Columns
Spirituality



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During Labor Day weekend of 2023, my life changed almost "in the blink of an eye," as the saying goes. Despite my chronological age, I have enjoyed good health and mobility as the norm. I even felt a bit of pride and gratitude when people commented that I didn't look my age and was in very good condition despite it.

However, on that weekend, I awoke to serious progressive pain in my back and left hip, and by Labor Day, I needed help with everyday activities and routine tasks. I felt abruptly transported to an entirely new realm of existence, which I didn't like at all!

Thank God that my sister, who lives in the same development, came daily to prepare meals, get me to medical appointments, help me with daily tasks and grocery shop for me. She continued this routine for two months, always caring for me with kindness, concern and generosity. What a great blessing.

It is difficult to gather the many graces I received during this time in my life but I want to express my gratitude to God and acknowledge God's providential care and goodness for what I have learned from this experience.

An overwhelming sense of gratitude fills my heart. Family and friends stepped up to help in many ways and accompanied me constantly throughout this difficult journey.

I recognize how important it is to bear each other's burdens and simply be present with someone who is suffering. Compassion means to suffer with another, and I experienced such compassionate concern from so many. May I return what I have received to as many as possible.

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Each individual was a unique image and presence of God. As a single, self-supporting woman, I value independence and self-sufficiency. However, I have come to understand God's desire for total dependence on God and interdependence with one another. None of us is truly independent and self-sufficient. For me, it has been

a revelation of my true inner poverty.

One of our community prayers to St. Joseph concludes with, "Divine Providence can provide; Divine Providence did provide; Divine Providence will provide."

In retrospect, I am amazed at how God provided the right professionals, supportive caretakers, and compassionate companions, all according to God's perfect timing. I try to remember with gratitude and trust for the future that God does indeed provide what I need when I need it.

Although much improved and able to perform most daily activities, I am still in the healing process, uncertain about the extent I will regain my former mobility and strength. So, I choose to live in the present moment, in the now of each day, focusing on God, and on what I *can* do. I move at a slower, more deliberate pace and need to rest more frequently during the day.

This time in my life is more like being on a sabbatical or retreat, because I can devote time to prayer, spiritual reading, connecting with family and friends, and simply enjoy the ability to care for myself. I have grown to love and appreciate what I mindlessly called the ordinary, the routine, the mundane. All these simple tasks and pleasures have become sources of joy and expressions of God's goodness.

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What I need now from God is the grace to come to terms with the inevitability of pain and suffering, and the limitations and challenges of aging. I need infinite patience with myself and my current physical ineptness. I know God does not inflict pain and suffering upon us but rather God is one with each of us in our suffering.

I know Jesus experienced these limitations as a human being. He is my Divine Physician, who through his own life, death and resurrection transforms my challenges for the greater good of others and all creation.

However, accepting this reality proves to be a difficult struggle for me, and I find myself resisting. Yet, I believe that nothing is lost, and that God's transforming power extends to every aspect of our suffering or experiences. As St. Ignatius and St. Paul remind us, God uses everything and works for the good of those who love God.

Just a few days ago, we were marked by ashes, reminding us of our fragility. We are dust and to dust we shall return. Yet, we are also reminded of God's radical love and how God labors for our restoration and healing and relentlessly and constantly brings abundant life out of all the circumstances of our lives.

Whatever my future, I know and trust it will still be a full life that will bear fruit as long as I stay rooted in the divine life of the Trinity.

At the beginning of this ordeal, I asked the Lord to heal me and give me my life back. He is indeed granting my request, but it isn't the same life I once had. Now, I find myself much more aware of and grateful for all the "little things," realizing that everything is a gift. Relationships have taken on new value and meaning, simple acts of kindness are monumental, and helping others in any small way I can brings joy to God.

Life becomes remarkably simple when I let go, follow the lead of grace, and depend totally on God and not on myself. While life may have truly changed, it certainly hasn't been taken away; instead, it has been enriched and made more abundant.