

Beacons of Hope



This month's edition of The Catholic Mirror focuses on how the Diocese of Des Moines is addressing the coronavirus. In particular, we salute a few of the unheralded individuals who found ways to be lights in the darkness. Read about them here and about many more inside.

1 - St. Ambrose Cathedral parishioner Setit Abebe, a CNA with Wesley Life, offers home health care and has been working daily during the pandemic.

2 - Joyce Lillis, of Catholic Charities Board of Directors, and Holly Ackermann, Catholic Charities community outreach manager, serve food at the outreach center in Des Moines.

3 - Food service director LaRissa Harrell, of St. Anthony Catholic School in Des Moines, learned of a state program that reimburses schools for offering meals to students during the closure. Pictured with school principal Jennifer Raes, Harrell holds a tray with bags filled with that day's lunch and breakfast for the next morning. As she holds the tray, families come and take the bags they need.

4 - Bakita Marbati, of St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish, is a registered nurse in Des Moines. She wears a protective mask at work. Marbati works at MercyOne Rehab Hospital in Clive.

5 - Cindy Myer, of St. Anne Church in Logan, sews face masks for Mallory Mikles, of Home Health in Logan. Myer says the whole community is helping provide masks.

6 - Deacon Randy Lynch and Jane Hols, of St. Joseph Parish in Des Moines, serve lunch recently at Connection Café, a free lunch program for the needy downtown. Additional safety precautions have been employed at the café such as providing the meals outside and offering individually wrapped lunches.

7 - Burton Rausch, left, and Mary Hoferer, with Corpus Christi Parish/Holy Family Church stand outside Dudley Court Apartments as they pay a visit to homebound parishioners Rose McCallum and Doris Jensen. Photo by Joe Shearer/Reprinted with permission from The Daily Nonpareil.

8 - St. Ambrose parishioner Zakariyas Balcha, an advocate with EMBARC, delivers food.

After You

Going to the grocery store can be risky business in these pandemic days. Even with one-way aisles, there are fewer smiles and more wariness as we furtively pass one another. So I was all the more taken aback a couple weeks ago, while observing the mandatory six-foot distance to enter the check-out line, a woman came up before the adjacent register with an apparent clear shot to deposit her items on the belt, and then paused and motioned to me to swing in front of her: "You were already waiting; after you." Be assured: I was not wearing a Roman collar or episcopal symbols; I was dressed in sweats and had not yet shaved or showered. In most people's eyes, I was a scuzzy late middle-aged man.

Wow. A simple gesture, but significant in these days when we can easily withdraw into self-protective, me-first mode. "After you" is no small deed. Upon it rests, according to French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (as cited by Fabrice Hadjadj in *The Resurrection*), the essential feature of civilization. It means that we recognize another being as a person, as "someone else," and by that very



By
Bishop
William
Joensen

fact, someone who has a claim on us: our respect, our courtesy, our deference, our sacrifice. It reflects recognition that we are not gods, that the world and our place in it is given to us, and that maybe we should treat one another, let alone ourselves, as gifts with strings attached: our responses to each other should express this awareness that we owe it to one another to communicate the priority of seeing over seizing, of mutually collaborating over forcing our way, our wills forward.

Hadjadj continues to riff on the Risen Lord: Jesus "has no need to impress anyone. On the contrary, he 'effaces' himself; with his body he performs the eternal 'After you'." The Risen Lord is not absent, but more present to us than when he was previously sensible." "The only person who can say to us, 'After you' is someone who was there previously. The space he frees

up for us is ours only because it was previously his own."

Jesus knew eternal life before he entered our sometimes miserable lives. He wants to import mercy where before there was only misery. He shows us that we are more than mortal if we but cast ourselves in faith on him. These Easter days, we continue to absorb the proclamation of the Risen Lord, the accounts of witnesses, mixed with the daily press briefings of the status of the coronavirus/COVID-19 spread. Death is real, but so is the faith-filled announcement that life prevails, and Jesus has been true to his promise that after three days he will be raised. Our sins and struggles to believe, just as for Thomas, are not off-putting to him, but draw him ever closer so that he can in effect say, "Whatever you need to believe, I take to heart: after you."

In the "Be Not Afraid" shrine and retreat center dedicated to the memory of St. John Paul II outside Krakow, Poland, the master mosaic artist, Fr. Marko Rupnik, SJ, and his team crafted a provocative image in the main apse of the upper church: Jesus has descended to hell, to the belly of the beast, and has thrust his

cross into the jaws of that beast to pry them open and to allow Adam and Eve, the patriarchs and prophets and holy women and men who preceded him, to escape with safe passage to the bosom of Abraham, to the company of Mary and all the saints. Jesus is in effect saying, "After you" to those he has redeemed, just as he said in response to the will of the Father, to the promptings of their mutual Spirit: "After you" as he undertook the mission of redemption, the work of mercy that should evoke our perpetual trust in him, no matter how much we feel our livelihoods, our very existence, to be threatened.

If we are indeed people of the Resurrection, and not merely civilized, then how much more should we embody the attitude of our Redeemer, whether we are at the grocery store, or sharing public space, or trying to somehow commune with Jesus and yet also respect the vulnerabilities of our neighbor who might be more prone to peril than peace. Jesus comes to save each of us as the radically unique person we are, but he will not redeem us without our taking into account one another. "After you" is not merely a recipe for

civilization in the Western mode; it is the kernel of a Kingdom not made by human hands, won by the suffering and death of a Savior who was absent for a brief while, but only so that he could let us go before him into the embrace of his heavenly Father.

I join with all of you in commending to God those who have died on account of the coronavirus/COVID-19, offering Mass and prayers in the dispensation of the plenary indulgences commended to us for the souls in purgatory. And I trust that I am one with you in pledging to live a truly human life in these difficult days, where maybe even available medical resources are an issue, that no matter what the cost, I will take note of the one standing or lying next to me, and will say with all gratitude for the opportunity, "After you." If we continue to do so as a Diocese, as a great State of Iowa and as a society, then not only will civilization be preserved, but then the proclamation that He is risen indeed will speak to hearts and bring conversion of souls to the great mercy of God in ways we could have never imagined.

