

Good Morning!

My name is Rona Sisson and I want to share my experiences in participating in OMC's Lenten small groups during Lent 2020 and this year, 2021: and how these experiences have personally shaped my relationship with God and strengthened my Catholic faith.

Like some Catholics, my spiritual path has not been a linear one. With strong Catholic family roots on my father's side, tracing back of all places to Pennsylvania from my home state of Michigan, I was raised a Christian--- and formally joined the Catholic Church during my years at Notre Dame. Settling in Philadelphia, we joined OMC - from there, my faith journey has been a winding road. I feel grateful and blessed to be back with my faith community here at OMC.

I joined a Lenten small group in early 2020. My father was facing a serious end of life struggle with Parkinson's, in a Michigan nursing home; my job carries a level of stress as many of ours do; I was facing extended family long-distance communication challenges; and as many of us, navigating the 'parenting playbook' as my children grow into adults. We were meeting at our Leaders' home, enjoying the community and faith reflections on the weekly Mass readings. There was something so tangible and affirming about taking the time, during Lent, to study God's word and pray about its meaning for our own lives.

In Mid-March 2020, the severity of the global pandemic hit us all. The fear, confusion and rapidly changing world upended my pre-Covid daily routine. These events have been unimaginable.

Our small group scrambled to continue to meet, and we moved to an online format. The readings took on an even more profound meaning for me during this time. I created a simple, daily prayer routine and reflection time: the world certainly felt upside down. My Dad died almost exactly a year ago today, on April 22, 2020. Like many, he was physically separated from family due to Covid restrictions, and I was unable to attend services. The love and support of my OMC group was profoundly helpful to me during this time.

Fast forward to Lent 2021, and I have been blessed with time to pray and reflect with an equally amazing group. The readings from this year's 4th week of Lent personally moved me even closer to understanding that the events of the world are mere earthly things. "A Time to Choose the Light" was the thematic direction of the weekly Lenten Mass readings, and the journey we all take in coming out of exile and darkness -- with an open heart -- toward God's word of love and peace .

Thank You!