

The Impact of Crisis on the Spiritual Life

Nancy Santamaria, Spiritual Director

Saint John Vianney Center

2021

“Shelter me” by Michael Joncas

- ▶ Shepherd and sheep, my God and I:
to fresh green fields you led my steps in days gone by.
You gave me rest by quiet springs
and filled my soul with peace your loving presence brings.

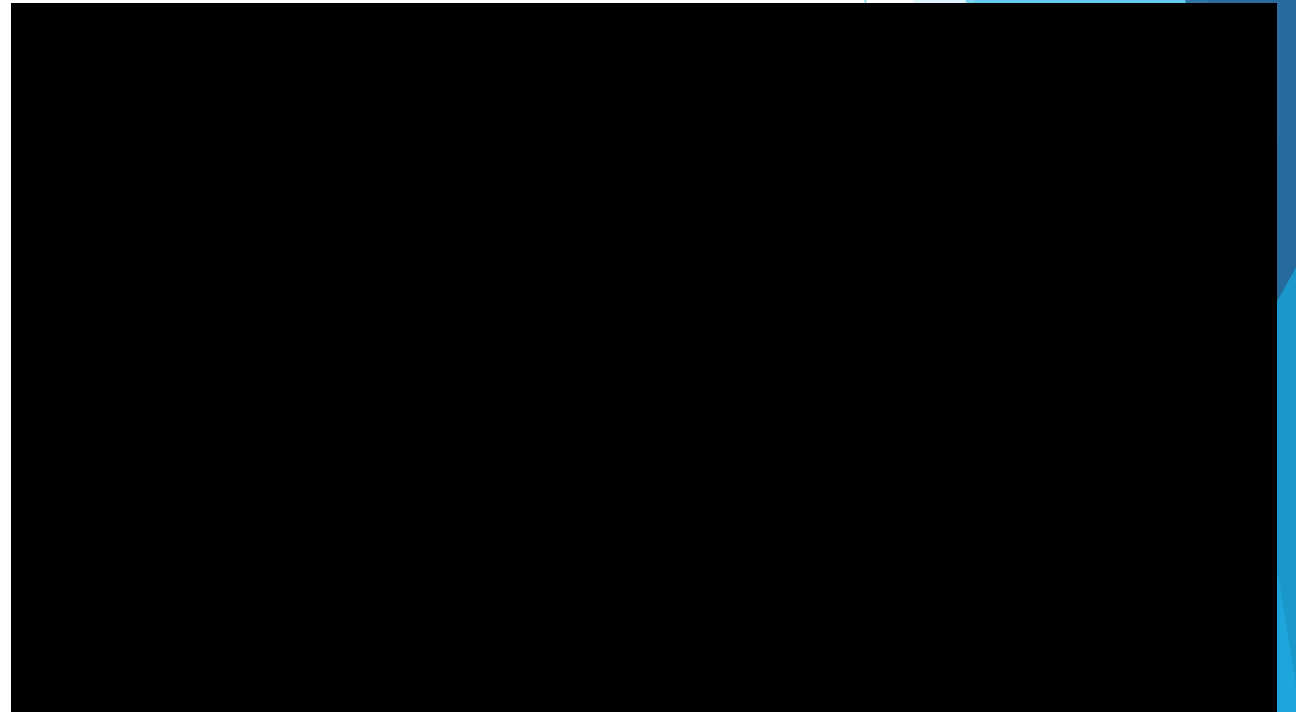
Chorus:

O shelter me, O shelter me:
the way ahead is dark and difficult to see.
O shelter me, O shelter me:
all will be well if only you will shelter me.

2. Yet now I tread a different way;
death dogs my path with stealthy steps from day to day.
I cannot find your peaceful place
but dwell in dreary darkness, longing for your face.

3. I will look back in days to come
and realize your faithfulness has led me home.
Within your house I'll find my peace,
trusting that in your mercy you have sheltered me.

- ▶
- ▶ *At the request of the composer, “Shelter Me” is reprinted free under ONE LICENSE.*



The Impact of Crisis on the Spiritual Life can cause a harshness with ourselves or a determined, yet aggressive effort to plow through.

▶ ***Can our response include Self-Compassion?***

What is Self-Compassion?



▶ **What is Compassion?**

A “suffering with” another person;
kindness, companioning, empathy in action

▶ Self-compassion is practicing compassion toward oneself.

