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God's presence in our family during the pandemic

When a child asks questions that move us forward in faith...

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Our little family (Hector, 8, Isaac, 6, Stephane and Erika) returned from our spring break in Mexico on March 11, just two days before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. We needed to make a quick decision and thought it best to self-isolate for two weeks, without any idea that our

precautionary confinement would extend into months!

Things change...

Our confinement experience has been marked by different phases. Initially, we considered it as a temporary *extended vacation* at home. However, soon enough, we realized it was not that at all! Our first major challenge was trying to put order into our new family-school-professional reality all lived in one place, our home, together sharing the same space 24/7. It was actually quite chaotic, and emotions started rising with each passing day. Deprived of the Eucharist and of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, our thirst for spiritual grace only increased, and we had to explore different ways to pray, individually and as a family, so as to restore the interior peace we sought and needed.

But Hector's question move us...

Through our daily prayer at mealtime (which increased since we were now eating together three times daily, every day) and at bedtime, we realized that God had bigger plans for us during this confinement. In one instance, we recognized God speaking to us clearly and directly through our son Hector who asked one day during mealtime: *If God exists and if He is capable of doing anything, why does He not destroy the coronavirus?* His question definitely took us by surprise and, of course, we knew that we needed to provide a reasonable answer. But how does one explain to an eight year old that God while aware that evil is taking place, invites us to join Him in correcting that evil, in making a crooked path straight so as to accomplish a greater good.

That explanation inspired us to ask the question: *What is God asking from us during this time of pandemic?* Looking back, Hector's question had a profound impact on our family. As a family, we realized through our daily interaction, joys and struggles that God was asking us to find new ways to love Him, to love each other and to love others, even if physical distancing was a must.

...and leads us to reinforce important virtues

Our children taught us, as parents, how to be resilient and to adapt willingly to our new reality by becoming more caring, more patient, more hopeful, accepting graciously that we had to balance time with our children with the demands of work that often required being available at unusual hours. The children, for their part, also developed a new way of loving the neighbours by saying

prayers for them. They started offering friendly smiles to everyone who crossed our path during our daily walks. They acted particularly lovingly toward their grandparents. They took good care of them by maintaining daily contact with them through phone or Skype, or other means.

Yes, after the initial storm caused by mandatory confinement, a certain calm has ensued. But, of course, the path was sometimes very steep and littered with obstacles. Today, we can say that we are still in a process of growing as we pursue this path but that we have been able to use this confinement opportunity to abandon ourselves to God's will for our family. We have experienced very difficult and very beautiful times together. Nevertheless, it has been an opportunity to strengthen some important virtues such as temperance, friendliness and hope.

We are thankful to God for this time together, for his presence in our daily lives and for his loving mercy during these difficult times.

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