

## Moving toward THE 'New Normal'?

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Everyone is talking about it. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues and eventually (we hope) ends, we are living in a 'new normal.' It seems this phrase is intended to describe the significant changes to daily life that we are experiencing and what life will look like after the pandemic. The concept includes social distancing, regular sanitizing, and lots and lots of meetings via internet. This presents a 'normal' life built on the fears of an unseen virus that ravages the human body and can lead to death. It is serious, and by now we have seen the tragic consequences of the virus. This time challenges our commonly held perceptions of life, and we come, in many ways, face to face with life's greatest enemy: death.

The Christian proclamation confronts this reality head-on and offers a true sense of what is the 'New Normal.' For 2000 years we who follow Jesus Christ have lived in a new normal. It is time that we, as a Church and its members, begin to recall this, proclaim it, and live accordingly! The new normal for Christians is the Good News that Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine, died and rose from the dead. The light of the Incarnation and of Easter proclaims that the creature now shares in the life of the creator! The unity that is established by Christ between God and humanity is the disciple's new normal. In Baptism we have died and risen with Christ. Each day we are called to step out from the shadows of fear and live according to the Gift of Life that we have received. This is grace; this is the Good News!

This entails something more. The source and goal of our faith is communion with Christ and his body, the Church. The Christian sensibility given to us from the days of the Apostles is that through gathering to share the meal of our Lord, we will, by His grace, be brought into communion with Him. Through this action we are gifted a share, in this time and reality (right now!), in the Divine Life. *This is the new normal for Christians.* It is Eucharistic! As I like to remind, "The Meal seals the deal." Christ's gift to us, God's life, is the gift of the New Covenant, most fully realized in the Mass. While many of us are currently distanced from this for the reasons of public health and safety, we must continue to be reminded that it is the summit and source of our faith.

This is not a rejection that life in the Covid-19 world has changed. It has and the change will continue. But it is life! The gift of Christ's work informs our hope that, even in the midst of the darkness of death, amid the shadows of the tomb, life triumphs! If we are reminded of anything during our quarantines and mask-wearing excursions in search of toilet paper, it ought to be that life as we know it was radically changed by a man named Jesus of Nazareth in the first century. Where once the world sat in the darkness of sin, it now rises in the light of the Resurrection. Where death once reigned, the life of God now endures!

The power of death is attempting to place itself once again on the throne of this world. As it does, nothing will seem as certain as it did before. Christians cannot allow their certainty of faith to be compromised. Especially now, we must seek out the graces of the Sacraments which empower us to respond in one voice: the life of God given to us in Jesus Christ is the "new normal."