



I'm fine. Have you been saying that to yourself lately? Women have been notorious for saying they are fine even when the walls are collapsing around them. Now that we are two years into a pandemic, I think we have all used this short affirmation. We want to assure ourselves that we are fine, we will be fine and we can get through this. While most of us are experiencing this as our first pandemic, this is not new to our world or to God.

The first true lesson I learned about saying I was fine, long before this pandemic, was when the insurance company did not want to pay for part of my maternity needs. Turns out they questioned that I took time for bedrest at the end of my pregnancy, even though the doctor ordered it. While that might not make sense, rest assured, they got a hold of part of my medical record that had me quoted as saying, "I'm fine," in the notes.

Fine is a relative term. I was fine having to clock 20 horizontal hours a day to keep my babies growing. My babies ended up being fine even though they came six weeks early and were in the NICU for three weeks. Fine for most would be still being able to go about daily life as if they were not even pregnant until their water breaks. Fine for all expected parents is bringing your child home from the hospital when you are released and not having them hooked up to machines, even ones that said if they were fine!

So how are you doing? Take a deep breath right now and know it is OK to say to yourself how you truly are doing. You are not weak, abnormal, losing yourself or going to stop breathing. You may not be fine, but you are being sustained by God. As Catholics we have the gift of knowing our God loves us just as we are. If God loves us just like this, as "fine" as you are right now, I hope you know you can love yourself right now, just as you are!

Loving yourself and being loved by God may mean you are not fine today, but you are not alone. You have God with you and now in this pandemic, you may be one in four who are dealing with anxiety or depression. If nobody has told you this today, please know you are doing an awesome job navigating through this pandemic and other difficult situations you may have or had in your life.

Jesus, being God of course, knew not to eat alone on Holy Thursday nor leave us alone for too long. No, life was meant to be shared with others regardless of how dire our situation. God made us become part of a family on earth to be loved and nurtured as well as being part of his family to complete us. Together, we are all God's family, we are the church. We come together and received Christ in the eucharist to sustain us, nurture us and become one with him. We are a Christ-filled, loving community, here for one another.

Regardless of how many communities we are a part of, there may be days or moments when we feel all alone, even when we are with people, and truly could use a hug. People are hugging less now at a time when hugging can literally help us with stress and anxiety. I remember once I had to be in court for a very difficult hearing. It was cutting into my assigned adoration time at my parish, but I had to miss my time slot and get a substituted. On the way home, I decided to stop by adoration at a later time just to be with God in my grief. There I was in a chapel with multiple people and with God, yet I felt as if I needed to leave for I just needed to be hugged. I sat there before God and told him I need to go for as good as it was to be with him, I just needed to be physically held. God heard me. At that moment I felt the most loving hug I had every felt. I did not feel his arms around me, but instead I felt him embrace my heart. I was completely filled with Christ's love. He held me then and he holds me today.

Today I recognize we all have mental health. We may swing back and forth, feeling down or feeling energized. If you are feeling down for too long, you may want to reach out for help. Your mental health matters to us. We will be having more conversations at our parish about mental health to help us all navigate this gift of life, even a blessed life with Christ, for our mental health is part of each of us.

- by Catherine Campbell