

# Spiritual exercise 20 April 2020



## God welcomes all

I think for the first time in our lives, we truly understand the devastation of how it feels to be “socially excluded and isolated”. We understand now how it must have felt to many people in the past, who have been isolated and excluded by us, our world and society. Our reading tells us a similar story. Onesimus was a slave and was excluded from most of the privileges of his society. He was not only a runaway slave but a thief who stole from his master, Philemon. The punishment for crimes like his would have been severe. Onesimus might have been in danger for his life going back to his master! However, things turned out differently for him. He met the Apostle Paul and his life changed for the better. Paul included him in the brotherhood of believers. He was no longer a slave to sin but a servant of the Living God. Paul is writing a letter to his owner, Philemon, urging him to forgive the misdeeds of his runaway slave and welcome him with open arms of love. Paul says (Phil 1:15-16) that “perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.”

While we are in lockdown and socially isolated, we have a lot of time to think about all the people that we have **socially distanced** ourselves from or excluded because of their status, gender, political views, sexuality, race or religion. May we ask God to help us to see them in a new light through God’s loving eyes, as Paul was urging Philemon to do. May we look at others differently and find the courage to “see” them as people who are created by God and who are loved by God. Amen

**Monday 20 April 2020**

**Philemon 1:17:**

“So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.”

### Prayer

Lord,  
remind us again of your continuing love for all people,  
surprise us with your goodness  
and inspire us to respond in faith, hope and love.

**Amen.**



Listen to and read the words of the hymn: “Brother, sister, let me serve you”.