

the back page - sheth larue, Senior MDiv.

Over spring break I was going to spend some time accruing hours at my CPE site, but my plans were changed as COVID-19 descended on Austin. When I was informed that I could no longer set foot in the hospital as a budding chaplain, I wasn't particularly heartbroken about it because I disliked the work. But as time has worn on and I'm isolated and secluded, I'm beginning to recognize that something in me isn't quite right.

I'm doing my part by staying home and away from others (thanks to the Pitcocks for letting me crash at your place)...and I'm being educated via Zoom and Hangouts...and I'm attending churches virtually...I am hella Facetiming and Facebooking and Tweeting and Instagramming my way through this quarantine.

But it hit me the other day that I'm suffering. I'm suffering because I am not able to live out my vocation, my calling, my share that I have within God's Kingdom. I'm suffering because I know that the work which will make me most complete, most happy, most content, is out of my reach.

Yes, I know that I'm doing my job by staying home, blah blah blah...but it's not the same. The screen can only do so much to convey my heart and I'm not able to be my truest self right now. If I were a betting man, I'd say that most of you are in this same boat: you're trying your best to do what you can where you are, but you're only a shadow of who you are and what you do. And this hurts your soul. It pains all of us because we cannot be ourselves right now.

There's no easy way around this. To be the most helpful is to be still...to be alone...to be in this desert. I am finding comfort in the beginnings of Jesus' ministry: when he was baptized and the Spirit descended upon him he was "about thirty years old when he began his work" (Luke 3:23). While tweenager Jesus spent time in the temple teaching, it took nearly two decades for him to move into full-time ministry. And then - when he did start his ministry - he immediately went into the desert, where he spent forty days alone with the scheming devil tempting him.

We'll get out of these deserts soon enough. Be patient with yourselves. Spend this time honing your spirits for the days to come - and find rest - because when this is over, the world is going to need us more than we ever imagined. Be well, be good, be safe.

much love. sheth.

"Each one of us is called to a special place in the Kingdom. If we find that place we will be happy. If we do not find it, we can never be completely happy. For each one of us, there is only one thing necessary: to fulfill our own destiny, according to God's will, to be what God wants us to be."

Thomas Merton, *No Man Is An Island*, (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 2003), 131.