



# AMEN NEWS

## Letter from the AMEN Chair

Dear AMEN Sisters,

I hope this newsletter finds you safe, healthy, and home with your loved ones.

I am home with my loved ones, and in my garden, listening to birds in the early morning and the quiet... as well as digging, planting, trimming, fertilizing, watching the rain, praying, and generally sowing seeds of hope.

In March, when Bellarmine told the AMEN Board that we had to cancel all events and meetings, I sadly thought to myself, *"Well there goes the rest of the year for AMEN."* I had even thought, *"What is the point of publishing a newsletter any more?!"* A few weeks later, I received an email from St. Christopher's Church, which contained a reflection on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent's gospel reading, where Jesus gave vision to the blind man. The reflection posed an interesting question:

*"What do we see? And, what don't we see?"* (see reflection below) The reflection was revelatory for me and inspired me to publish a newsletter of hope and inspiration written by some of our AMEN members for the April Newsletter.

This special addition of the AMEN newsletter speaks of faith during these difficult times, volunteering to help others, hope for a new future, brings us out into the natural world, helps us to be creative at home, and discusses issues around family. It is a long issue, but I assure you, *every word is worth reading.*

I hope you enjoy this special AMEN newsletter as much as I do! I want to thank all the ladies who contributed to this newsletter. They have written their articles out of love and the desire to help our community during this time of crisis.

We don't know when our AMEN community will be together again. But rest assured, we **WILL** be together again! But as my dear friend and Board Advisor, Linda Chin, wisely and profoundly said to me, *"In a time when we are to have social distancing, we don't need to be spiritually distant."*

Stay strong, stay positive, stay healthy, and stay home!

You are all in my daily prayers.

My love to you all,

Teresa Giovanzana  
AMEN CHAIR 2019-20

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## Lenten Reflection From St. Christopher's Parish

### Gospel of John 9:1-41

The Gospel reading of the man born blind and given sight by Jesus provides us with the perfect opportunity to reflect on what we see...and what we don't see. Even though we may have perfect vision, aren't we sometimes spiritually blind? Don't we sometimes fail to see the works of God and the beauty of God's creation? Take for instance our time of sheltering-in-place. **Our perspective will shape our experience.** We may be disappointed about being at home instead of at work. But couldn't we instead see it as a spiritual gift? Rather an opportunity to be grateful for the love of God and for the gift of our families?

We may be disappointed that there are no sports on TV or movies to see in the theaters. But couldn't we instead see it as the rare gift of time, to spend more time with God, and to be with and appreciate more deeply our families and friends?

This Lent will be unlike any other Lent we have ever known. But how can its uniqueness draw us closer to God and help the glory of

the resurrection of our Lord? Some of us may wonder where is God in all of this turmoil, uncertainty, and fear? The answer is clear to us people of faith. God didn't cause the coronavirus, or the sicknesses, or the deaths. Instead, God is right there in the midst of it all. He is in the heroic first responders and healthcare workers caring for the sick. He is in the scientists working night and day to develop vaccines. He is in our public officials enacting measures to protect us from harm. He is in the small deeds that individuals are doing to help each other. We can see the work of God in and through others...with the eyes of faith.

#### THIS LENT:

**WE FAST** – perhaps from work and the business of our normal lives

**WE PRAY** – for all who are sick and in harm's way of the pandemic

**WE SERVE** – doing what we can to check in on elderly neighbors and the needs of our family

This could be a time of fear and worry for us, if we let it. Or it could be a time of consolation and peace. What do we see? Do we see the love of God? Or do we need to open our eyes and truly see?

## Endurance and Hope While Social Distancing

By Sarah Bonini

These past few weeks we have made a new normal from our regular routines. Learning to social distance and shelter in place has allowed us to dust off old hobbies that fell by the wayside during our busy lives as wives, mothers, and career women.

Personally, I have been reading more, playing the piano again, and taking long walks on the trails behind our house. While walking, I listened to a great [YouTube video by Bishop Robert Barron](#) about how we can grow spiritually during this time of isolation during the Coronavirus pandemic.

