**Lockdown Story 1 (Anonymous)**

As someone with underlying health issues that placed me in the vulnerable category, my COVID experience started with reasonably high levels of anxiety. That has reduced to some extent, but it is a constant emotion. Overall, though, coping with the pandemic has been relatively manageable as it has posed much lighter challenges for me than for some.

I am fortunate that I have been able to work from home. So significantly, my ability to earn an income has not been affected and so financial viability was not a stress I had to face. Of course, the structure of my life has become rather different with the necessity to isolate and so inability to participate in an array of regular group activities. I’m very familiar with the well-publicised dilemma of ‘*am I working from home*’ or ‘*living at work*’ and it certainly feels more akin to the latter, but that is a problem many would be happy to face given the occupation and economic trauma that is raging.

Central to my COVID experience has been my access to technology. One of the key things it has enabled is my ability to participate in live streamed and recorded masses. My pre-pandemic pattern would be to attend mass on Sunday and on a couple of weekdays. I was reasonably happy with this spiritual ‘*diet*’. However, COVID has provided me with an opportunity to reflect on how else I might nourish my spiritual wellbeing. I have missed only a handful of streamed masses throughout lockdown and that has given me the chance to engage more regularly and deeply with the liturgy of the word. I have also participated in a weekly Lectio Divina group. Initial uncertainty about whether this was ‘*for me*’ was soon overcome and it is something I would really recommend. A secondary, but extremely important consequence, is that I also gain much pleasure from virtually socially engaging with this new group of people. It seems perverse that during the most physically isolated period of my life, my social circle has expanded! Zoom also allows me to regularly meet up with friends and some of those friendships have grown richer through us booking dedicated time to spend together.

An important aspect of my faith is being able to live it by trying to be of some sort of service to others. Opportunities to do this have been dramatically diminished but through virtual meetings, telephoning and texting I have been able to continue making some limited contribution. This has fuelled a process of reflection on my approach to life and my sense of self and purpose. Initially, I had to rely on others to shop for and deliver my groceries. I was warmed to receive more offers of help than I actually required. That said, I didn’t like being the one needing help, I’m used to being the helper. COVID has provided me with a salutary lesson that our roles change at different times throughout our lives and we may need to rethink our understanding of independence, purpose and contribution, and have faith that God has a plan for us. Like most people, I lurched into the pandemic without any real plan or preparation. Several months on I can reflect that it has given me the chance to walk in different shoes for a while, reappraise how I live my faith and become more thankfully aware of the many blessings in my life.

*End*