Después de Usted

Ir al supermercado puede ser un factor de riesgo en estos días de pandemia. Incluso con los pasillos de un solo sentido, hay menos sonrisas y más preocupación cuando pasamos enseguida de otros. Por esta razón estuve muy sorprendido hace un par de semanas cuando, observando la distancia obligatoria de seis pies antes de entrar a la línea de la caja, una mujer

llegó a la caja registradora de enseguida en una clara disposición a colocar su mercancía sobre la banda, luego se detuvo y me indicó que pasara por delante de ella: "Usted ya estaba esperando aquí, después de usted." Les aseguro que no tenía puesto el collarín romano ni algún otro símbolo episcopal; estaba vestido en ropa deportiva y aún no me había bañado ni afeitado. Para la mayoría de la gente no era más que un hombre desaliñado de edad avanzada.

Vaya. Un sencillo gesto, pero de mucho significado en estos días en que podemos entrar fácilmente en una actitud de auto protección, de yo primero. "Después de usted" no es un acto sencillo. Sobre esta frase reposa la característica esencial de la civilización, de acuerdo con el filósofo francés Emmanuel Levinas (como lo cita Fabrice Hadjadj en *La Resurrección*). Significa que nos reconocemos a otro ser como una persona, como "alguien más," y por ese mismo hecho, alguien que puede solicitarnos algo: nuestro respeto, nuestra cortesía, nuestra estima, nuestro sacrificio. Esto refleja el que reconocemos que no somos dioses, que el mundo y nuestra posición en éste nos ha sido dada, y que tal vez deberíamos tratarnos unos a otros, más allá de nosotros mismo, como regalos con compromisos: nuestras respuestas de unos a otros deben expresar esta consciencia de que nos debemos unos a otros el comunicar la prioridad de observar en vez de capturar, de colaborar mutuamente en vez de imponer nuestro estilo, nuestro deseo.

Hadjadj continua su relato sobre el Señor Resucitado: Jesús "no tiene la necesidad de impresionar a nadie. Al contrario, él se 'borra' a sí mismo; con su cuerpo él lleva a cabo el eterno 'Después de usted'." El Señor Resucitado no está ausente, pero más presente ante nosotros que cuando estaba previamente sensible." "La única persona que nos puede decir, 'Después de Usted' es alguien que ya estuvo allí previamente. El espacio que libera para nosotros es nuestro únicamente por fue anteriormente suyo."

Jesús conocía la vida eterna antes de que entrara en nuestras algunas veces miserables vidas. Él quiere importar misericordia a donde antes había únicamente miseria. Él nos muestra que somos más que simples mortales si nos desbordamos a nosotros mismo en fe hacia él. Estos días de Pascua, seguimos absorbiendo la proclamación del Señor Resucitado, los testimonios de los testigos, combinados con las conferencias diarias de prensa sobre la evolución y contagio del coronavirus/COVID-19. La muerte es real, pero también lo es el anuncio lleno de fe de que la vida prevalece, y Jesús nos cumplió en su promesa de que resucitaría luego de tres días. Nuestros pecados y nuestra dificultad para creer, así como lo fueron para Tomás, no lo decepcionan, pero lo acercan más a nosotros para que pueda de hecho decir, "Lo que sea que necesites creer, lo llevo en mi corazón: después de usted."

En el santuario y centro de retiro "No Tengas Miedo"

dedicados a la memoria de San Juan Pablo II fuera de Cracovia, Polonia, el artista maestro en mosaicos, Padre Marko Rupnik SJ y su equipo diseñaron una provocativa imagen en el ábside principal de la iglesia superior: Jesús ha descendido a los infiernos, a las entrañas de la bestia y ha colocado su cruz en la mandíbula de la bestia para mantenerla abierta y permitir a Adán y Eva, los patriarcas, los profetas y los santos hombres y mujeres que le precedieron puedan escapar libremente hacia el regazo de Abraham, a la compañía de María y de todos los santos. Jesús les dice en efecto, "Después de Usted" a aquellos a quienes ha redimido, tal como lo dijo en respuesta a la voluntad del Padre, al llamado de su mutuo Espíritu: "Después de Usted" cuando tomó la misión redentora. La obra de misericordia que debería evocar nuestra confianza perpetua en él, sin importar que tanto sentimos que nuestros modos de vida y nuestra existencia misma están siendo amenazados.

Si somos en verdad el pueblo de la Resurrección, y no simplemente un pueblo civilizado, entonces qué tanto más debemos acoger la actitud de nuestro Redentor, ya sea en el supermercado, o cuando estamos en espacios públicos, o si estamos tratando de alguna manera comunicarnos con Jesús y a la vez respetamos las vulnerabilidades de aquellos a nuestro alrededor quienes pueden estar más predisuestos a los riesgos que a la paz. Jesús viene a salvarnos a cada uno de nosotros como las personas únicas y radicales que somos,

pero él no nos concederá esa reedición sin que nos tomemos en cuenta unos a otros. "Después de Usted" no es simplemente una receta para la civilización estilo occidental, es la semilla de un Reino que no ha sido edificado por manos humanas, ganado por el sufrimiento y la muerte de un Salvador quien había estado ausente por un breve instante, pero solamente para que pudiéramos salir delante de él al abrazo de su Padre celestial.

Me uno con todos ustedes encomendando a Dios a todos aquellos que han fallecido del coronavirus/COVID-19, ofreciendo Misa y oraciones en la dispensación de las indulgencias plenarias que se nos encomiendan por las almas del purgatorio. I confío estar unido a ustedes comprometiéndome a llevar una vida verdaderamente humana en estos días tan difíciles, en donde incluso la disponibilidad de recursos médicos puede ser un problema, que sin importar cuál sea el costo, pondré atención en la persona que está parado o recostada a mi lado y, le diré con toda la gratitud de dicha oportunidad, "Después de usted." Si continuamos hacienda esto como Diócesis, como el gran Estado de Iowa y como sociedad, entonces no se conservará solamente la civilización, pero la proclamación de que Él verdaderamente ha resucitado llegará directamente a los corazones y resultará en la conversión de las almas hacia la gran misericordia de Dios de formas en las que nunca podríamos haber imaginado.

