



## From the Prelate

In a letter dated August 12, 2020, Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, the prelate of Opus Dei, writes with encouragement during this coronavirus pandemic. He quotes St. Paul's words, which Saint Josemaria condensed in the aspiration *omnia in bonum*: "We know that in everything God works for good for those who love him" (Rom 8:28). While admitting that "we can't always see this good right away. At times we can't even understand it," the Prelate reminds us that staying close to God "can lead us to live everything in a different way."

He closes his letter with the following exhortation: "To truthfully say *omnia in bonum* is a question of faith and of our correspondence with that faith through the conversion of our heart—our love for God and other men and women—when we are faced with our own and our neighbor's suffering. With faith we can, one way or another, help to make this good a reality."

*Women in Touch* asked several of our readers how they have been coping with social distancing. What follows are several fun, inspiring, and unique ways, not only to survive the pandemic, but to make the most of it.

## Zoom to the Rescue!

### Using the Pandemic to Strengthen Social and Family Ties

Marisa Schoeffer and her husband have found a way to hang out with friends, using everyone's new favorite tool, Zoom. Couples sit in their own living rooms with wine and Zoom, and chat for an hour or two, catching up on news and enjoying each other's company. Marisa notes, "One couple lives near Napa, so there's no way we could get together with them for a drink," but now with the pandemic, they can. "It's been a lot of fun," she says.

Marisa has also been putting Zoom to work to strengthen family ties. Her far-flung family spans the globe, living in Argentina, Sweden, Miami, and California. Such great distances can wreak havoc with scheduling, but Marisa explains, "We have nine hours difference between all of us, but we have figured it out. From 10 pm in Europe to 1 pm in CA we can make it happen. And we love those meetings – we get together via Zoom for every birthday and on other occasions as well. We had never done that before COVID, so thank you, pandemic, for that."

Marisa has another Zoom group based in Argentina. She reports, "Some of my female cousins, my sister, and I had been getting together once a month for over 35 years. When I moved to the US, I was missing that opportunity. Now, thanks to Zoom, they decided to continue with their monthly gatherings in a 'virtual way,' so I can join them. I love it!"

## Reinventing Life During Covid-19



Our extended family has dived head-first into COVID, using the pandemic as a unique opportunity to connect, inspire, support, and encourage not only our close kin and friends, but also the members of our community and beyond.

As the virus spread globally and countries implemented lockdowns, we realized that the crisis could be a blessing in disguise. We decided that the unusual circumstance can be utilized for deeper introspection, to strengthen familial bonds, and to think about the welfare of others, both physically and spiritually. My adult siblings and I gathered our personal funds to share with relatives and friends who suddenly found themselves without wages, enabling them to pay bills and buy food. Additionally, my college-aged sister holds Zoom meetings three times each week for the toddlers in our family. It is a creative way for her to connect with her nieces while teaching them simple lessons on Catechism, numbers, shapes, colors, and fun movement routines.

Meanwhile, our mom started free mentoring online, offering emotional, spiritual, and personal growth support during this time of isolation. She also encouraged several psychologist friends to do the same, listing friends and relatives, connecting with them, and moving them to action. Topics include coping with stress, creating positive behavior changes, overcoming limitations, intelligent self-control, time management, and proper use of technology.

Then, COVID-19 REINVENTING LIFE was born. Mom and I work as a team to host an international webinar, whose goals are to encourage participants to live wellness and interior growth, create positive relationships, and move up to become agents of change. It is filled with conversations, lectures, songs, affection, and testimonies of reinventing journeys of different generations around the world. These online sessions highlight natural virtues, such as human dignity and the dignity of work, to promote human and cultural formation. We are also creating digital life lessons catered to specific groups, using Zoom meetings, podcasts, and videos. The webinar promotes the messages of St. Josemaria "to help shape public opinion, transform society, and make it more human", to "make the most of [your] time", and to promote the "value of audiovisual media for positive influence".

For our family, the pandemic is an opportunity to make a difference — to uplift people's lives during this crisis by bringing family, friends, and others closer to God, and spreading St. Josemaria's teaching. As Pope Francis offers in his meditation on the meaning of the pandemic, "It is not the time of [God's] judgment, but of our judgment: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to [God], and to others."

~ MJ Veloria

## Camp Orbis - A Whole New World

When my mom first sent me an email about Camp Orbis, I was unsure what to think. Because of the quarantine, I'd been having as little social interaction as possible. But of course, I was still curious.

Camp Orbis is a weeklong online international summer camp for high school girls. The camp is a project of People Engaged in People Projects, Inc., in the Philippines, and its spiritual formation is entrusted to Opus Dei.

I was fortunate to go to this camp with 100 campers from 17 different countries, including Poland, Botswana, Sweden, UK, and Columbia. We were grouped into ten different cabins named following the theme "types of travelers". I was a member of Cabin Voyagers. Cabin meetings were from 7:00 to 8:00 am PST, although some countries, like the Philippines, had their meetings at 11:00 pm!

My cabin friends are wonderful girls from the Philippines, Nigeria, Mexico, Peru, and the US. Learning about my fellow campers' different cultures and hearing their native accents was so intriguing. When my counselors set up a chat for our cabin, I noticed that the girls from Latin America said, "Jaja" instead of the typical American, "Haha". During the week, campers could choose to participate in several different activities, such as cooking, art, singing, dancing, self-care, language, fitness, guitar, writing, games, and photography. We also had events like "Ms. Orbis", a cultural fashion show, and "Orbis Got Talent", a way for campers to show their talents.

