



Vatican Diary

By Loup Besmond de Senneville



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Praying in the midst of the oppression of tedium

Pray that the Spirit meets us in the swings and roundabouts of the mood changes and then welcome the calm of God's peace when it arrives



By [Michael Kelly SJ](#) | [Australia](#)

The tedious life inflicted by trying to prevent the spread of the coronavirus is also an opportunity for many other things than just being bored.

Yes, we can spend a lot of time just waiting for a change and lamenting the containment, restriction and boredom that come with trying to prevent the spread of the virus to us and through us.

But there are also benefits coming our way if we choose to look for them.

They include increased time for being with those we are closest to (even if virtually), reading, exercising, losing weight and also something not often considered – renewing a prayer life as a contemplative person.

Contemplation may not be something we've considered much in the time poor lives we've led at a frenetic pace in our pre-pandemic lives.

But actually, I have discovered we can start an attempt to be more contemplative from the moment we open our eyes in the morning.

My mother taught me that as a small child. She encouraged me to make a prayer when I first became conscious in the morning. She suggested that I pray "Thanks Lord for bringing me to this new day".

That then allows a conscious focus on finding and engaging with God as we await God's still small voice to respond to my prayer of gratitude and appreciation.

God does not leave us to ourselves when we ask for divine assistance

That's how I learnt even as a small child to discern what the presence of God in my life might be and feel like. I developed a taste for God's presence and learnt to know when I could be confident that I was actually in God's presence.

Being in God's presence is not really difficult to discover. The aim of all prayer is to be and live ever more deeply in God's presence.

Later in life I then learnt that welcoming the enriching, nourishing presence of God in my conscious life was allowing the experience of "consolation" to take hold of me.

And it was a major encouragement for me to learn that the main person in whose tradition of prayer I was being trained as a Jesuit – that of **St. Ignatius Loyola** – prized consolation above all else as the means of spiritual growth.

Consolation, St. Ignatius taught, is the aim of prayer. But that's not something we can just press a button and find ourselves blessed with after pressing the button.

What we need to do is ask the Spirit to bring us there and then open ourselves and patiently wait till God grants us our petition or request. It can come to us quickly or very slowly. It's not up to us and it does not roll out to our timing.

But God does not leave us to ourselves when we ask for divine assistance. And in prayer, that comes as consolation – joy, peace, forgiveness, spiritual transformation.

But that's not all we can feel and my happy discovery early in my learning to pray was that the spirituality I was learning about is a very smart -- if also simple -- spirituality of mood swings. Each mood swing can overpower us, distract us, take us into trouble.

However, if we don't let it control us, pray that the Spirit meets us in the swings and roundabouts of the mood changes and then welcome the calm of God's peace when it arrives.

Then we have a whole new opportunity to meet God, let the Spirit take hold of us and find our way to the joy, peace, forgiveness and spiritual transformation that comes with authentic conversion.

This transformation is as healing and renewing in times of deep turmoil, conflict, hurt and unwelcome surprise as it is in the sort of times we have now – tedious, repetitious and apparently endlessly so.

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