

# Distinct Voice: Presence of/with/to God

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## **PRESENCE OF**

Life has taken a different turn we must all admit but nevertheless, everything happens for a reason. The COVID-19 Pandemic has silenced us down and taught us a new culture, a culture that we knew nothing about yet we must learn to adapt and dance along with lemon, and juice the lemonade out of it. After the Pandemic has come and gone with the help of God we shall have acquired a new “US” that will fashion us anew for life in the normalcy.

Social distancing has alienated us from the mutual closeness we enjoyed with people previously, hence in our new normal after the Pandemic, we will have to learn how to embrace people yet still observe the new safety-social distancing norm. We will probably need to be warmer in our conversations and relate deeply with people we care about rather than just routine handshakes and cheek pecks.



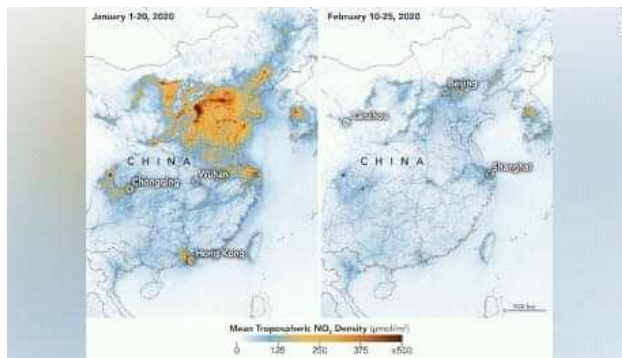
COVID 19 Pandemic took us all by surprise but, nevertheless, we thank God that our eyes have been opened anew for the new normal. We have learnt to appreciate life more, built lasting relationships with people, and our trust in God has grown to a deeper heights.

Lockdown new normalcy helped us to build family ties and togetherness with our loved ones with whom we were locked down.

From left is Carolyne, Sr. Agnes and Mr. Mutua had visited but we were seated at a social- distance

After the pandemic, when finally the locks are lifted up, we shall walk a new into our loved ones homes and lives and possibly embrace life with new insights. A new “us” that we never knew before; “us” who can think differently.

When we reflect on the presence of/with/ and to God during the pandemic, we noticed that even what we called tragic experiences, were in the plan of God. Therefore presence of God is the awareness of the omnipresence of God in our midst. There are many things we took for granted which COVID-19, brightly displayed as very important. For instance, I came across this information, about a satellite image that had been released by the NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) that showed a reduction in emissions in China. As shown below.



The first picture was taken before the onset of CORONAVIRUS. The second picture was taken sometime during the pandemic. The first one has something like a scar in it but the second one has no scar – it is just beautiful to see. This shows that though the world has shut down, Mother Earth is exhaling. The visible cloud of

toxic gas hanging over industrial powerhouses like China (the world’s worst polluter) had almost disappeared. God is present to all his creatures and sometimes he uses events to manifest his presence.



These pictures show the Elephants in Maasai Mara Park. This was in an article shared in the Newspaper where someone had written, “Every year, the Maasai Mara, known for its large

population of lions, leopards, cheetahs, elephants and millions of herbivores, host over 300,000 domestic and international tourists. No single tourist has visited the Mara in more than 60 days. Therefore the animals are at peace. They are roaming freely and grazing without distractions, waste has also been controlled. The ground that was always littered with used water and soda bottles and snack wrappings is clean and breathing well as Coronavirus keeps visitors away”.

As an administrator of a Vocational Training Centre, where we train young women in computer packages, dressmaking, tailoring, hairdressing and beauty therapy, my mind was always planning what to be done in the institution, but during the period of stay at home, I recognized the beauty of creation just around us. The rocks below are just in front of our convent I have more clearly seen them during the lockdown.



No wonder Pope Francis said, in *Laudato Si'*, “God speaks to us through nature and it is through the beauty that, we know the nature of God”. The new normal invites us to look at the beauty of creation with gratefulness and joy. I believe as we move to the new normal we need to reflect on the past with gratefulness, the present with appreciation and the future with hope. And say, “COVID 19 was a blessing in disguise”.

Many of us have discovered a new “us” that we never knew before; “us” who have kept our journal books busy and made very powerful reflections and entries over the season, read books, prayed, rested, exercised, played games and learned new ways of being, still more “us” who have ventured into musical instruments and learned how to fiddle around with those amazing gadgets. The list is endless, lots and lots of people have what it takes to bounce back to after these frightful moments. We shall all put on a new dress of Transformation and welcome the newness in us all to flourish and blossom. Surely our lives after the Pandemic should not be a replica of what went before.

With our churches and places of worship locked up, we learned to turn our homes into worship places and reached out to God; a new norm. When we could not reach out to God in our churches, mosques and synagogues, we reached out to him in our homes. We invited our families to be with us as we sought Him. In our new normalcy, our families will become centres of worship and God will be close to us unlike ever before.

## **PRESENCE TO**

As I reflected on the presence to God, I remembered the story by William P. Young". A story about Mack, a man whose young daughter Missy was kidnapped and brutally murdered while on a family vacation. He receives a note from someone who signs the note as "Papa" Papa encourages Mack to come to the shack. Mack had long been seething with rage at Missy's death and in the depths of profound grief accepts the invitation and returns to the shack. Mack on arrival is met by Papa who turns to be God called Elouisa or Papa. He spends a weekend in the shack with Elouisa (Papa) and the other two members of the Holy Trinity, and Mack after the weekend leaves the shack a changed man. Mack only listened to Papa and the two members who stay with Him. I invite all of us to view the period of COVID 19 as weekend in the SHACK with Papa. A time when God wanted us to pray, listen and contemplate on our interconnectedness, a time to become creative and to think differently.

## **PRESENCE WITH GOD**

We should approach the new normal as a new era, a period where we will learn that we are not sufficient and we need to journey with God and invite him in our daily activities. Like the disciples were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm, we realize we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented. So we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this.

I conclude with a quote from what one of our sister of Mercy wrote in the Enews, about the pandemic that had affected people before and said, "When the danger passed, 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". I concur with her and to say when this pandemic passes, may we be re-created a new, so that we may embrace with joy the renewed face of the Earth.