We find it easier to be compassionate toward another than to be
compassionate toward ourselves.

Why Self-Compassion?

What scriptures come to mind?

- ▶ Luke 5: 16

But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.

- ▶ Mark 1:35

³⁵ In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.

- ▶ Matthew 14:23

²³ After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

The five Myths of Self-Compassion have been identified by Dr. Kristin Neff as:

- ▶ **1. Self-compassion is a form of self-pity.**
- ▶ **2. Self-compassion means weakness.**
- ▶ **3. Self-compassion will make me complacent.**
- ▶ **4. Self-compassion is narcissistic.**
- ▶ **5. Self-compassion is selfish.**

Does one or more of these myths resonate with you?

- ▶ There is significant research that proves these myths to be false.
- ▶ In fact, it has been proven through psychological testing that Self-Compassion supports the development of resilience, strength, creativity in problem-solving and a sustained out-pouring of compassion for others.



These are the three elements of Self-Compassion:

- ▶ **1. Self-kindness vs. Self-judgment**
(Being gentle with oneself vs. harsh criticism or imposing perfectionism.)
- ▶ **2. Common humanity vs. Isolation**
(There are others who are suffering similarly vs. being the only one.)
- ▶ **3. Mindfulness vs. Over-identification**
(Tuning in to our emotional awareness vs. augmenting or ignoring the challenges.)

Let's Pause:

Self-compassion Practice

[Considering ourselves...]

Inhale: I allow myself
Exhale: to make mistakes.

Inhale: I allow myself
Exhale: to be imperfect.

Inhale: I allow myself
Exhale: to be a learner in life.

Inhale: I forgive myself
Exhale: And for now, I am free.

[Considering others...]

Inhale: I allow you
Exhale: to make mistakes.

Inhale: I allow you
Exhale: to be imperfect.

Inhale: I allow you
Exhale: to be a learner in life.

Inhale: I forgive you
Exhale: And for now, we are free.

The Impact of Crisis on the Spiritual Life can wear down, beat down our ability to endure the suffering and to continue to meet the challenges.

▶ *Can our response include Spiritual Grit and Resilience?*

What is Grit/Spiritual Grit?

- ▶ *Grit is defined by Angela Duckworth, University of Pennsylvania, as “the disposition to pursue long-term goals with sustained interest and effort over time.”*
- ▶ *Grit has been found to be more important than intelligence as defined by educational testing, class rank - or self-control in the military.*
- ▶ *This idea of Grit can be thought of in the spiritual realm as Fortitude, perseverance and endurance.*

Grit has three components

- ▶ 1. Self-Efficacy or **Optimism** that is, a strong expectation, that, in general things will turn out all right in life, despite setbacks and frustrations. (*Goleman*)

Optimists respond to setbacks actively and hopefully, viewing the situation as something that can be remedied. A mistake is acknowledged, but can be learned from in order to do better next time.

- ▶ 2. **Valuing your goal:** perhaps a passion or something that needs to be cultivated, meaning that “you have to find ways of deepening your appreciation.”
- ▶ 3. **Cost:** Gritty people do not feel the cost of working hard toward their goal nor do they focus on lost opportunity.

What is Resilience?

- ▶ Ability to bounce back
- ▶ Flexibility
- ▶ Strength in hard times
- ▶ Ability to recover quickly from difficulties
- ▶ Elasticity
- ▶ Ability to spring back



Resilience

▶ 10 Steps to building Resilience – American Psychological Association

1. Make Connections.
2. Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.
3. Accept that change is a part of living.
4. Move toward your goals.
5. Take decisive actions.
6. Look for opportunities for self-discovery.
7. Nurture a positive view of yourself.
8. Keep things in perspective.
9. Maintain a hopeful outlook.
10. Take care of yourself.
11. Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful. Eg., meditation, spiritual practices.

In the religious realm, Resilience can be strengthened or decreased

- ▶ Our Beliefs, Our Rituals and our Support Systems can help to strengthen our Resilience, or they can put a strain on it, according to social worker, Mary Van Hook's work in this area.
- ▶ In terms of Beliefs, for example, if we believe that a loving, providential God hears our prayers, then we feel accompanied, loved and guided. This helps to build our resilience. On the negative side, if live out of believing that no one is really listening, that we are essentially alone, this can wear down our energy, our ability to bounce back after trials and to believe that things will improve.