In the video, Bishop Barron mentions the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. I brought this up at our Women at the Well Google Hang Out. For the past two years we have been carrying around [Kevin O'Brien's Ignatian Adventure](#) which is a 32 week retreat of daily prayer spent reading scripture, meditating, and journaling.

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A few of us decided, it's now or never; we have the time, and were eager to commit.

Today, I read Romans 8:18-25. I was supposed to focus on my personal life and the times of great challenge and hope. My prayer went a different direction, though. When I read 8:18, "I consider the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us," and then the final verse, "we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance." I couldn't help

but reflect on this time of suffering during this terrible pandemic. Yet hope is still alive in us all as we strive to do our part, pray for a cure and look to the future. Never before in our generation have we really been in such unity throughout the world persevering and struggling to battle the same challenge. We are all focused on this virus and how it is affecting so many people directly by illness or death. Throughout the world people are isolating, taking precautions that not only will protect themselves, but protect others from this horrific pandemic.

With our sheltering in place, we experience suffering, yes, but it also gives us the opportunity to look forward with hope! How many times have I said, "When this is over, we will..." The assurance and hope is constant. We struggle, we endure, and we have hope for what relief is to come. On my walks I am appreciating so much beauty! These every day walks outside are sweeter; I am noticing trees and my neighbors' gardens and the slow emergence of spring.

Reflecting also brought me to where we are in our Church season: Lent. During Lent we are supposed to go into the desert like Christ. This is the time for prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In years past, I gave up little pleasures such as dessert or too much social media, read daily Lenten reflections, and collected change in the Rice Bowls brought home from school. This year, whether we realize it or not, we are learning first hand the solitude of the desert: fasting from socializing and freedom to go where we want when we want, praying and reflecting on our lives and the world, and giving to others by isolating ourselves and not hoarding toilet paper or bottled water.

In Lent, we do this for 40 days, and look forward to Easter Sunday when we can have that chocolate or glass of wine. Now, we look forward to the end of shelter in place. Although we don't know how many days our virtual desert will last, we eagerly anticipate the freedoms and celebrations that are being postponed such as graduations and spring dinners. The time leading up to these "resurrections" are hard and we may suffer. However, we have that hope, and we look at the emerging spring around us and know this too shall pass and a better time awaits us.

Ultimately, we are an Easter people, and the suffering and challenges that we experience will not get in the way of the hope and conviction of future celebrations and joyful reunions here and in eternity.

## Video Reflection from Rabbi Rachel Gartner from the Office of Campus Ministry at Georgetown University

Rabbi Rachel Gartner encourages us to seek God's presence in daily life, especially in uncertain times like these. She invites us to take a moment every day to sit in stillness and silence as we practice spiritual continuity. Click the link below to hear Rabbi Rachel's message:

<https://www.facebook.com/georgetownuniv/videos/reflection-from-rabbi-rachel/1848318115293067/>



## V Stands for Volunteer, not Virus!

By Linda Chin

It's important to shelter in place... but there are ways we can help those in need while minimizing personal exposure to that dratted bug that is wreaking such havoc in our lives. Our local nonprofits are scrambling to maintain operations, and the city of San Jose has set up a central volunteer database to match volunteers to areas of greatest need. Once you fill out the volunteer application, you'll be matched to a nonprofit who will reach out to you for assistance. The typical request is to help with grocery shopping for elderly folks, or packing food for distribution centers, or delivering supplies to overwhelmed families.

This is voluntary...so if the opportunity you are offered doesn't appeal to you, you can always decline. Sign up at:

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/mayor-and-city-council/mayor-s-office/san-jose-strong/volunteer>

And if you're at-risk and minimizing outside activities, consider making a donation to your favorite nonprofits...and if you're not sure where the greatest need is, San Jose and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation are collecting funds that will go to three key groups — families and individuals who can least afford a medical or financial crisis, small businesses whose revenues have fallen off, and nonprofits that are seeing an increased need for services or have had to cancel arts, cultural, or fundraising events.

