games. I've also attempted home schooling, and even built "offices" in bedrooms out of extra pieces of furniture from the attic. My sanity has been tested, and the results are still pending. 😊 However, the Fraternity has surrounded me with support and love: my God has sustained me. *From Theresa Flynn, MD, OFS*

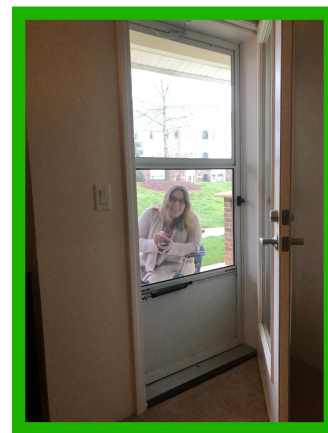
Dear life, when I said "can this day get any worse," it was a rhetorical question, not a challenge.

- Author Unknown

6. I am still working, albeit from home for a few hours in the morning since I'm **electronically connected** to my office. Later I drive in to work. I am considered an essential employee, so I have to make sure the mail is collected, you know, the bills, checks and checking for wire and ACH deposits. Another important function is issuing invoices, gotta keep the revenue flowing to us. Perhaps the most important task is processing payroll every two weeks. The employees really like that one. We have direct deposit, so we are doing our part helping keep employees at home and not having to make a run to the bank to deposit a payroll check. Life at home is quiet, but I stay busy reading and binge watching shows on Netflix. Also, I have more time in the kitchen to make things from scratch. My goal is to reduce the accumulated items in my pantry that I bought on a whim and quickly forgot about. I learned how to make face masks from bandanas that I have accumulated over the years. I keep a zip lock bag of them on the front seat of my car for when I make a dash into the grocery store. I ordered some masks about 4 weeks ago and Amazon said they had shipped for delivery in another week. I hope they make it.

In the mean time, I found about a dozen masks in my medicine closet from when my wife had a stem cell transplant. I knew they would come in handy, but wouldn't have ever imagined our current situation. I stay in contact with my family. As some of you know my son is a police officer and my daughter-in-law is an ER nurse at Wake Med. I pray for them daily as they go in harms way. Stay safe and stay busy. I miss you all, but especially when we are in community. One day soon, very soon we will be together again. I think of that African-American song, "Oh Happy Day", sung in a syncopated rhythm when that day comes for us. Look up the movie, *Sister Act* on Youtube for that version. Your feet will start tapping and your hands clapping! **By Louis Coker, OFS**

7. On April 8, I found out that we were **confined to our rooms**. No activity whatsoever. All activity areas are closed. All staff members must have their temperature taken and wear masks and gloves. Meals and mail will be delivered to our rooms. All deliveries will have to go to the front office. Laundry will be done by the housekeeping staff who no longer will be able to clean our rooms. Then a couple days later, I found out that my physical therapist and occupational therapist were allowed to come to my room for therapy. We always have good healthy conversations during those visits. My children have been phoning me by face time, or messaging me with comments and pictures. I can also see and talk to my grandchildren. On a nice day, we can go out for walks if we call the office and get an approved time to walk. Emails, calls, and cards from the fraternity help God's love shine through all this. And, with the quiet time I can be with Jesus, it isn't so bad after all. To the right is a picture of my daughter, Gina, visiting in April before the lockdown. **By Frank Peluso, OFS**



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10. I have been "staying in place." I am lucky to be able to work from home. My **Grandmother** who will be 104 on April 24 has been walking everyday outside. She use to walk on the treadmill for 20 minutes. Today she told me she walked around the retirement village for 45 minutes. She is one amazing woman. I have been able to drop off groceries at her front door. Last week we tried Zoom for the first time and we were so excited to see each

other. It is hard not seeing her, but I want to keep her healthy. For Easter she dyed hard boiled eggs and sent them to me. It is so important to stay in touch. Please stay safe! *From Lee Cunningham, OFS*



11. Okay Michael, whatcha got cooking? **Michael Hancock, OFS** writes, “Here is one of my favorite cooking channels: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0tVWRw4aNoVqXaobA8E> Ig “

Claudia Regalado of the channel writes “Hello my beautiful fam, welcome back to my kitchen! Today I’m going to share with you how I make the best green chilaquiles, perfect to have them any day any time! This is the same green sauce (salsa verde) I used in my green enchilada video. I hope you enjoy it and as always if you do please don’t forget to give me a big thumbs up, comment down below what recipe you will like to see next and if you are new to my channel please hit that

subscribe button so you can be part of our family!” Then he sent this yummy picture of **the ingredients for his favorite salsa verde**.