THE CATHOLIC

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Priests embrace technology amid pandemic

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

With Masses suspended indefinitely amid the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, priests have been embracing new technology to reach the faithful.

Father Joel McNeil, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap and Sacred Heart in Woodbine, said one of the first things he did was upgrade internet capabilities at his parishes to reach people.

He didn't have much time to mull the idea – a funeral was scheduled shortly after state guidelines were put in place prohibiting gatherings of more than 10 people.

"We had to scramble and livestream that," Father McNeil said. "And the last I checked it had 2,500 views."

He expects the livestreaming of funerals to become a permanent reality, "because people are spread out all over the country and that might be something for those unable to travel," Father McNeil said.

Facebook has been a blessing to parishes throughout the diocese, Father McNeil added. Feedback has been positive, and people are grateful and appreciative of the livestream Masses and other resource posted there.

Father McNeil is also sensitive to reaching older folks who aren't on the internet.

"We're being attentive to all the different ways we can communicate," he continued. "Some folks are online and some folks aren't. We're using as many different avenues as we can to stay connected to folks, [including postal mail and signage along Highway 30]."

Father Ray Higgins, pastor of St. Theresa parish in



Des Moines, was not familiar with new technology. But he knew this was the push he probably needed.

"Since we couldn't be together, I thought, 'How are we going to do this?'" Father Higgins said. "And people mentioned going to livestreaming on Facebook."

He has since livestreamed the Mass and Stations of the Cross on Facebook. Those videos have also been posted to their website, in addition to his audio recording of the rosary.

A tech-savvy parishioner helped him get started, but now he's doing it on his own.

"I just line [the phone] up and make sure I'm in the view and just read from the altar," Father Higgins said.

Of course, parishioners aren't shy about offering feedback.

"Somebody called me and said, 'If you move the phone horizontally it will work better on our TV screen,'" Father Higgins said. "And so I started doing that."

Staff sent out emails and made phone calls, letting members of the parish know that although they couldn't be togeth-

er physically, they could still participate digitally.

Father Higgins has been encouraged by the response and feels it's a ministry that will continue, long after social distancing.

"This is something we might do more often for folks who are homebound," he said. "And I want to do some videos just to reach out to people."

They have certainly expressed appreciation for the digital offerings.

"Maybe this can be the impetus to improve what we have and get a better website," Father Higgins said. "We begin to realize that we need a means to communicate when we have things like this. This pandemic makes us realize how important technology is."

Though he has great appreciation for new technology, Father Higgins said he misses his people and looks forward to the day when they can return to Mass.

Father Adam Westphal, pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Creston, was using technology, including Facebook and YouTube, with positive results long before the COVID-19 outbreak.



Top left: Mike Arkwright of St. Boniface Parish in Waukee streams the Mass from home. Top: Father Joel McNeil, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap and Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine, sang for his parishioners via Facebook. Bottom: Father Mark Neal, pastor of Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, shared a video from his home about baking and his favorite recipe as a way of engaging parishioners.

But the recent suspension of Masses and parish activities has attracted many more people.

"More people are engaging on these other avenues of communication and it has invigorated the outreach," Father Westphal said. "There's a lot of response from people getting engaged in different ways."

Father Westphal has been ramping up efforts to let people know about their social media platforms, and it has been paying off.

"We've gotten a lot of people who are thankful so far,"

he said.

Father Westphal encourages priests to just take the first step with digital communication in order to reach members of the parish and community at large.

"Starting off – don't expect it to be Hollywood quality movies," Father Westphal said. "You just start somewhere and realize you're going to have hiccups as you go... My advice to priests or people getting started is to just delve into whatever you want to do."

"The effort is what counts," Father Westphal added. "It's like everything – as you practice and delve more deeply the better you'll get. But the important thing is to just start."

The pandemic could be the catalyst that moves things in a new direction for a lot of priests, he added.

"I think we've already seen some positive impact," Father Westphal said. "You look at Facebook feeds and they are filled with pastors of all denominations. All of a sudden we're taking over Facebook. So already it's forcing us out into the missionary realm."

He compares it to the response of the early, persecuted Church who drove the message out.

"We are not able to preach at our pulpits, so we've come up with these other methods to reach out," Father Westphal concluded. "We've already seen the impact. People are seeing priests continuously in these different areas."

Father Coenen, longtime team ministry priest, passes away

Father Tom Coenen, who served in team ministry and in primarily rural parishes, died April 7 at age 68.

Originally of Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine, Father Coenen attended Loras College in Dubuque, where he earned a bachelor's degree in history, and the North American College in Rome, where he earned a bachelor's and a master's degree in theology.

He was ordained by Bishop Maurice Dingman in 1977 at St. Joseph Church in Earling.

After ordination, he served at Holy Spirit Parish in Creston for a year. Then he began team ministry from 1978-1984 at St. Patrick Parish in Lenox, St. Edward Parish in Afton and Holy Spirit Parish in Creston.

From 1984 to 1988, he served with the Harrison County Team Ministry at St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap. From 1988 to 1990, he served with the Leon Team Ministry at St. Brendan Parish in Leon.

Father Coenen became pastor of three parishes in the southern part of the diocese – St. Brendan Parish in Leon, St. Joseph Parish in Mt. Ayr, and Immaculate Conception Parish in Maloy – in 1990 until 1997. He became pastor of St. Clare in Clarinda, Sacred Heart in Bedford and St. Joseph in Villisca, serving from 1997 to 2006.

He became pastor of St. Joseph in Earling and St. Peter in Defiance from 2006 to 2009, when he took a sabbatical. In 2010, he began serving Queen of Apostles Parish until he retired in 2013.