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/mayor-and-city-council/mayor-s-office/san-jose-strong/san-jos-strong-fund>

Looking forward to the day when we can volunteer again...TOGETHER!!!!



## Live-Streaming Sunday Mass At Bellarmine

The Jesuits at Bellarmine will be Live-Streaming Sunday Mass every Sunday, at 9:30am, from the Bellarmine chapel, throughout this crisis. The Jesuit priests encourage you to celebrate mass with them. You can view the broadcast from this link: [Click here for Live Stream](#)

## A POEM

by Kitty O'Meara



Written in 2020, which has gone viral on the Internet

*And the people stayed home.*  
And read books, and listened,  
and rested, and exercised, and  
made art, and played games,  
and learned new ways of  
being, and were still. And  
listened more deeply. Some  
meditated, some prayed, some  
danced, some met their  
shadow.

And the people began to think  
differently. And the people  
healed. And, in the absence of  
people living in ignorant,  
dangerous, mindless, and  
heartless ways, the earth began  
to heal. And when the danger  
passed, and the people joined  
together again, they grieved  
their losses, and made new  
choices, and dreamed new  
images, and created new ways  
to live and heal the earth fully,  
as they had been healed.

# Bake with Love



## A Sweet Life

By Bev Bonovich

Our current shelter-in-place situation has created a lot of quiet time. Quiet time generally offers up time to reflect upon life, to look for the good in each day and each situation, and to create joy in as many ways possible for myself, family, friends and community. Baking has always been a way for me to create joy and to connect with family, friends and my community in a very warm and special way.

Handcrafted goods take thought to identify the perfect or favorite treat for a loved one. They take time to buy the needed ingredients and then craft it from scratch. The presentation is something to be considered too. The goods can be decorated then plated, bagged, boxed, or bowed.

The best part about baking is the sheer delight of the recipient. The wide eyes, “*mmms*” and “*yums*,” make me feel like love has been shared. We have a rule in our home, “*Sweets only stay for one day.*” The extra servings are made to be shared. Our friends and neighbors feel lots of love from our homemade treats!

While at home the past few weeks, my family has requested oatmeal chocolate chip cookies, pumpkin muffins, and chocolate chip and pecan scones. These treats have brought a feeling of love, joy and connectedness as we’ve shared them and meaningful conversation over a hot “*cuppa*” (coffee or tea or heated milk).

Scones are an easy treat to make. All you need is a bowl and the ingredients. Here is my favorite scone recipe. Happy Baking!

## Hazelnut Chocolate Chip Scones

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 6 Tablespoons salted butter (if you use unsalted butter add 1/2 t salt)
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 1/2 cup chocolate chips
- 3/4 cup nuts (optional -walnuts and pecans are yummy)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (conventional oven). Butter a 10-inch square in the center or a baking sheet OR cover baking sheet with parchment paper.

Stir together flour, brown sugar, baking powder, baking soda (and salt if you are using unsalted butter). Cut butter into squares and sprinkle over the flour mixture. Work the butter into the flour with your fingers until they become coarse crumbs. In a small bowl, stir together the egg, buttermilk and vanilla. Add the buttermilk mixture to the flour mixture and mix with a fork. It will be very moist. Add the chocolate chips and the nuts. Work them in with your hands - then make into a ball. Place the ball onto the cookie sheet and press into a 9inch, flat circle. Bake for 20 – 25 minutes until the top is lightly brown and a toothpick comes out clean. Sprinkle with sugar. Cut into 10 wedges. Enjoy!

