

What If It Was My Mother?



Routine encounters can sometimes bring surprising points for deeper reflection. I experienced this with my next-door neighbor, who assists with delivering meals to the homes of elderly. One day, as I dropped off the bags that we use to deliver the meals, we started talking.

My neighbor commented on the long distance down hallways that each of us now had to walk to deliver meals to one of the new people on our route. As she walked the halls the first time, she had felt that the distance was a bit much.

Then, she recalled asking herself: “What if it was my mother?” She would want others to be willing to go the distance if it was her mother. Why wouldn’t she want to do the same for someone else’s mother?

From then on, dropping off that meal on the route didn’t seem burdensome to her...but part of the circle of relationships to which we are all connected.

Her question keeps running through my head in different ways in relation to others. What if it was my mother suffering discrimination and violence, without health insurance, in jail, on the streets, sick, in the midst of wars, in poor-paying jobs, or in polluted neighborhoods?

“What if it was my mother?” “Brother?” “Sister?” “Father?” “Cousin?” “Friend?” “Daughter?” “Uncle?” “Aunt?” “Son?” I even think about it in relation to our world, which we often call “Mother Earth,” and which we are damaging via pollution, wars, and overuse.

In other words, what if “it” was someone or something very dear to me? Am I more likely to respond when I see people in need? How might I respond? How am I to walk gently on the earth? Might it be with more heart, more commitment, and with a lighter step — as it was with my next door neighbor when she asked herself that challenging question?