Father Ed Pfeffer, 89, passes away

Father Edward Pfeffer, who served the diocese in education, administration and parish life, died March 18 at the age of 89.

Originally from Holy Trinity Parish in Des Moines, he attended Dowling Catholic High School, Loras College in Dubuque, and Mount St. Bernard Seminary in Dubuque.

He was ordained by Bishop Edward C. Daly in 1956.

Following ordination, he spent two years studying Canon law in Rome. He served as assistant pastor of Holy Trinity Church in De Moines and was on the faculty of Dowling Catholic High school, assistant pastor of St. Ambrose Cathedral and vice chancellor of the Diocese of Des Moines.

In 1964, he was ap-

pointed chancellor of the diocese, a position in which he served four bishops.

Beginning in 1979, he served as pastor over the next 20 years in three parishes: Sacred Heart in West Des Moines, St. Patrick in Council Bluffs and St. Joseph Church in Winterset.

He retired in 2000 and began serving as a volunteer at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women at Mitchellville. He served there for 13 years before retiring again.

Father Pfeffer prided himself on never having had an unhappy year in his active ministry. His fellow priests countered, however, that the happiest of his years were during and after Vatican Council II.

He was preceded in death by his brother, Father Tom Pfeffer, a baby brother and his parents. A funeral Mass will be celebrated at a later time.



Families stay connected despite social distancing



Brooke and Eli Huck spend time on their religious education packets provided by Holy Spirit Parish.



Cameron Hoyt, of Holy Spirit Parish in Creston, colored a picture as part of his religious education program.

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Religious education families are trying to stay connected when they're staying apart as a precaution to the coronavirus COVID-19.

St. Patrick Church in Massena invited youth to make pictures and hang them in the church.

"We have changed the sign in front of our church with our Mass times to say 'God is good all the time and all the time God is good' and 'Keep the faith,'" said Theresa Hensley.

Family activities and resources were shared with parishes through the diocesan Evangelization & Catechesis Office.

Religious education

directors, catechists and volunteers were encouraged to check in often with their team members, ask volunteers and parents how they're doing and what they need from the parish, and consider if there were safe ways to put their faith into action.

"In the midst of this challenging landscape, our parish formation teams have brought Christ's light to families of all shapes and sizes in our diocese," said John Gaffney, diocesan director of Evangelization and Catechesis.

Barb Hudson, at Holy Spirit Parish in Creston, also worked to maintain solidarity when families are apart.

She put together family packets and delivered them to the individual homes on March

20. Each packet had prayers, rosaries, holy cards, lessons and crafts for Lent and Easter that were age appropriate for each family.

Included in the packets was a letter with concerns and blessings along with information on how to keep in touch through Facebook and hearing their priest celebrate Mass on KSIB radio.

"I added a handwritten note to the kids packets and asked them to help out at home and no fighting," said Barb Hudson. She also sent out group text messages and forwarded family activities and prayers from the diocese to her community's families.



Brothers Isaac, Dominic and Marek Hapes colored this Alleluia sign for their church, St. Patrick in Massena.



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This "stained glass" window at St. Patrick Church in Massena was painted by Bryson and Avery Lee with the help of their mom, Chelsey.

Schools moved to distance learning with lightning speed, dedicated teachers



The first week of distance learning was a success at St. Malachy School in Creston.

**By Nicole Evans
Contributing Writer**

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted daily life, including how we are educating our children.

As part of our commitment to continue to provide a high quality faith-based educational experience for our students, diocesan schools were quick to respond to school closure announcements by implementing an interactive distance learning program.

“We felt that continuing to educate was and still is best for our students and families to ensure all student learning continues in the wake of this public health crisis,” said Donna Bishop, superintendent of Schools. “As a result, we re-defined how and where learning happens.”

Administrators and teachers from all 16 schools answered this call by shifting to a remote learning model for students within a week’s notice. Classes for all students in preschool – 12th grade transitioned from a traditional synchronous model of education, where students learn together at the same time, to an asynchronous model, where students learn apart and independently through virtual distance learning.

Rather than measuring student progress by time spent in a classroom, student progress is now measured by completed activities and demonstrated task mastery. Each week, teachers provide their students with online support, resources and tasks to guide them through coursework. Students in return, demonstrate how and

if they have mastered assigned concepts by completing coursework online or through written learning packets.

To ensure all students have equal access to high quality instruction during this time, diocesan schools provided Chromebooks and wifi support to families without electronic devices and the internet capability to families that requested it.

Teachers quickly adapted to this new distance-learning model through use of programs like SeeSaw, Google Classroom, and Zoom meeting platform to support classroom instruction.

In just a few short weeks, schools across the diocese are reporting a nearly 100 percent participation rate in distance learning by students, and feedback from parents has been extremely positive.

At Holy Trinity School in Des Moines, the first three days of distance learning for preschool - fifth grade resulted in 6,467 completed assignments, 5,849 teacher comments, 2,997 parent and teacher likes, 167 connected parents, and 351 parent visits on Seesaw. Other schools throughout the diocese report similar outcomes.

“We want our schools to represent stability for our students, families, and staff during this time,” shared Bishop. “We will ensure that student learning continues. We continue to encourage input from our parents as we move through these un-chartered times together.”

To learn more about distance learning and how diocesan schools are responding to COVID-19, visit dmdiocese.org/catholic-schools/covid-19 and on Facebook at [dmdioceschools](https://www.facebook.com/dmdioceschools).



“We’ll get through this with love and prayers” said a post on St. Albert Catholic School Facebook page with an image of the elementary school team.



Father Luis Mejia, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Perry, and Kandice Roethler, principal of St. Patrick School in Perry, pitch in to hand out 20 pound boxes of chicken and eggs to families in need after schools closed statewide.



Schools across the diocese encouraged students to Chalk the Walk the week of April 3. Here, the Von Ahnsens, of Shelby County Catholic School, show their work.

