

“In the beginning,” the Book of Genesis tells us, **“God created the heavens and the earth.” At that time, “the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God’s spirit hovered over the water.”**

As with the creation of the planet on which we stand, every good thing begins with darkness. Every positive thing begins with the negative. These may be two of the strangest concepts you have ever heard, but they are true in nature and in spirit. The world began in darkness, without form and void. Every day begins in darkness: “And the evening and the morning were the first day” (Genesis 1:5). The wonderful fruit you ate as a snack today started as a seed planted in darkness, in dirt. Mankind was made from dirt. A beautiful and free butterfly begins its quest for freedom in the constraints of a dark cocoon. You began life after nine months of being in a dark womb.

Life’s challenges are there to develop your gifts, test your character and give you value. Indeed, the current social distancing restrictions are among such challenges. We could easily shorten the turmoil of the butterfly’s imprisonment by cutting open his cocoon and setting him free. That would be so caring of us. However, the butterfly would never fly and his life would be short-lived. You see, it is the struggle to free itself from the cocoon that gives the butterfly the strength it needs to fly and to survive. We could easily free a seed from its dirty surroundings in the ground, but it too would not survive. Likewise, every day we beg God to remove us from our circumstances and deliver us from life’s challenges. We pray to be removed from the very thing that is there to make us great.¹

As you stay at home during the Easter holidays, how are you using your time? The restrictions are not all negative. Along with *social distancing* comes *family closeness*, the ability to spend more quality time with your family. In this sense, the term “social distancing” is an oxymoron. We’d do better calling the current restrictions “spatial distancing,” for we humans are social beings. Even when we distance ourselves spatially, we can still remain connected socially. The current restrictions are affording us quality time to be connected. This opportunity to be connected is a rare gift in the midst of a world that’s usually busy with so much industriousness in places of work and the daily commute. If you know people who are living by themselves, the current crisis provides you with opportunities to speak them on the phone to assure them that they’re not alone, or use Zoom to counteract the gloom. Whether you’re living with your family or you’re on your own, there’s so much love to share as we celebrate the victory of Christ’s Resurrection, His triumph of light over darkness, closeness over distancing, hope over despair, and joy over sadness.

In the midst of all the current restrictions, we’d also do well to remember another way God has revealed His power. We remembered tonight in the Book of Exodus how **“the sons of Israel had marched through the sea on dry ground, walls of water to right and to left of them. That day, the Lord rescued Israel from the Egyptians.”**

¹ cf. Lincoln Bain, *Identity Crisis* (Published by Dominion Media Publishing, 2016), 63.

In this event, God revealed Himself as a God who liberates. In the current restrictions, we know that our freedom will not be lost forever.

Although this gift of freedom will not be experienced until sometime in the future, there's another gift in the present moment of the pandemic that is too good to miss.

Interestingly, the same word in Chinese for "crisis" is the same word for "opportunity." God doesn't cause suffering, but He allows it to happen when He knows that good may come from it. What's the good that God wants us to ultimately experience in this crisis? May I suggest to you that God wants us to take delight in knowing what He means upon saying to us, His people, through the prophet Isaiah: **"your creator will be your husband"** (Isaiah 54:5). Let me explain.

Spatial distancing may not sound like a good opportunity, but distancing is our speciality as Catholics. Think about it. The Hebrew word for holiness, *"kodesh"* or *"kiddushin"* literally means, *"set apart."* When something is set apart, it's not just set apart at a *distance*; it's set apart for *consecration*. Consecration isn't for being *isolated*; rather, it's for being *united*. In fact, the Hebrew word for "holiness," *"kiddushin"* is the same word used for *"wedding,"* or *"marriage."* Why? Because when a man gets married he sets one woman apart from all the other women on earth. She becomes consecrated to him, and he becomes consecrated to her. They become "holy"; his wife is set apart, not to be distanced from her husband, but to be united to him. Although spouses consecrate themselves to one another, their consecration is no mere human act, for as Jesus said, **"What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate"** (Mark 10:9). Being set apart by God also applies for priests and consecrated men and women.

With this understanding, our current period in spatial distancing is a moment in time that's consecrated. We're not setting ourselves apart from one another just for the sake of it. We'd become very lonely if that were the case! Rather, we're set apart so that we can stop the spread of the pandemic. More importantly, I would like to think that God is setting us apart so that we can prepare to become united to Him as His Bride. Just as Jesus died and rose again in His resurrected, glorified body, so too, we can expect that His Mystical Body the Church, will also undergo her own crucifixion and resurrection upon which she will be consummated in her nuptial union with Christ the Bridegroom, thus sharing his glory.