



Newness of Life

One of my favorite prayers appears in a confession in the Compline service: "O God... grant that we may serve you in newness of life, to the glory of your name" (*Saint Helena Breviary*, p. 210). The phrase "newness of life" comes from Romans 6:4, in which Paul is comparing the risen Christ to his followers who now "walk in newness of life."

At the convent, it feels like we are walking slowly, in starts and stops, into post-COVIDtude, and we are gradually discerning future plans. We are not yet into the fullness of new life, but some signs, like tiny buds in spring, are becoming apparent.

On the first Pentecost, the disciples were also isolated and they were hiding fearfully in an upper room. The door was locked. They had, in effect, quarantined themselves. Jesus then came among them, and the Holy Spirit propelled them to go out into the world and to share the message of salvation.

I had often thought that it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that they opened the door and went out to begin their ministry. Now I think it was also by human agency, with the companionship of the living Christ, that they

gained courage. Jesus had given his life for them, and they now understood that they, like him, could live beyond fear. The Holy Spirit did inspire them to go; the presence of Christ and the gift of salvation sustained them on the way. They

were given the gift of "newness of life" in Christ, and the fullness of this new life required that they share it with others.

We are all beginning the post-COVID era, more fully over for some than for others. There is still deep sadness for people, relationships, and experiences lost in the past three years, and it is a challenge to open the door and begin this new journey.

Jesus was also isolated, even from his disciples, who never quite understood him, and yet he never backed away from the vulnerability inherent in his mission. So, like the first disciples, I also am feeling his presence and encouragement to begin to move forward, with joy and gratitude, into the newness of this life.

—Sr. Ellen Francis, OSH

How has moving beyond COVIDtude been for you? What has changed in your relationship with God?



SISTER ACTS

Sr Ann: Ever since OSH consolidated in the South, I've kept in touch with many Associates through Facebook. It has proved a special blessing with COVID stopping our regular guest ministry. I find myself accompanying in their grief Associates whose family members are seriously ill and several who have been recently widowed. When their usual community support was impossible, Facebook posts and phone calls have brought us in close communication.



Sr Ellen Stephen: In spiritual direction, it is my joy to listen reflectively to the seeker who comes with matters of soul and spirit. I hold their life experiences to the present moment's wisdom. Responses often arise from Scripture, our daily prayer, writings of wise and holy people, or from the truths of my own living. Jesus guides us to love, and that way is hard. That's why we confer with a companion, a guide who's "been there," jointly discerning what God is up to in the seeker's life.



Sr Mary Lois: For centuries, many people have used prayer beads as an adjunct to their spiritual life. Over the years I suppose I have made hundreds of rosaries. It's interesting to work with the many kinds of lovely materials. I can work at my own pace and in the end have something that I hope will bring peace and joy to others. Several other sisters also do bead work, and our creations are for sale in the OSH gift shop. I am also happy to take special orders.



SISTER ACTS II



Sr Carol Andrew: If I could choose only one ministry, it would be preaching. Preaching is both difficult and rewarding – difficult because I cannot rely on scholarship, thoughts or feelings to en flesh the sermon, but neither can I ignore them. I must wait in prayer to know what a congregation needs to hear from God now. When people say, “That’s just what I needed,” I suspect I heard God!



Sr Faith Anthony: After searching for my ministry for years, I found my ministry when I wrote my thesis at Church Divinity School of The Pacific on comparative theology; in my case, thinking of the cross through the lens of Buddhist/Dōgen’s philosophy and spirituality. With my background (a monastic, as well as an Asian who knows two cultures, religions, and languages), I wish to continue this endeavour in all I do (writing, preaching, communicating, making cards, etc).

Sr Miriam Elizabeth: I gather twice a month with others to pray with and for women who are in a search process for a bishop election. Our group, Kindling Prayers, was born to nurture the flames of discernment and shine light for the journey of these women.





Sr Rosina: COVID time has increased my ministry of mentoring others preparing for particular work. I'll focus here on one deacon who works in a parish, and who, God willing, will become a priest in June. As a priest, she will need to identify people's gifts and match people with suitable ministries. I'm coaching her along these lines, as well as empowering her to see her own gifts. I am proud of her and pleased for what we have achieved together.

PARTNERS IN CHRIST

Sr Linda: On Sunday mornings, I gather with a small group from St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in North Augusta, and we meditate using Centering Prayer. While I feel that Centering Prayer is the most important part of our time together, we're also

getting to know one another and experimenting with other forms of contemplative prayer, such as body prayer, praying with icons and singing simple chants. I love these folks' willingness to participate in full.



CONVENT OF SAINT HELENA

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We will notify you in advance when we know the guesthouse is reopening!

Let us bless our God, alleluia, alleluia!
To God be thanks forever, alleluia, alleluia!





**Four sisters
from three CAROA orders:**
[left to right]

Mother Hilary
The Order of Julian of Norwich

Sr Miriam Elizabeth
Sr Ellen Francis
The Order of St Helena

Sr Sarah
Society of St Margaret

Sr Ellen Francis: My ministry is shifting towards support and publicity for monastic life in The Episcopal Church. For the past three years, I have been serving as Vice President of the Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas (CAROA) and as a member of CAROA's communications

committee. During COVID, I chaired Zoom meetings of the CAROA vocations/formation directors. This past year, I convened the committee that organized Religious Life Sunday, to be held each year on the third Sunday of Epiphany (religiouslifesunday.org).



Monastic sisters and brothers representing the
CONFERENCE OF ANGLICAN RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN THE AMERICAS (CAROA)
April 2023