

# Even when you feel you are an outsider, you are never alone

When I was a child, I wasn't allowed to eat food with artificial dye in it. It was the 1980s, and my mother may have been a bit ahead of her time in worrying about dyes and preservatives.

When you're a first-grader at your school Valentine's Day party, it isn't easy to turn down all the red and pink food in the room. But that was the family rule. So I passed on the colored treats, and I found the world kept on turning.

My mother was most likely thinking about my health. But I learned something else. Throughout my childhood, my parents found opportunities to show me that sometimes you have to go against the grain. They opted out of sex education classes at school and taught us what we needed to know at home. They took us to the March for Life. They showed us that sometimes the more difficult path is the right one to walk.

They helped me feel comfortable with being on that path, even though they must have known there would be times I would walk it by myself.

In recent days, I have been feeling a little alone. Maybe you have, too. Maybe the questions and issues and conversations are bigger than you can get your arms around. Maybe no one's voice seems to be speaking to or with yours. Maybe when you do speak, you feel misunderstood. Maybe you aren't even sure what to say.

"It is, I think, that we are all so alone in what lies deepest in our souls, so unable to find the words, and perhaps the courage to speak with unlocked hearts, that we don't know at all that it is the same with others," said Sheldon Vanauken in his book, *A Severe Mercy*. So many people feel alone—many with a loneliness I may never understand.

Watching the images of people marching at the women's march on Saturday, I knew with certainty that this event was not for me. Listening to the words and messages, I knew they were not speaking to me. I saw no room for myself—as a woman and a wife and a mother and a Catholic...as myself—at that march.

Watching the crowds and seeing how they were celebrated, I felt like an outsider. I hear the voices, I see the messages, but they are not for me. Those people marching may have good hearts and good intentions, but they are not singing a song I am called to sing.

I do not want to protest. I want to help build a better future, a future I believe—I know—is possible. I want to advocate for peace, for love, for joy, for justice, for life. If you do not hear your voice in the crowds either, what is God asking of you?

The path you take to make a difference may not be an easy or an obvious one. It might not come with clever phrases or matching shirts or a designated day. It might not be celebrated on social media. It might mean some friendships become strained, and others are enriched.

It's your path to take, and it's worth taking. Maybe only you can walk that path, with your own voice, your own questions, your own vision, your own hopes and dreams.

"Remember," St. John Paul said, "you are never alone. Christ is with you on your journey every day of your lives!"

And so He is.