It is the same in terms of Rituals and Support Systems.

Some examples...

For the Interim Time

When near the end of day, life has drained
Out of light, and it is too soon
For the mind of night to have darkened things,

No place looks like itself, loss of outline
Makes everything look strangely in-between,
Unsure of what has been, or what might come.

In this wan light, even trees seem groundless.
In a while it will be night, but nothing
Here seems TO believe the relief of dark.

You are in this time of the interim
Where everything seems withheld.

The path you took to get here has washed out;
The way forward is still concealed from you.

“The old is not old enough to have died away;
The new is still too young to be born.”

You cannot lay claim to anything;
In this place of dusk,
Your eyes are blurred;
And there is no mirror.

Everyone else has lost sight of your heart
And you can see nowhere to put your trust
You know you have to make your own way through.

As far as you can, hold your confidence.
Do not allow your confusion to squander
This call which is loosening
Your roots in false ground,
That you might come free
From all you have outgrown.

What is being transfigured here is your mind,
And it is difficult and slow to become new.
The more faithfully you can endure here,
The more refined your heart will become
For your arrival in the new dawn. - J. O'Donohue

Let's Pause

Suscipe

*Take Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory,
my understanding,
and my entire will,
all that I have and possess.*

Thou hast given all to me.

To Thee, O Lord, I return it.

All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will.

Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.

- Ignatius Loyola

The Impact of Crisis on the Spiritual life can cause a distraction from attentiveness to our prayer practices, the graces that are being showered on us for the journey, and the deep, holy desires that are planted in our hearts.

- ▶ *Can our response include Reverence for the gifts, Focus on our spiritual relationships, enduring Hope, attentiveness to God's surprises?*

Do not waste the opportunities that are provided by a (*good*) Crisis

- ▶ **What does a crisis potentially hold as blessing?**
- ▶ **1. rethinking old patterns to which we can't return**
- ▶ **2. rethinking old patterns that perhaps we've been wanting to change**
- ▶ **3. adapting creatively to changes we are being forced to make**
- ▶ **4. brainstorming into the new normal**

Show up in prayer

Attend to your Grief

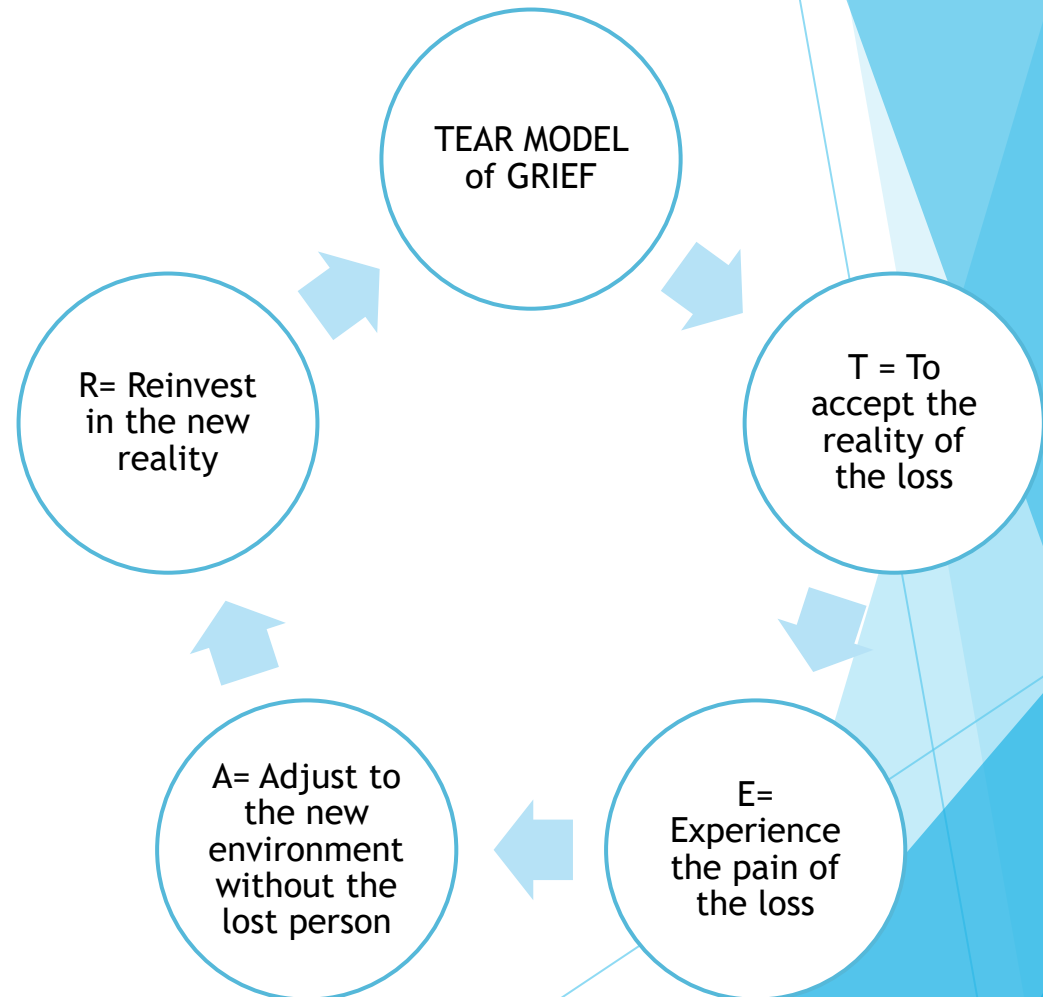
- ▶ **1. *Types of losses:* family, friends, a pregnancy, health, youth, ministry, a parish, funding, property, dreams, hope, a pet, a treasured item, more? The way life was...**
- ▶ **2. *Types of grief:* Anticipated grief, Delayed grief, Complicated grief, Masked grief, Collective grief, Community Grief, and many more.**
- ▶ **3. Everyone grieves differently, in different amounts of time. Grief looks different on each of us.**
- ▶ **4. Grief comes in waves.**
- ▶ **5. Grief is sacred; we bring where we are with our grief to every relationship. There can be blessings and surprises.**
- ▶ **6. Grief work can be essential to deepening our relationship with God, others and our interior life.**
- ▶ **7. What to do? Take good care, pray, write in your journal, spend time in nature or what restores you, read about Grief, speak to a trusted friend, work with a Spiritual Director or Grief counselor, wrestle with Grief.**

