

Life in the Time of Covid: 2020-2022

Anne Sovik

Pandemic Year Diary: Excerpts

March 20, 2020—Friday, first full day of spring!

A strange new time of coronavirus. Isolation as “vaccine” against it. Anxiety runs as an undercurrent. I talk loudly to myself. Mornings I get up motivated for action, action which alternates with periods of lassitude.

Self-imposed lockdown as sabbath. As sanctuary. A sacred time. Love wells up when images of various people come to mind—friends, beloveds, the St. John’s community, near strangers, complete strangers . . .

Sometimes I intentionally do nothing. Sit or lie and see and listen with no purpose or thinking through or planning.

This could be a productive time. Mary Y. is cleaning out her closets, figuring she won’t survive the pandemic and wishing to save her children the trouble. I should do that, too.

[During the shock of early pandemic, I developed a sudden mania for cooking, for trying new recipes to use the staples I’d stocked up on in order to avoid entering grocery stores. I made, among other things, carrot-orange soup, Russian cabbage borscht, red lentil soup, croissants, vegetable pot pie, coq au vin—dishes more elaborate than my usual dinner for one.]

March 28, 2020—Saturday

In the co-op parking lot waiting for my online grocery order, I almost cried when I saw through the open door the staff wearing masks, and saw plastic sheeting hung to protect cashiers and customers from each other. As I drove home along empty streets past deserted parking lots, it hit me again: we are living in something that feels like an end time, the kind of thing we might expect in speculative fiction, but never expected to experience. We are living it.

April 10, 2020—Good Friday

The body of Christ, without gathering as a body—there’s something poignant about the radio church services, the pastors and assistants carrying on in the otherwise empty sanctuary. A different flavor of sacred. In some way more sacred? Because carrying on despite . . . Carrying on in the face of . . .

April 19, 2020—Sunday

Just now I feel: I can’t take it anymore. Despair. Is this a life sentence? Will it turn out to have been a life sentence?

[It was not all despair; there were good times. I relished having so much unscheduled time. Getting outdoors, whether in solitude or with friends, was especially cheering. Sanity preserving! Zoom meetings, despite some initial awkwardness, provided social continuity.]

February 20, 2021—Saturday

My first dose of the Pfizer vaccine! A red-letter day, long awaited. There is hope.

—Anne Sovik (b. 1946)