

Cultivating Hope After a Year of Lockdown

by Mary Hatton, Director of Development

"What resonates to me is the second commandment of Jesus as one community, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Mk 12:31)." Amid pandemic, we practice health protocol to protect one another-our duty to protect our earth and sisters and brothers because we all are one humanity; what happens to one member affects the whole of humanity."

-Sister Vangie Lasao, SSS

The other day during an early morning traipse through the neighborhood, an unexpected thing happened to me. Within minutes of my adventure, a strange and overwhelming feeling of hope came over me, a feeling I was all too grateful to experience after a long year of feeling anxious and uncertain instead. What happened? Why this sudden sense of optimism? All around me I sensed change, something was different, even smelled different. Yes! It was the promise of Spring...the air was crisp and the sky was bright, the trees displayed bits of green budding on the ends of their branches, pops of color dotted front yards and the overwhelming sounds of birds singing was evident in every tree I passed. And people! Those two-legged creatures we haven't seen in a while...out walking their four-legged friends, WITH other people, laughing and talking and carrying on as if the last year was all but forgotten.

Obviously, the last year has not been forgotten. We have far to go. We are certain to be reeling from the effects of the pandemic for many years to come, many of us having experienced deep pain and loss, on many levels. However, on this particular day, I felt hopeful, hopeful that we were somehow being pulled out of a dark hibernation, and into the light. It was ironic to me that so much promise was erupting right around this key moment on the calendar, near the anniversary of when the WHO (World Health Organization) declared Covid-19 a pandemic. In fact, on the exact anniversary of this day, March 11, there were signs of hope as the country was "opening up"; schools received the green-light to return students to class, restaurants and entertainment venues getting the go-ahead to welcome back patrons, and the supply-chain of vaccines was on the rise and out for distribution. Moreover, that we stand in the season of Lent, it makes it even more appropriate to prepare ourselves for the promise of Easter, a time of renewal, rebirth, and this year, recovery. We aren't out of the woods, but for now, while we are preparing, let's embrace hope and pay it forward so that others may feel it too.

Do you have Hope?

We asked our Sisters, Staff and Associates to reflect on the last year of the Pandemic and the promise of hope. Here are some of their responses:

What is the promise of hope that I pray will be realized when we finally are lifted from beneath the shadow of this pandemic? That we recognize more deeply than ever before our responsibility to protect and promote the well-being of the earth and all her people.

-Sister Maribeth Larkin, SSS, General Director

The Pandemic reassured me that we should care for each other to coexist on earth. It also allowed me to appreciate the power of community and prayer. Now, I am ready to embrace a beautiful hope that these hard-learned lessons will guide me to be a better self and member of our SSS community.

-J Hong, Archives, SSS Encino

I think this past year gave us time to slow down, get in touch with our creative side, be it rock painting, bread making or gardening. It made us appreciate so much we took for granted. And it made us see so many that we took for granted like grocery workers, healthcare workers, ambulance drivers, Amazon and food delivery people as Heros!!!!

-Sister Elizabeth Lopez, SSS

This past year has given me a greater appreciation for the many travels I have been privileged to enjoy in the past, in the US, Europe, Mexico, Canada, Australia and New Zealand as well as the memories of those trips I hold dear. I never paid much attention to the natural world around me in this urban environment until my world shrunk as it has this past year. I am now acutely aware of the variety of birds and their habits and the seasonal changes of my Japanese Maple trees among others.

-Kathie Montserrat, SSS Associate

The pandemic had made me realized how important our health is, as the saying goes "Your health is your wealth". And not only our individual health but the health of the community, humanity in general, and our planet earth.

-Nodelyn Abayan, SSS

Hope is a duty, not a nicety. Hope is not a dream, but a way of making dreams become reality. Happy are those who dream dreams and are ready to pay the price to make them come true.

- Suenens, submitted by Damaris Bradish, SSS Associate

The Year of Pandemic stopped us -- literally -- in our tracks. This re-arrangement of our lives has provided us - without our permission -- a time of "forced retreat." Have we heard the message?

-Sister Deborah Lorentz, SSS