Tear Model

Psychologist J. W. Worden also created a stage-based model for coping with the death of a loved one. 2008

He divided the bereavement process into four tasks:

1. T To accept the reality of the loss
2. E To experience/ work through the pain of grief
3. A To adjust to life without the deceased
4. R To reinvest in the new reality /maintain a connection to the deceased while moving on with life



P
R
A
C
T
I
C
E

"Hope is ...
an abiding state of being ...
Become a chalice
into which this divine
energy can pour; a lamp
through which it can shine."

~ CYNTHIA BOURGEAULT

MYSTICAL HOPE

► **For Eckhart, emptying the mind is:**

the most powerful prayer, one almost omnipotent to gain all things, and the noblest work of all is that which proceeds from a bare mind....A bare mind can do all things. What is a bare mind? A bare mind is one which is worried by nothing and is tied to nothing, which has not bound its best part to any modes, does not seek its own in anything, that is fully immersed in God's dearest will and goes out of its own.

Embrace Silence

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the frame, creating a modern, layered effect against the white background.

▶ **Be still**
Listen to the stones of the wall
Be silent, they try
to speak your
name.
Listen
to the living walls.
Who are you?
Who
are you?
Whose
silence are you?

-- Excerpt from Thomas Merton

Some Blessings – what are yours?

- ▶ 1. Eating two by two. Perhaps with “others” - more significant conversation.
- ▶ 2. Presence to prayer. Changed by ritual.
- ▶ 3. Gratefulness for what is and for what we cannot have; deeper longing.
- ▶ 4. More contact with neglected relationships.
- ▶ 5. Abundance of time? Less time?
- ▶ 6. Creativity. New learnings from necessity, e.g., live-streaming.
- ▶ 7. What more? Reading eyes, time in nature, consider what has worked, what has not and learn from it.

Let's Pause

- ▶ The night before Jesus died, from John 14:27, Jesus told us,
- ▶ “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.”

Christ's Peace is always available to us.

“Showing up” to our prayer practices is essential. It is good for us to “place ourselves in the position to receive the grace that is available.”