12. Besides sharing food and baked goods, my favorite thing to do is to bless myself and my dog, Cooper, with holy water. I take a **special walk** on Apex’s Main Street and leave rosaries, holy cards, and medals, on benches, or planters, to spread the faith and bring hope. I know that God will do his work because when we go back they are gone. *By Marie Roccoforte, OFS the Evangelizer*

13. Here is my **exciting adventure**:

- Granny-nanny for four-year-old Clara so her mom can work from home
- Posting to national Franciscan website . <https://secularfranciscansusa.org/>
- Write stories for the Tau
- Thanks to Ellen, provided a meal for staff at Oak City Cares
- Attending numerous Zoom calls and Go-To-Meeting conferences
- Tending my flower garden
- Establishing a small raised bed garden for herbs and a few veggies

From Sharon Winzeler, OFS

14. I have been doing a lot of reading. The **virtual reflections and liturgy** of the hours have been keeping me grounded. Fr Kluge’s reminder that the antidote to fear is faith and the result of faith is love is something I remind myself several times a day. I can’t go to work since St. Francis’ school is closed, so I do miss the kiddos at work. *From Alexandra Rommel, OFS*

15. Since I don't go places every day, this “staying at home” is not too much different from my normal life. I have been taking extra walks with my dog. I have been saying new prayers that I received from e-mail. I miss having friends over for tea, so I have been talking on the telephone more. I also have been packing and organizing my **dumpster diving finds**, in order to sell them when we are cleared to roam about freely. *From Suzie Nelson, OFS*

16. I have had the opportunity to bring meals to our feed the needy families. I also telephoned a couple in our home parish. Calling some neighbors who are alone is important. I was able to be a blood donor. We are definitely blessed to be able to take advantage of all the live streaming, prayers and Masses ,especially at St. Francis live stream. We have **zoom meetings** with our prayer group, and continued zoom meetings for RCIA. *From Joan Monti, OFS*

17. 16 I have been catching up on reading books, **knitting** a sweater for a daughter in law, Face-Timing with the grandchildren! *From Charlotte Witoski, OFS*

18. Oh my, I need to practice **social distancing** from the refrigerator. I'm getting so fat that when I got on the scales it said "I need your weight not your phone number." Seriously, I don't think anyone expected that when we went from Standard Time Zone, we'd end up in the Twilight Zone. It's getting so bad that my body has absorbed so much soap and disinfectant lately that when I pee it cleans and disinfects the toilet. We are all in this together, and we will get through it together. Let's smile together 😊 and pray together. 🙏 So be joyful! Sing with us ♥ All love to you, from me and my dear friends. #WeAreOne @hopencopan, @marietherock, @jeannie_c, @Benny_white, @cotton_sheets, @suziecutezie, @smiley_leec, @tubamanchris, @mini_ginnie, @sweet_greet, @cranky_frankie **By Anonymous**

19 I have been catching up on reading books, **knitting** a sweater for a daughter in law, Face-Timing with the grandchildren! **From Charlotte Witoski, OFS**

20. I have been making a lot of face masks for the people in my residence building. It was wonderful to meet all my neighbors and give them these little presents. My present to me was actually **being a true Franciscan**. Peace and many, many blessings! **Dianne Greet, OFS**

21: Zubair Simonson, OFS has been busy writing another book which will eventually be on kindle. Also, don't forget to watch his interview on the show *The Journey Home* with Marcus Grodi. It will air on EWTN - May 28, 2020 at 8:00 pm. **By Frank Peluso, OFS**

22. **A True Emmaus Encounter - S. Lynn Oeser, OFS** writes: For most of us, the hours between sunrise and sunset are very different in these days of plague. As a child of God, my days on earth are lived in the roles of a wife, a mother, a daughter, a friend, a Secular Franciscan and a pediatric triage nurse in a large university clinic. Like everyone else, my normalcy is altered. I am still going to work every day.

