

The Crucible and the Lifeline

By Linda Bilotti

Crucible [noun]: *a container in which metals or other substances can be heated to very high temperatures.*

Usage: In the searing crucible of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, our societal frailties are clearly exposed, even as we glimpse the true goodness in our humanity.

Lifeline [noun]: *a rope that is thrown to someone who is in the water, especially the sea, and is in danger.*

Usage: Our small yet mighty Saint Peter's in the Woods has emerged as a fundamental lifeline to us in this crisis, extending faithful communion, solace, and a pathway to share critical lifelines with our neighbors.

It has been so hard to parse out the nuggets of goodness that emerge each day, as this scary pandemic moves in waves across our beloved nation and the planet. I sometimes feel in a fog brought about by fears from many quarters. How many souls will be ultimately lost? When will this virus be done with us, so we can go back to normal? What will be the new normal, for good or ill? Will the divides in our country heal? Will our own family be tragically affected, either physically or financially?

Through all these doubts, I do know we are the lucky ones. I find myself being thankful for simple gifts and pleasures that would have passed me by previously, with little notice. A beautifully crisp Fall day. Sitting six feet apart in the back yard with my children and grandchildren, even when I can't hug them. Watering the "Giving Garden" and watching the tomatoes turn red. Seeing my SPW friends in person during a simple service, as I look up to the tree tops where the leaves are bright orange against a blue sky. Sharing a fleece blanket or a bag of groceries with another family. Enjoying Bill sing in a driveway concert for twelve masked neighbors. Or making dinner for two more often than not.

There are many of these shimmering nuggets which are the resilient remainders of our pandemic crucible. Saint Peter's in the Woods helps keep me out of the fog and grounded in what is important. No small task for a church whose doors have been shut since March. It's been a shape shifting feat by our talented and kind Rector, Susan, our staff, and the lay leadership.

Stewardship [noun]: *the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.*

Usage: In stewardship of our honey sweet church in the woods, it's Autumn and a time to gather in the harvest. Let's keep the good works going. Bill and I are "One Together" with Saint Peter's in the Woods!