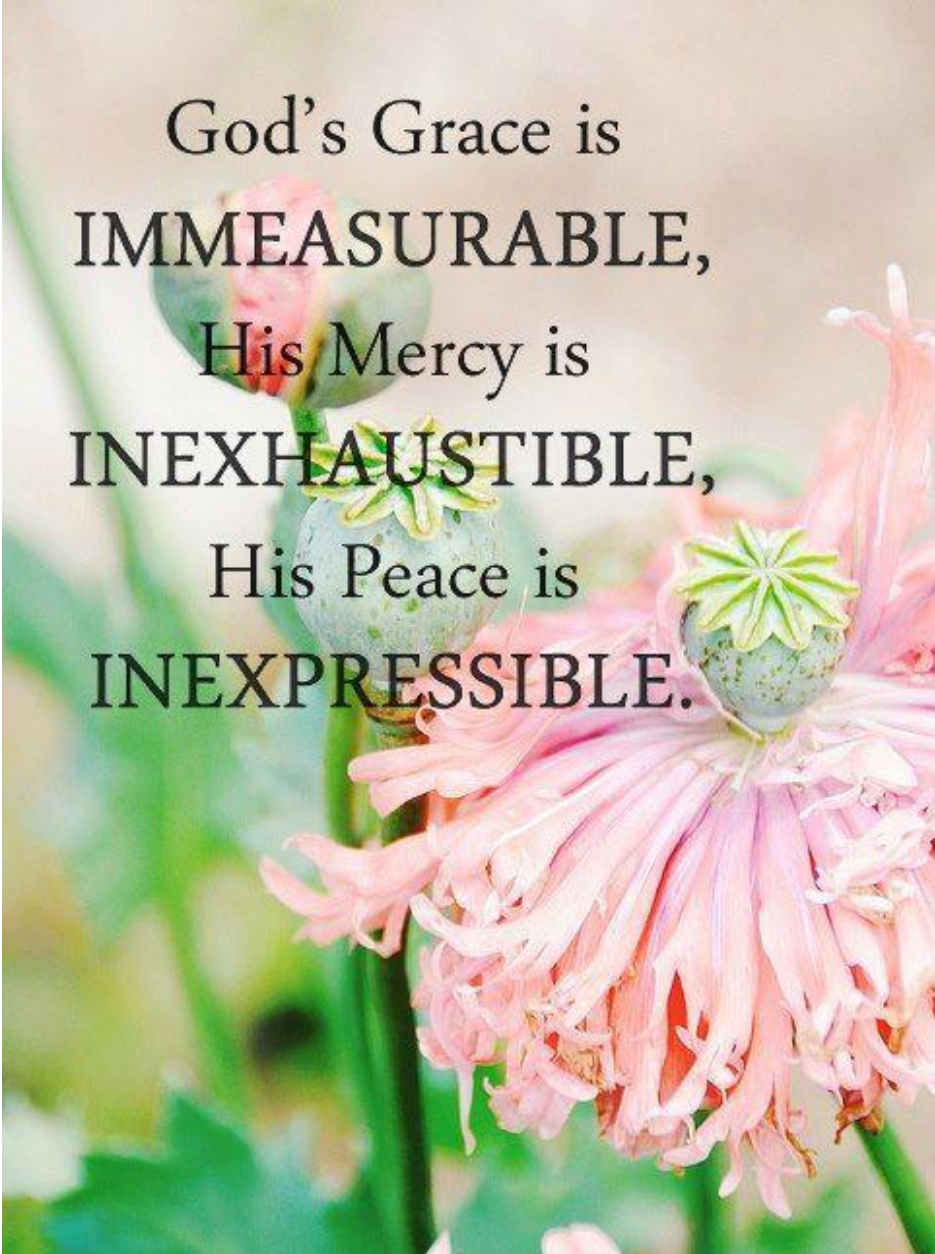


Blessed Are You Who Bear the Light

▶ *by Jan Richardson*

Blessed are you
who bear the light
in unbearable times,
who testify
to its endurance
amid the unendurable,
who bear witness
to its persistence
when everything seems
in shadow
and grief.

Blessed are you
in whom
the light lives,
in whom
the brightness blazes -
your heart
a chapel,
an altar where
in the deepest night
can be seen
the first that
shines forth in you
in unaccountable faith,
in stubborn hope,
in love that illumines
every broken thing
it finds.



God's Grace is
IMMEASURABLE,
His Mercy is
INEXHAUSTIBLE,
His Peace is
INEXPRESSIBLE.

Thank you!

You are in my prayers.

Peace.