Recently our Spiritual Assistant, Fr Steve, as priest, offered to bear my burdens with me. He asked me how I was. Here is part of my response:

You asked how I am. I have fears and concerns. I am very tired. My work has been draining mentally. That being said, I am well. Very well. More than ever before I have a deep sense of peace that somehow this is the time that I was created for. I'm not a big program person, I am a one-on-one sort of being who lives to encounter whoever crosses my path. My encounters of late are deep, meaningful and seem to conclude with a fruitful peace. Sometimes I give, sometimes I receive. There is a line from the book of Esther 4:14 where Mordachi sends this word to Queen Esther: 'Who knows—perhaps it was for a time like this that you became queen?'

I bear within me a complete trust that all of my professional training, my spiritual formation, and my life experiences have been ordered to this time. This is the NOW that I was created for.

My faith and trust in God is my strength. In this time of disorder, I pour out my heart and soul outside Church walls that contain the Tabernacle. It's not so much ritual as instinct.

As the deer in Psalm 42 longs for running streams, I long for Eucharist. I thirst for the eye to eye, light from light, touch of the Real Presence before me through the eyes, lips and hands of the Eucharistic Minister whose voice proclaims, "The Body of Christ."

I spent Holy Saturday at our future home in the mountains praying and reflecting on all of the readings of salvation history and concluding with the Evening Prayer. The sky was clear. The stars and the moon were crisp and bright. My spirit bore the joy of Easter in a submissive place of trust and acceptance.

Late that evening our two dogs needed a walk. My husband Mike and I walked down around the church as we always do. We seldom encounter anyone. As we passed by the back door, the priest was just locking up. He had just celebrated the Easter Vigil alone. We greeted him with "He is Risen!"

We spoke for a short time, and I began to lament missing the touch of community and Eucharist.

The priest cut me off and said, "We can do something about that here and now. Would you like to receive communion?"

We both said, "Yes".

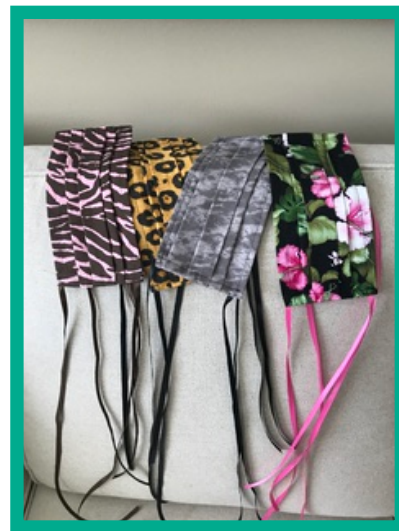
So, on the Holy Night of the Easter Vigil, we received communion on a mountaintop under the stars. A true Emmaus encounter. **Our hearts are still burning.**

This is the NOW that I was created for, and I see that I was created for every "now" of my life. For my remaining days I will offer thanks and praise to the Lord for creating me.

He is Risen indeed, Alleluia! Alleluia! By *S.Lynn Oeser, OFS*

23. A New Tradition - Not being able to continue being involved in ministry, including meeting with all of you, has been difficult during the "sheltering in place" for the pandemic. Nonetheless, there have also been many blessings and graces too. Among those are the opportunities we have had meeting with our family through Zoom. To celebrate my birthday in March, one of our daughters set up a Zoom online meeting and we were able to visit with our nine children and their families who are scattered on the West coast and also here in NC. It was a little chaotic the first time with so many of us trying to talk at the same time. But it was so much fun that we decided to celebrate everyone's birthday this way. Soon after that first call, a grandson had his birthday and we did better, giving everyone a chance to speak individually. Since there are so many of us, we will be celebrating 2 more birthdays next week and look forward to this new tradition. Easter blessing to all, *Gladys & Ben Whitehouse, OFS*

24. It's amazing the world is slowing down and I'm still busy. I've enjoyed extending my morning prayer, not rushing out to morning Mass has given me that extra time. In the first couple of weeks of the shut down, I was making lunch for the volunteers at Oak City Cares. There were several of the homeless men and women who were now the full time help in the showers and laundry room. Since they weren't Stay in Place at the shelter, they weren't getting lunch. It was wonderful cooking for them and the staff. That came to a halt when they closed Oak City Cares to do some retrofitting to make it a COVID-19 test center. In between cooking, I was making masks, see below. When I moved I brought a sewing machine and material with me. I hadn't touched in the 8+ years I've been in Raleigh. It's been tremendously rewarding **making the masks**. They are going mostly to the people on the margins who don't have access to them. It is also a time of prayer, there is something very meditative about, measuring, cutting and sewing. Peace to all, if you need a mask please let me know. *By Ellen Ferrone*



*Romans 15:13 May the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*