Before camp ended, we exchanged contact information so we could stay connected and hopefully remain life-long friends. I enjoyed this camp very much, because I got to interact with and become friends with so many girls across the globe. During the week, I created friendships I would never have been able to make at a local camp. This fun, new way of making friends gave me a truly memorable summer.

~ Abigail Cinco, 14 years old



## Zoom Rosary

My husband and I began a weekly Zoom Rosary with one of his co-workers when the lockdown began. This co-worker liked the idea, and he invited two more families. One of those "two more" invited another family. Then, the same co-worker invited another family. This co-worker turned out to be the most apostolic friend ever! So last Wednesday, we were six families praying the rosary on Zoom.

For the first ten minutes we all chat, and then each family leads a mystery, making a new offering of that decade. It has been a great way to keep in touch, meet new people, and pray for other families' intentions. Also, since it's a family rosary, it has been really fun to have the kids around, playing while we pray. My baby loves to get right in front of the screen and stare at it, so often you can hear people giggling while praying.

~ Lorena Santibanez

*This is an idea that is sublime in its simplicity. We can all do this! Just imagine if every family who receives this newsletter were to start a zoom rosary with friends, or even, as Lorena's family did, with one friend. We'd soon have a radiant chain of rosaries praying for an end to the pandemic, for those who are suffering its many effects, and for so many other heartfelt intentions, all while uniting families and friends in affection truly grounded in Christ and Our Lady. Zoom Rosary – here we come! ~JR*

## With a Little Help from My Friends

So many of the communications we receive these days, whether from our inbox or from the mailbox on our front porch, seem to be echoing each other. The bank, the school, the exterminator – they all use a similar phrase. "During these difficult times... In light of these difficult times... As we go through these difficult times..." If times are that difficult, we need to be doing something about it! The social distancing we are all experiencing as a result of the coronavirus has curtailed, if not obliterated, the time that we spend with friends, right at the moment when we need it the most. The Beatles had it right. We do need our friends. But conversely, they also need us.

How many moments do we have who are dealing with a houseful of kids with pent-up energy, trying to get them to focus on their virtual classwork? How many friends do we have who, after months of speaking only with their husbands and those same wired kids, have resorted to having heartfelt discussions with the dog, or maybe the iguana? Those Beatles really were prescient. We need our friends, and they need us. Let's make an effort to reach out to our friends with a phone call, Facetime, Zoom – even a hand-written note! Who knows... that little bit of affection-filled contact may be just what our friend needs to get through another day, to lift her spirits, and help her respond to her family with a smile and renewed enthusiasm. And friendship is a two-way street. That contact that energizes and gives our friends joy also makes us happy – it's a win-win proposition. So, as you sit down for your daily cup of coffee, plan who you'll reach out to that day, sharing sighs, giggles, and joy in a mutual exchange of friendship. And while you sip that coffee, peruse the excellent series of [articles on friendship](#) featured on the [Opus Dei website](#). These articles discuss many aspects of friendship, including friendship with God, friendship as a path to bring others closer to God, and the reciprocity of friendship – that it involves loving others and letting ourselves be loved by them.

Oh, and by the way – as you enjoy your coffee, listen to the Beatles. They know their stuff, and they'll make you smile.

~ Jane Reckart

## COVID Close to Home

While most of us are dealing simply with the daily inconveniences of social distancing caused by COVID-19, others are facing the virus itself. Marta Torres and her family had a serious personal encounter with COVID earlier this year, when they contracted the virus. Her husband ended up in ICU and almost died. Family and friends lent their support with steadfast prayer. Marta says, "I offered God many sacrifices and prayers to have my husband back." Ultimately, they experienced a miracle – her husband was completely cured with no side effects – and the family has received many graces and blessings since then.

Firmly believing that all things work for the good, Marta and her loved ones experienced this first-hand. Family and friends have become more united, praying a daily virtual rosary beginning in May, which they continue to the present. Marta also started teaching a virtual doctrinal class to help others learn more about the faith. One participant, who is not Catholic, prays the rosary now, and is considering entering the Church so she can have the sacraments, especially confession and communion. Marta calls this and all the blessings they have received, "the new conversion in love and unity."

## Girls' Club: Huntington Beach Lends a Hand



were struggling. After their very first Zoom meeting, the group learned that the Little Sisters of the Poor in San Pedro were in need. The nuns run a facility that cares for the elderly, but due to the coronavirus, they were lacking food and necessary disinfecting supplies. HBGC 17 quickly organized a collection for donations. In addition to food and supplies, the girls made cards for elderly residents expressing heartfelt messages of comfort, well wishes, and prayers of support. On April 18, a truck FULL of cleaning supplies, paper products, and food delivered the donations to very grateful staff. When the cards were presented as well, a staff member exclaimed, "These will make their day!" HBGC 17 understood that in unprecedented times, community service is imperative.

April of 2020 was a month of intense change and challenges, with Orange County and most of America trying to adjust to the new normal of quarantine. The Huntington Beach Girls' Club 17 took the opportunity to discuss these adjustments and find a way to help those who

~ Lisa Scott

To find a girls' club near you, go to <https://www.southern-hillsinc.org/girlsclubs>

## Upcoming Events

Due to the coronavirus, all in-person events have been cancelled. Please check the Walnut Grove website [here](#) periodically for updates on events. Meanwhile, recollections are available at the St. Josemaria website [here](#) and at the Murray Hill Place website [here](#).