CARING ABOUT YOUR LOSS AND SHARING IN YOUR FAITH

Prayer to St. Joseph for a Happy Death

O blessed Joseph who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, obtain for me, I beseech you, the grace of a happy death. In that hour of dread and anguish, assist me by your presence, and protect me by your power against the enemies of your salvation. Into your sacred hands, living and dying, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I commend my soul.

Amen

John & Mark Parrish,
parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi

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With no public Masses, many parishes have seen a drop in weekly financial support. Please remember to support your parish during these unprecedented times.

Please continue to financially support your parish

The coronavirus pandemic kick started an effort to ensure that all 80 parishes in the diocese have the ability to accept online tithing.

National studies indicate 39 percent of Catholic families are comfortable giving online with a debit or credit card, said Maureen Kenney, diocesan director of the Stewardship Office. Others continue to provide their support through direct transfers from their bank accounts or by filling a weekly envelope.

With no public Masses at this time and all Iowans encouraged to stay home, some parishes were struggling to continue to provide services with their staff while experiencing a dramatic drop in weekly financial support.

While many parishes have their own websites that have the capacity to accept online giving, there are some par-

ishes that do not. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, 46 percent, or 37 parishes, did not offer direct debit (also known as ACH) or online giving.

With the help of the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa, online giving is now available in all 80 parishes either through the parish websites or through a link facilitated by the foundation.

"The Diocese of Des Moines is grateful for the online giving services the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa is providing to parishes during this health crisis," said Maureen Kenney, diocesan director of Stewardship. "Many folks are already accustomed to shopping online for everything from clothing to groceries. Now, tithing online is an option for all."

Online giving gives parishioners an opportunity to continue to support their pastor and the work of the parish during the

pandemic.

"Giving online takes very little time and goes a long way toward making sure the Body of Christ is strong, even when we can't gather as a community," said Kenney.

Visit your parish's website or catholicfoundationiowa.org/make-a-donation to support your parish.



St. Peter and Paul Parish in Atlantic has a new tithing box for safe and secure drop-offs.

Around the Diocese - A Note From the Editor:

We will not be printing calendar events this month. Government and health experts advise people to avoid gathering in groups as the world grapples with the pandemic caused by coronavirus COVID-19. We hope to bring this feature back to *The Catholic Mirror* soon.

Diocese launches COVID-19 Relief Fund

The Diocese of Des Moines COVID-19 Relief Fund has been established with a two-fold purpose: help individuals and families struggling with COVID-19, and to help the most pressing needs in Catholic parishes and schools in the diocese. The fund offers an opportunity for those who can, to help those who need a helping hand during this historic time.

"As we enter the fifty days of the Easter Season, we recognize how much upheaval and loss our society and church has experienced in this pandemic, and the long process it will take to restore human lives," said Bishop William Joensen.

"Catholics and Iowans have always shown themselves to be true neighbors to one another as Jesus calls us to be, and this is a signal moment when each of us is afforded the chance to draw closer in prayer and spiritual solidarity, and material support as we are able."

The Diocese of Des Moines COVID-19 Relief Fund, at dmdiocese.org/giving, was created in partnership with Catholic Charities and the diocese to provide immediate assistance to the most vulnerable individuals and families. Individuals and families could receive help with their monthly rent, utilities, medical bills, etc. thereby allowing them to spend money on basic needs like groceries, gas and other essentials during this time of uncertainty. Catholic Charities will administer this aspect of the relief fund through a grant application

process. Payment will be made directly to vendors such as landlords, utility companies, hospitals/clinics, etc.

"We are grateful to Bishop Joensen in creating this special relief fund for our diocese, to include Catholic Charities. In our 95-year social ministry legacy, our Catholic Charities mission continues to empower individuals and strengthen families through its many programs and services. Thank you in advance to all who can help contribute to this relief fund," said Barbara Q. Decker, executive director, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Des Moines.

The diocese, in partnership with the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa, will identify the urgent needs of the most vulnerable parishes and schools and, in coordination with ministry leaders, offer temporary relief in the midst of declining parish collections.

"Our parishes and schools are adapting to new challenges both financially and operationally. While many are financially positioned to endure the COVID-19 crisis, some will face difficulties especially as the crisis lengthens," said Maureen Kenney, diocesan director of Stewardship. "The fund will go a long way to strengthen our parish and school communities in their efforts to serve individuals and families."

Parishes and schools are also working to apply for and receive financial assistance from the federal government.

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Spring break trip to Peru cut short for Urbandale family because of COVID-19

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Bob and Mary Boyle of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale had planned the spring break trip of a lifetime to Peru with their son Aidan, a sophomore at Dowling Catholic High School.

But as the departure date drew closer, concerns about COVID-19 grew.

The couple thought they had accounted for all the risks they might face before deciding to move forward with their vacation plans.

“The very first part of our trip was three or four days in the Amazon,” Bob said. “You’re pretty cut off when you’re there.

“But probably around [March] 16th, the people that run the lodge and our guide said the government is going to close the [Peruvian] borders,” Bob continued.

Not only that, but the Peruvian government also wanted to halt all movement within the country – no buses, trains, planes – nothing.

“They just wanted everything to stop,” Bob said.

The Boyles had not planned for that scenario.

Everyone in the lodge agreed to quickly grab their luggage and belongings so they

could make it to the nearest town before the country shutdown.

Military and police were everywhere.

“We got into the airport and got a flight to Cusco – a medium-sized town,” Bob continued. “We really needed to get to Lima and couldn’t get to Lima. And so we ended up in a hotel in Cusco.”

Though concerned about making it back to the United States, the Boyles were happy to have found a hotel room available.

Being stuck in a foreign country amid a global pandemic was scary. And they began having lots of questions about the unknowns.

“No one likes it,” Bob said. “We didn’t want to be there. There’s kind of a fine line between civility and incivility. If the supply chain stopped moving in Cusco and people were hungry or people develop anti-American sentiments or the police were not 100 percent honest...it becomes more than inconvenient. We just hoped it stayed civilized. But we thought ‘What if this breaks down?’”

