

Trying to stay connected with fellow humans

by Mark Pavilons

Poet John Donne pointed out that no man is an island. Our personal networks ??ur connections to one another ?are facing unprecedented strain.

This is perhaps one of the keys to the mounting stress during the current pandemic. In an effort to curb the transmission and mounting cases of COVID, governments all around the world have had to come up with some novel, ingenious, and yes, extreme methods. The latest include our stay-at-home order, and in some places, curfews, forcing people to stay inside for parts of the day.

Curfews are nothing new, and were used in times of crisis and war. The last time they were implemented here in Canada was the ?October Crisis,??in 1970 when the FLQ kidnapped Quebec's deputy premier Pierre Laporte and British diplomat James Cross. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau enacted the War Time Measures Act, the only peacetime use of this extreme measure.

Our on-again, off-again imposed isolation is getting tiresome.

We've all been affected, some more than others. For those who are simply somewhat ?on edge,? make no mistake that this is the reason.

?The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed,??Carl Jung once said.

Just what has happened to this necessary transformation?

The old adage, you don't know what you have until it's gone, rings true. In what seemed so long ago, simply running errands, smiling and greeting our fellow human beings was taken for granted. Now that it's very limited, it's like a hole in our hearts.

With heads down and mouths covered, we trudge along as best we can. Few even make eye contact anymore.

We frail humans need one another, despite cries by some that they love their solitude.

We need to talk, to share, and we need human contact.

That's one of the reasons we have so many well-developed senses. While they have initially been entrenched to increase our chances of survival, we have evolved to the point of choosing when and where to use our God-given abilities.

The pandemic has altered our daily routines and rituals. It has forever changed our hygiene and sense of contamination and contagion. To some, it has become a bit of an obsession.

Will this forever change the way we approach and come in contact with our fellow human beings? Maybe.

While impractical, I suggest when all of this is over we organize one massive group hug. It would be like a giant wave at a ball game and it could start right here in our home town Can you imagine? From sea to shining sea, just like Canada's motto (A Mari usque ad Mare).

Until then, we are forced to confine, sequester, detach, disengage and insulate.

Not very nice terms, and not very conducive to the way human beings are meant to live.

I would be so bold as to say this is shaking the very foundations of our democratic society. Recent events have very graphically demonstrated that.

Our society is based on enshrined rights and freedoms, contained in our venerable Charter. These include guarantees of free speech, to gather, to practice religion. We are granted the right to enter and leave Canada at will.

Now, due to such unusual and unprecedented circumstances, these rights have been curtailed and severed. It is not an ideal situation by any means.

All of these rights and freedoms have to do with human nature. It has to do with supporting an engaged public, doing things which bring us together for a common goal or purpose.

To lose one's purpose is sad, indeed.

Sure, we can express our opinions on blogs and social media. We can share Mass and Sunday service via YouTube. We can study and learn through Google.

Again, this is not how it's meant to be. How does one go from being a social creature, to a recluse, closed off from our brothers and sisters? How do we simply flick the switch, and turn off that part of our essence?

The answer is we can't. But we've been forced to.

Therein lies the dilemma.

People in some cities and regions around the world have protested, some vigorously, against the restrictions, curfews and orders. Whether touting fundamental freedoms, or simply being frustrated, they desperately want to be together again with their fellow citizens.

Who doesn't? No one is an island.

It's unlikely any of us will be able to celebrate upcoming Valentine's Day, birthdays, and March Break as we would have liked. There are a couple of milestone birthdays in my household, and I have no idea what to do.

At the moment, even going to the store is not an option. I doubt you can order balloons on Amazon.

I don't want to be detached, segregated, divided, removed or kept apart.

I want to be emancipated, released, sprung, let loose and unfettered.

Right now, we can't physically heal one another's wounds, or reach out to damaged hearts.

But the time will come when the doors swing wide open and we're greeted by a breath of fresh air and the sun on our faces.

And when that happens, I hope we see a flood of hope, compassion and love. I hope we see an outpouring of gratitude and mutual support.

Will the world emerge from this cocoon with renewed spirit? I truly hope so.