Columns
Coronavirus
Spirituality



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Since Oct. 20 I've been out of quarantine and am still recovering from a bout of breakout COVID-19 that affected 10 of us sisters in my community's retirement center. Fortunately, all 40-plus of us sisters who live here have been fully vaccinated since early 2021, and those of us who became breakout cases received the emergency approved monoclonal antibody infusion no later than 24 hours after we tested positive.

So often during the time I was in my latest quarantine (my fourth in the 22 months since we have been dealing with life in a coronavirus world) I thanked God that all of us had received our vaccinations and that the monoclonal antibody infusion was available to us during our recent outbreak. As a result, even though all of us sisters are in the high-risk category because of age and chronic health issues, our COVID-19 infections were manageable, and we are now in various stages of recovery. Had we been infected in October of 2020 instead of October 2021, the outcome almost certainly would have been quite different.

Not for the first time, I have realized that the entrance of the coronavirus into our world has changed that world dramatically. Our pre-COVID-19 "normal" is not something that we can return to completely. Neither will the virus go away. The best we can expect is that science will continue to find ways to give us more protection from the disease and more ways to cure it. With the continuing development of the vaccine, the monoclonal antibody infusion, and the latest oral medication for those who catch the disease, we can expect continuing success in managing COVID-19 and reducing the number of deaths it causes.

I have also realized that almost two years of dealing with the uncertainties of living in a COVID-19 world had taught me several lessons that have been invaluable in moving forward in my life after having lived for 85 years. Briefly, I have learned that although I have little or no control over the physical diminishment of aging, I do have a choice in how I approach each step in each day and face whatever challenges that day may bring. Living in a COVID-19 world has made me far more aware of the choices that I can make.

First, the uncertainty of COVID-19 has taught me to take each day as it comes to me, sometimes not even taking a whole day at a time; just taking one step at a time. Worrying about what I think the future will hold is a waste of valuable energy that could be put to a more profitable use. Besides, what I think the future may hold

may or may not become a reality, and worrying about it usually results in my becoming less aware of opportunities to function optimally in the present.

Second, I have learned that it is infinitely healthier to focus on what I can do, not so much on what I can't do. Diminished bodily strength and performance is an inevitable and often irreversible part of the aging process. In other words, aging happens. The important thing in this process is how one chooses to view the physical changes that happen. Regret, resentment and denial when one loses ground physically is counterproductive and only adds to the natural stress that comes with aging. Focusing on what I can do, and then doing it, results in a healthier approach.

Third, my multiple quarantines have allowed me more reflective time; time to remember things from my past that are useful in coping with the present and generate hope and trust in my future. For example, remembering difficult times in my past when I have felt the presence of God in my life has helped me to remember that God is still present and walking with me now, and that he always has been and always will be.

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Fourth, having dealt with my recent bout of COVID-19 has had its own lessons to teach me. One is that I can trust my own body to tell me what I need and how to work with health care personnel in the healing process. Coping with the physical weaknesses of COVID-19 has reinforced my trust in the God, my rock who is always with me. This, in turn, has resulted in a confidence that as I continue to age this same God will continue to guide me through whatever the future has in store for me.

Fifth, I have become more vividly aware that I live in a world that is far bigger than my own limited circle in which I live. Not everyone has access to the medical advances that I have access to. Not everyone trusts the science that is quickly developing vaccines and treatments to help us to keep on living in a world in which COVID-19 is active among us. Although I don't know these people, I can still pray for their safety and well-being.

Sixth, and finally, coming through COVID-19 has taught me that even though I'm retired from a more active ministry, God still has more work for me to do. At this

point I have no idea exactly what that entails; but I am convinced that, whatever the future holds for me, I will find my part to play in the evolution of that future. I am equally certain that God will be as active in that future as he has always been in my past and continues to be in my present.

So, in spite of the uncertainties, annoyances and pain of living in a COVID-19 world, I can honestly say, "Thank you, coronavirus, for the life lessons you have taught me." And, even more importantly, "Thank you, God, for being with me and guiding me through this pandemic."