## The Messenger

By Mary Oliver



My work is loving the world.  
 Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird — equal seekers of sweetness.  
 Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.  
 Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.  
 Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?  
 Am I no longer young, and still not half-perfect?  
 Let me keep my mind on what matters, which is my work,  
 which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished.  
 The phoebe, the delphinium. The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.  
 Which is mostly rejoicing, since all ingredients are here,  
 which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart  
 and these body-clothes, a mouth with which to give shouts of joy to the moth  
 and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam, telling them all,

## Reflection

By Sharon Winnike

I first read this poem two weeks ago, while reading *The Ignatian Adventure* by Kevin O'Brien, S.J., President of Santa Clara University. The poem invites us to be grateful, as we listen to and look at the world more closely, "*learning to be astonished.*"

Gratitude is hard in a time of pandemic. Plans have been upended, as parties, weddings, vacations are

canceled, or worse, jobs lost. Still, for us in Northern California, the poppies and wisteria are now in bloom, the air is clear and fresh and most of us are able to spend some time outdoors. All around us good people are offering daily acts of kindness and generosity. Is this an opportunity to live more simply and fully in the present and "*keep my mind on what matters*"?

## Remembering The Gratitude Journal

By Teresa Giovanzana

About 20 years ago I saw Marianne Williamson on the Oprah Show. She spoke of a Gratitude Journal – the daily act of writing in a journal the special moments of the day and giving thanks to God. My son Domenic was about 3 years old then, I was a stay at home mom, and I was feeling a bit out of sorts at that time. The idea of the Gratitude Journal resonated with me so I started one immediately. I recently have looked at my journal and read my entries of what I was grateful for during those early days. Here are some of the entries:

I am grateful that my son and I saw two squirrels chase each other in a tree.  
 I am grateful that my son and I played hockey in the driveway.  
 I am grateful that my son and I planted pansies.  
 I am grateful that my son slept through the night.  
 I am grateful that my husband took care of our son when I was too cranky.  
 I am grateful for my parents support.  
 I am grateful to have heard thunder and rain tonight.  
 I am grateful for the love of my husband and son.

These entries remind me that life's simplest pleasures are the most precious!

Because of my journaling, the conscious act of being grateful on a daily basis taught me that God is with me in all moments of my life – the good and the bad moments. I also realized that living a life in gratitude is a more joyful, accepting, and peaceful life.

After a few years of daily entries, I stopped writing in my journal and began listing my moments of gratitude in my head as I lie in bed at night. I wish I had 20 years of gratitude to read at this point of my life – it would be an interesting and illuminating read! I encourage you to either start a Gratitude Journal now in our days of quiet – or start back up with your journal of old.

## This Was Not The Ending They Planned

Personal Essay by Betsy Noonan

Whether you are the mom, aunt or grandparent of a 2020 graduate this spring, we all know the heartache this class is experiencing as they come to terms with cancellations or postponements of their senior weeks, award nights, proms, high school and college graduations. Most of our college students were abruptly told to pack up and leave their campuses within hours and return home, arranging travel across the country on a very short notice.

In the context of this worldwide pandemic, this is not the first problem that comes to mind. I completely understand this and I'm not trying to minimize anyone else's pain and suffering. However, I have seen college students get "shamed" online for expressing grief about missing their final spring quarter and graduation. I believe it's important to give students and families the space to recognize how different this right of passage will be and to find peace with how they will celebrate if social distancing is still necessary at graduation time.

We have been encouraging our son to look for opportunities to create different "traditions" that will be meaningful when he returns to school to complete his final quarter online. The class of 2020 is a class like no other and they should distinguish themselves. Our son's graduation date is in mid-June, which has not been changed, although it surely will be impacted dramatically. As of now, our family will keep our mid-June plans to travel to campus. We hope to take our son and his friends to a fancy dinner and celebrate the day with as much pomp and circumstance as is appropriate at that time.

Just because the traditional expectations of what happens when you graduate high school or college won't be realized for this class, does not mean that their accomplishments are any less impressive. It means that the last few miles of their journey will need to be re-routed, and as the graduate's family and community, we need to make that detour just as fun and meaningful as possible. We are women for others. We got this!

Here's two links – one is a letter that appeared in the Cal Poly student newspaper that captures the student's perspective and helped me with the title of my essay!

<https://mustangnews.net/letter-to-the-class-of-2020/>

The second is a link to a mental health site. That advocates: "Self-care is not selfish. You must fill your own cup before you can pour into others."