Police were everywhere enforcing the rules.

The Boyles had other concerns as well.

“I was more worried about my wife and my son,” Bob



The Boyle family of St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale was stuck in Peru after the country abruptly halted all transportation and closed its borders in March.

continued. “My wife has some illnesses and she was running out of some medications. My son is only 15 and I’m worried about civil unrest.

“We just tried to remain positive and I did have faith that I would eventually get back home,” Bob said. “And I definitely maintained a perspective of how fortunate I was. I was safe, healthy and fed. People around us were living in hostels. People were running out of money. And

I felt incredibly fortunate... I really don’t have any real problems in the world – much worse things are happening.”

In the past few years, Mary has faced a number of health struggles, forcing her to lean on her faith. She continued leaning on it during these times, despite her fears.

“My biggest concerns were...that we were going to become exposed to the virus in a country where the healthcare is not good,” she said. “Another is that we were basically living under martial law and the police presence was really ramping up and they were starting to storm in hotels and hostels and put people in up to a two-month quarantine.”

Their friend Carla Shey-Osborne of St. Pius X Parish had been made aware of the Boyles’ ordeal and lifted them up in prayer.

“They were a long ways from Lima,” Carla said. “We looked it up on the map. We thought, ‘Holy crap.’”

She was concerned about the family. She also made some noise, contacting U.S. Sen. Charles Grassley and U.S. Rep. Cindy Axne about their situation.

The Boyles’ names (along with 5,000 other Americans all trying to get out of Peru) were added to a U.S. government list for repatriation flights. But the number of days or weeks until they would get assigned a flight was anyone’s guess.

On Tuesday, March 24 Bob woke up at 4:30 a.m. and checked his email.

“It said, ‘Be at Cusco airport at 8:30 a.m. I got it at 4:30 a.m.’” Bob said, noting his relief that he’d checked his email in the middle of the night. “We were five miles from Cusco airport.

The bad news is that no one was allowed on the street and there’s a severe financial penalty.

“I went down to the front desk [to ask for help],” Bob said. “The hotel couldn’t find any means for us to get to the airport.”

Thankfully, their travel agent found the Boyles a driver.

At the airport, they were immersed in a line of nearly 250 Americans anxiously awaiting their flight back to the United States.

The email from the Ministry of Travel did not specify that the entire Boyle family would be on this flight – it was just sent to Bob. They crossed their fingers and offered up prayers at the airport.

“We found all three of our names were on the list,” Bob said. “And it took quite a few hours to physically get in the Cusco airport.

Mary said she often prays to her late mother for intercession during times of crisis. This was no different.

“The irony is that we were evacuated on what would have been her birthday,” Mary said. “And I thought about that as we were standing in line.”

The plane landed in Lima an hour later. The flight crew changed, the plane was refueled and they left Peru.

“There was a lot of clapping on the plane,” Bob said. “And when the wheels touched down in Miami people clapped and cheered again.”

Despite their ordeal, the family wants to return to Peru and explore everything they didn’t get a chance to see.

Bob said: “It’s a beautiful country full of nice people.”

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Salute to those

Catholics head to the front line for the battle against COVID-19. Here are some of their stories.

Despite pandemic, supply chain workers keep on truckin'

"When we're stressed, we look to God for help."

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Two truck drivers say they're seeing a greater appreciation for their work and communities pulling together during the coronavirus pandemic.

Randy Eubanks, of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola, has been a truck driver for Hy-Vee for 33 years and has never quite seen anything like this.

"We have a lot of truck drivers working hard in the food industry," he said. "There's a big strain right now – especially right off the bat. Now everyone is hunkered down and it's not quite so stressful. There were a lot of tired people."

He's proud of coworkers and their response.

"I think they stepped up the best they could so that makes me proud," he said. "I think we have a lot of good people at the store level and warehouse."

Like many drivers, his day starts early.

"I get up at 11 p.m. at night, go down and get the truck ready and get the paperwork," Eubanks said. "I try to be rolling by 12:30 in the morning."

His destinations include Dubuque, Mankato or Rochester, Minnesota and Macomb, Illinois.

These trying times have caused him to stop, reflect and pray more.

"Right now, financially and health wise we're all taking a beating, but this has definitely lead me to pray a little more than I'd been doing before," said Eubanks, who also farms and hauls

grain. "When we're under stress we look to God for help. It's definitely been stressful."

These days of social distancing and isolation have caused him to become more appreciative of friends and community.

"A friend of mine sent me a picture of a lot of my truck driving and farm buddies," Eubanks said. "We were all in this picture and it was my posse. I looked at that photo and said 'I am going to appreciate that more from now on.' Maybe we should appreciate things more than we have. When you get those opportunities to enjoy company, [enjoy and appreciate it.] Maybe this is God's way of saying, 'Appreciate these times.'"

Chuck Stoolman, of St. John Parish in Adel, has been hauling livestock coast to coast and border to border for 12 years. He typically logs 3,000 to 4,000 miles per week.

He's seen positive changes while on the road as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

"The truck stops are a lot cleaner," Stoolman said. "Everybody is a lot more aware and people are a lot more helpful out on the road too. It's kind of helping us unite a little bit in America."

Before drivers might cut each other off or truckers might park in the fuel island, backing everything up.

"Now, it's like everybody has the understanding that we need to keep moving here – we've got to go," Stoolman said.

Strangers are reaching



Above: Randy Eubanks, of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola, has been a trucker for Hy-Vee for 33 years. Right: Chuck Stoolman, of St. John Parish in Adel, has been driving truck for 12 years and has noticed positive changes out on the road since the pandemic began.



out to strangers to offer a helping hand, Stoolman said. Because of the nature of being on the road, truck drivers are dependent on gas stations, truck stops and public restrooms and so they are more exposed to opportunities for getting sick.

"With the older and elderly truckers, people are holding doors for them and asking them if they need anything," Stoolman said. "They are most susceptible to all of this...I've seen guys asking some [of the older truckers] if they want something from inside [so they can avoid exposure.]

