

**Saturday, March 20**

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As I had entered 2020 with a severe concussion, conforming to a new normal in a pandemic world was not out of the ordinary for me. I had already adapted to new pain levels and limited social interaction.

Frustration, grief and anger filled the year as challenge after challenge – including another concussion in July – entered my life. I was no longer able to be with my gymnastics or cheer teammates, and I struggled with the lack of face-to-face classroom interaction as the new online approach increased my concussion symptoms.

It was so easy to lose compassion for myself as I did not feel “normal.” I blamed myself each time I couldn’t perform an action to the same ability that I had before the injuries and the pandemic. I spent many dark days wondering what I could have done or could be doing to serve God more. Surely if I did more, fewer challenges would result and more of God’s grace would follow.

But Ephesians 2:8-9 reminded me: *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.”* His grace is a constant reminder of His compassion, no matter how much or how little we do. We all face struggles during these difficult times. Serving the Lord is hard and setting blame is rather easy. But His patience and compassion remind us to show each other and ourselves those same acts of love that Christ shows us.

As I enter this Lenten season, still in a dark pandemic with post-concussion syndrome and practicing compassion, I think of Luis, a young boy I met during rehab. I watched Luis cry from pain and frustration but keep pushing. I also watched him laugh while beating me in Mario Kart and joke with the nurses to drink the cup of “apple juice” that was actually his own pee, an exciting accomplishment since it was the first time he was able to use the restroom without any medical assistance.

Luis made me realize that amidst even the most incomprehensible experiences, joy restores more than any threat can take away. His ability to find the good in any situation has served as a constant reminder during this time of uncertainty to always find the “apple juice” in a cup of pee!