<https://www.activeminds.org>

*Cheers to the class of 2020! Go Bells.*



## LIVE STREAM Filoli Garden's Spring Time Bloom!



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yG82J3X>

## Virtual Garden Tours in Five Gardens: USA, England and France



<https://www.housebeautiful.com/lifestyle/gardening/g31746949/gardens-you-can-virtually-tour/>



## A Fun Gardening Project

By Lisa Christensen and Teresa Giovanzana

The Gardening Group was scheduled for a Summer Vegetable and Flower Seed Workshop on March 28<sup>th</sup>, which was canceled. Here are the basic instructions for you to plant your own seeds at home where you don't miss out on having a summer vegetable garden!



### INSTRUCTIONS

It is important to have fresh seeds. Although some seeds can last for a few years and still be viable. If you don't want to go to the nursery to find fresh seeds, we have found seeds at Rite Aid and some grocery stores carry seeds.

You will need a seed tray or small plastic containers to germinate the seeds. The tray or containers need to be new, or if used, cleaned and sterilized.

Fill the tray or small containers almost to the top with fresh good quality seed starting or potting soil.

Sow your seeds. Depending on the size of the seeds, be mindful of putting an appropriate amount of seeds in each cell. Read packet instructions. Add more potting soil on top of the seeds – about a quarter of an inch.

Gently water the seeds where you do not disturb the seeds. Water three times. Drain off any water that has drained out of the tray or containers.

Place tray or containers in a low box or another larger tray. Cover the seed tray and low box with a large black plastic trash bag and close the opening with a twist tie. Bring the wrapped seed tray into the house and place in a warm location that will stay consistently close to 70-75 degrees. Over or under this temperature will either keep the seeds from sprouting or delay the sprouting.

After 48 hours check the seed tray. If there are any sprouts, pull out the tray and place in sunlight. If the soil appears dry, lightly water the seedlings. Drain off any water that drains through. The tray of seedlings should go outside into sunlight during the day and brought inside at night to stay warm.

If after 48 hours you don't have sprouting seeds, close the tray back in the plastic bag and check in 24 hours. Check every 24 hours until you see sprouting seeds.

When the seedlings become too large for the tray, transplant them into 4" pots using potting soil, for additional growing, or if large enough, directly into your gardening beds.

## Changing Family Traditions

By Catherine Christofferson

With all of the challenges we are currently facing, the one thing that has become very clear to me is the impact of positive thinking. We must believe that our spiritual beliefs and faith in humanity will persevere and get us through this epidemic. I want to share a holiday that occurred in March for my family. We could not celebrate the holiday in its normal traditional fashion, but its values still brought my family together in spirit.

March 19, 2020 was the official Persian New Year. It is called *Nowruz*, which means "New Day." This holiday is about spring and renewal, and dates back thousands of years. I was introduced to Persian New Year in 1987 when I married my husband.

It's not a religious holiday but rather a universal celebration of new beginnings: wishing prosperity and welcoming the future while shedding away the past. Families normally use this time to deep clean their homes and closets. They buy new clothing, furniture, appliances, etc. Usually *Nowruz* is a month long celebration, filled with parties, picnics, and visiting family and friends. In most Iranian homes there is a "Haft Sin" table, which includes seven symbolic items starting with the Farsi letter "S." The hope for the New Year includes health, wealth and prosperity.



Thirteen days after Nowruz, families head outdoors to picnic. The tradition is maintained on the 13th day, which is a number considered unlucky. To ensure good luck for the year, communities throw out the wheat grass, which is said to absorb all the negative energy from each home. Sadly in Iran, and around the world, the pandemic is keeping Persians from participating in all traditional celebrations surrounding this holiday.

My family and friends did gather through social media, made phone calls, shared pictures, and Face Timed each other, wishing each other a Happy New Year. It is times like this where we must remain positive, believe in new beginnings, and remember to continue to offer our love and support to each other.

I wish all of my AMEN family a [Happy Nowruz!](#)