Everybody's lending a helping hand."

The COVID-19 outbreak seems to have created an opportunity for people to pause and reflect, Stoolman said.

"The way the world was going, I feel like we were faster than a freight train that had no brakes," Stoolman said. "And somebody is telling us, 'Hey, slow down. You've got a family and kids.'"

"I've seen more fami-

lies – kids, parents, walking and biking and walking their dogs and spending time together," Stoolman continued.

The sale livestock has slowed down for now because of the markets, which has given Stoolman more time at home to appreciate his wife and step-daughter.

"We just have to put our faith and trust in God and hope for the best," Stoolman said. "That's all we can do."

Store workers lean on faith during uncertainty



Brian Hartman of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny is a Lomar sales representative for Hy-Vee. He regularly rotates between visiting 19 different stores.

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, people are more appreciative than ever of grocery store employees.

They are on the "front lines." Daily interactions with the public means increased exposure.

Demand in the grocery stores has been extremely high, and they can't keep some items on the shelf, such as toilet paper, hand sanitizer and disinfecting

supplies.

Brian Bieker, of St. Boniface Parish in Waukee, said he relies on his faith even more during these trying times.

"It's a time when we all lean on our faith more," said Bieker, a district store director for Hy-Vee. "I definitely spend more time praying. Praying really helps to bring comfort and peace of mind during these difficult times."

"I think it's important for us to realize that God always has a plan," Bieker continued. "You have to just to pray and reflect. He put me in this place

and time where I can be here to do what I can to serve the public and serve my community. I think that's a great honor and it's always been my privilege. That's one of the things I love about my position, but something I pray about quite often. The things I do and the decisions I make are for the good of the people that I work with and the community that I serve."

Faith and hope go hand in hand, Bieker added.

"If we all take the time to pray and know that God has a plan and make sure that we have faith and keep hope and know

who serve us

Catholic medical professionals put trust in God while taking care of others amid COVID-19

By Kelly Mescher Collins
Staff Writer

Faith has helped Dr. Megan Myers, a pharmacist at NuCara Specialty Pharmacy in Pleasant Hill, through these trying times.

“My faith has helped me stay positive and focused on doing my part and on just doing the next right thing,” said Dr. Myers, a member of St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines. “It helps me recognize those anxieties and fears. I have a little prayer when these thoughts pop up: ‘Perfect love casts out fear. I see you fear, and I choose God. God, I trust in you.’”

She consults with customers regularly who express their concerns.

“People are worried that the medication supply, which is worldwide, will be affected and they don’t get medications they need to treat a variety of health conditions,” Dr. Myers said. “We also had a lot of concern about shortages on medications being used experimentally for COVID-19 that patients take for other health conditions. Patients have also called asking for recommendations on ways to boost or improve their immune system.”

Staff at NuCara Specialty Pharmacy are taking precautions to protect both patients and employees.

“Currently the entrance to our building is locked,” Dr. Myers said. “We are offering free mail services and curbside pickup. Patients coming to pick up in person are instructed to call from their car or knock on the door to let us know when they have arrived and an employee will bring out their medication. Employees are instructed to wear a mask and gloves to deliver medication to patients and to wash their hands after-

wards. We are disinfecting the pharmacy several times a day, including door handles and any other shared surfaces. Employees also have to complete daily health screenings to monitor for any potential symptoms, and are obligated to report immediately to HR if any symptoms are present. When we receive deliveries and mail, those personnel leave our items in our entry way and the items are cleaned prior to bringing them into the pharmacy. These changes have greatly minimized traffic into and out of our pharmacy.”

Efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 have ramped up at the MercyOne Urgent Care in Ankeny, said Dr. Stephen Nowak.

“We now wear face masks and face shields to protect not just the patients, but also to protect the health care workers,” he said. “Personal protective equipment is a two-way street.”

The MercyOne Urgent Care in Ankeny has enough space to spread out. People who think they may have COVID-19 are advised to call ahead. They are kept isolated in a separate part of the building for examination away from other patients.

In addition to knowledge and medical expertise, Dr. Nowak said he works hard to help patients dealing with fears surrounding COVID-19.

“Patients are a little more anxious about it,” Dr. Nowak said. “It means we have to bring a new aspect to calm people down a little bit. Fortunately in Polk County, we’re not terribly high yet... We’re behind the curve and hopefully we stay that way.”

Dr. Nowak, his wife and daughter still at home are active at both Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny and All Saints Parish in Des Moines.

He struggles with some

of the stories he hears about victims of COVID-19.

“I can’t imagine what these families have to go through and you have to isolate and you can’t say ‘goodbye’...,” Dr. Nowak said. “I’m certainly an active, practicing Catholic... and every day I ask him to help me accept what his plan is and to not lose faith. And sometimes that’s a challenge in the face of something like this.”

His faith gives him strength, which he works hard to pass on to his colleagues.

“I try to exude that to my workers here so they can see that strength...,” Dr. Nowak said. “I don’t know what their faiths involve, but I try to exude that level of confidence to people. And every day we always ask God to sit on our shoulder and help make the right decisions for patients that have trusted us with their care.”

“It’s certainly a stressful time for healthcare and, indeed anyone, from first responders and paramedics to lab and x-ray, office receptionists, all the way up to providers taking care of people in intensive care. It’s certainly a time of challenge,” Dr. Nowak continued.

Both he and Dr. Myers have concerns about keeping their family safe during these trying times.

“When it comes to ‘big picture’ I’m not afraid,” Dr. Myers said. “It is the day-to-day anxieties and worries that I catch myself focusing on, such as, ‘Am I making the right decision sending or not sending my children to daycare? What will happen to our patients if one of us gets COVID-19? Should I still have the car repairs done that I really need?’”

Dr. Nowak is unable to visit his eldest daughter, who is living in one of the country’s COVID-19 hotbeds.



