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## **Standing Together: Faith Sharing on the Pandemic**

*The group leader, or someone the leader invites, reads the opening prayer:*

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we pray for your healing touch during this pandemic.  
We ask you to accompany those in our small groups,  
our parishes, our communities, our nation, and  
throughout the world who are impacted by the virus  
through infection, economic loss, or anxiety.  
Renew our faith in your promise to be with us always.  
Keep us mindful, Lord, that we share in this crisis  
as a family and that whatever we are asked to do  
to prevent the spread of infection, we do for the  
good of all. May we be patient and generous  
with each other, following your example,  
you who live and reign with the Father and  
the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

**Scripture:** Job 1:1,13-21

**Leader:** A reading from the Book of Job

There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.... One day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the eldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were ploughing and the donkeys were feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell on them and carried them off, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was still speaking, another came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was still speaking, another came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three columns, made a raid on the camels and carried them off, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was still speaking,

another came and said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house, and suddenly a great wind came across the desert, struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; I alone have escaped to tell you.” Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshipped. He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

**Leader:** The Word of the Lord

**Response:** Thanks be to God.

## **Reflection**

*The leader, or someone the leader enlists, reads the reflection.*

Job never saw it coming. He lost everything in a heartbeat; his life of comfort collapsed into a life of misery. Job didn’t know what the narrative tells us—that his troubles were a result of a battle of wills between God and Satan. Egged on by his wife and his so-called friends, Job wrestled with questions of punishment and justice until his healthy and prosperous life was restored. Amid a pandemic that has unexpectedly altered the lives of everyone on the planet, we might be able to identify with Job more than ever before. Some of us might be frightened by the threat to our own health and the health of others. Some might be worried about the consequences of losing our sources of income and our savings—temporarily or for good. While some might judge the pandemic to be an inevitable event in the natural world, others might be tempted to look for someone to blame—Governments? Medical science? Although some ancient people, like Job’s contemporaries, believed that illness was God’s way of punishing sinners, and even their descendants, Jesus rejected that idea, and so does the Church. This pandemic is a result of natural processes that medical research and treatment will ultimately explain and control. But just as we can understand the turbulence in Job’s mind and heart, we can give each other and ourselves some latitude as we react to what has happened to us. And perhaps we will have learned from the sudden and unwelcome experience that while we have faith of God’s promise of eternal life, we do not control the environmental and economic forces in this world. We cannot rely utterly on the advantages of life on earth. Being forced to forego not only luxuries but also something as fundamental as our freedom to go where we choose may help us value what we normally take for granted and empathize with those who do without basic necessities when there is no pandemic.

## **Sharing questions**

**Leader:** If you wish to, share how you are experiencing this pandemic at the present moment. What feelings does it raise? What insights or learnings?

## **Action step**

Name someone who is dealing with stress and anxiety resulting from the pandemic. Contact that person in the next few days, using phone calls, Face Time, or other virtual technology to let them express their feelings and be reassured of your concern and companionship.

## **Closing prayer**

**Leader:** Either aloud, by writing in the chat box, or in the silence of your heart, name those affected by the pandemic for whom you wish to pray.

**Leader:** For the eternal peace of those who have died due to the corona virus, and for the consolation of their families and friends, we pray to the Lord.

**Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For those who are ill with the corona virus and for those who are caring for them, we pray to the Lord.

**Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For those who are experiencing anxiety or loneliness because of the changes in their daily lives, we pray to the Lord.

**Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For those who have lost their jobs and those whose businesses are at risk, we pray to the Lord.

**Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For doctors, nurses, hospital staffs, and first responders who risk their own health to care for others, we pray to the Lord.

**Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For public officials who are working long hours to help manage the crisis, we pray to the Lord.

**Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For the Church, that she may continue, in new ways, to be a source of comfort and encouragement to the people of God, we pray to the Lord.

**Response:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** Now, let us pray together as Jesus taught us. Our Father ....

**Leader:** May almighty God bless us, protect us from harm, and bring us to everlasting life. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen.**

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