

## Faithful Witness as Women in the Church

### Offering Faithful Witness- Sacred Heart Center

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I look around my environs, my neighborhood, my parish and see so many giving faithful witness as women in the Church during this strange time of pandemic, isolation, distancing and deprivation. When we get stripped down to essentials, faith is certainly one of them.

I hear Kay, a 90+ year old, masked and with her cane, faithfully leading the rosary before Mass. I see the faithful women (and some men) gathering for weekday Mass, masked and spread out in alternate pews, waving at the sign of peace. I remember when the Church was closed and services discontinued, the voices of many phoning and asking when the Church would reopen, how to get palms and what about Holy Week and Easter?

Speaking about the priests' sexual abuse of minors, one woman said: *"I am not going to lose my faith over this. I love my faith"* Another said: *"I am walking around the house, holding my rosary all the time."*

The women who participate in book club and other programs at Sacred Heart Center are sincere seekers, coming to deepen in their faith. They are lifelong learners. They question some of the things that they were taught as children, such as never to go inside a church of another religion. One woman said vehemently, *"this was wrong,"* and others shared examples of what they had shared and learned from friends of other faith traditions. We realized that our practice of faith matures and that Church teachings evolve with new understandings through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of the Church.

After journeying with Sr. Joan Chittister as we examined facets of our aging and praying with Sr. Joyce Rupp using her book *Boundless Compassion: Creating a Way of Life*, the group expressed interest in exploring meditation from an eastern teacher, Eknath Easwaran. Then covid intervened! The book we chose is called *Strength in the Storm* apropos for this strange time.

Sacred Heart Center witnesses to those women (and men) who seek to grow in faith and love of God through the regular practice of spiritual direction. We are grateful to the Congregation for providing a safe and sacred space for participants to share and give faithful witness as women in the Church.