“I have a daughter that lives in New Jersey, so certainly with the travel restrictions, I can’t even go out and visit her,” he said. “I have to trust God to take care of her. And I have a daughter that’s currently living at home and she has a chronic illness, which kind of keeps me [thinking that I] don’t want to take it home to her. And a lot of healthcare workers are that way.”

Despite their precautionary measures, some things are just out of their control – though their prayer life is not one of them.

“I’m a daily prayer person –it’s the last thing I do in the evening and always a short one when I get up in the morning, asking for the strength to maintain my own health so that I can take care of other people,” Dr. Nowak concluded.



Top: Dr. Megan Myers, a pharmacist at NuCara Specialty Pharmacy and member of St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines, puts her trust in God amidst these trying times.

Bottom: Dr. Stephen Nowak of MercyOne Urgent Care in Ankeny prays he can maintain his own health in order to help others.

tain times

that this too shall pass, it’s all going to be OK in the end,” he said.

Brian Hartman, of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, is a Lomar sales representative for Hy-Vee. He regularly rotates between visiting 19 different Hy-Vee stores.

“I’ve been doing this for 35 years and since 9/11, I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything like it where cleaning supplies and sanitizer and bathroom tissues and towels are constantly out,” he said.

Hartman has lots of interaction with customers and

enjoys helping them find what they need. But he’s also taking precautions.

“I can’t wash my hands with soap enough,” Hartman said. “And then I keep a small bottle of hand sanitizer in my pocket... And I still have a bottle in my car.”

Hartman also keeps a rosary in his car. Listening to his Christian rock station while travelling from store to store also helps keep him focused on the positive.



Brian Bieker, of St. Boniface Parish in Waukee and a district store director for Hy-Vee, said “I think it’s important for us to realize that God always has a plan.”

Families bring church experience home



The Reese family, of St. Augustin Parish in Des Moines, spent about two hours creating their own stained glass window for Easter. They used painters tape to outline the cross and the triangular sections, and Crayola washable paint with a splash of water and a drop of dish soap to create the colors they painted.



During the worldwide health crisis, the Winship family of St. Columbanus Parish in Weston is thankful for faith. Seven-year-old Austin and his brother, Oliver, 3, “hold Mass” at their house, sing church songs and read from their Children’s Bible Storybook. Austin calls the children up to his homemade altar at home to talk to them about Jesus, just as Deacon Scott Brooks does at his parish. Austin is in first grade at St. Albert Catholic School in Council Bluffs.

Finding God’s grace with few sacraments

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Although public Masses are modified for streaming or digitally recorded opportunities and sacraments are limited during the stay-at-home recommendation, God’s graces are still available.

Bishop William Jonsen shared in a letter to the faithful April 5 that “The Body of Christ still lives and breathes, sighs and keeps watch with Jesus as we seek the mercy and joy that he alone can bring us.

“I especially want you to believe that though you may not have been able to go to confession, be anointed or receive Eucharist, God’s compassion and saving love seek you out wherever you are: at home, in hospitals or nursing homes, in places of shelter or outdoors,” he said.

The following is a status of the availability of sacraments at this time.

Mass – Public Masses are not to be celebrated. Priests may still celebrate Mass in the parish church privately or with the assistance of one or a small number of ministers even if he doesn’t digitally broadcast this.

Baptism – May be celebrated with 10 or fewer people present.

Confession – When a priest is not available, one should: 1) Make an Act of Perfect Contrition, 2) Make a sincere request

of God for forgiveness, and 3) Resolve to make a sacramental confession at the first opportunity. Because of the plenary indulgence, no one is being denied the grace necessary for salvation, which stands abundantly available to all.

First Holy Communion and Eucharist – First Communions are postponed until public gatherings are once again allowed by the Iowa Department of Public Health. Your pastor or pastoral administrator will reschedule First Holy Communion at the time most convenient for the children, the families, and the parish community. While the Catholic Church fasts from the Eucharist out of respect and care for those most vulnerable to COVID-19, Catholics are encouraged make a prayer of spiritual communion:

Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

Confirmation – Spring and early summer confirmations are postponed. Your pastor or pastoral administrator will reschedule

confirmation liturgies with himself as the celebrant at the time most convenient for the confirmandi, the families, and the parish community.

Marriage – May be celebrated with the 10-person limit.

Anointing of the Sick – Priests continue to anoint people. If a priest cannot administer the sacrament, Pope Francis assures that anyone in good faith and with the disposition of seeking God’s mercy, forgiveness and healing, is already in God’s compassionate arms.

Plenary Indulgence – Available to all of the faithful. On March 20, The Holy Father, Pope Francis, offered extraordinary graces to anyone who cannot access the sacraments of penance, Eucharist or anointing of the sick and the Viaticum. This is available to the person who seeks God’s mercy, forgiveness and healing, and who firmly intends to receive any of those sacraments when they are available again, has the assurance of God’s full forgiveness and mercy. It’s the Church’s way of communicating to all believers that our merciful, compassionate God is with us, bringing us near, forgiving us, and embracing us in this time of great suffering, anxiety and fear.

Source: Diocese of Des Moines, National Association of Catholic Chaplains, Catholic Health Association of the United States

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Engaged couples face pressures, uncertainty about wedding day as restrictions limit crowds

Couples planning to get married this spring have faced disappointment and uncertainty with the state's decision to limit gatherings to 10 people. Some have decided to keep their original wedding date while others have scrambled last minute to postpone to when their family and friends can all attend. They admit the experience has been stressful.

By Kelly Mescher Collins



Andy and Bailey Brooks
St. Francis Parish, West Des Moines

"When the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] officially came out with guidelines to cancel all events within the next eight weeks that were greater than 50 people, Bailey Brooks realized her wedding date was during that time frame.

"I went to my Mom's house and kind of shed some tears and waited for [my fiancée] Andy to come home," said Brooks, a member of St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines.

The next day Bailey and Andy discussed the possibilities.

"There was no way our wedding was going to go on as planned," Bailey said. "It was a really emotional morning. It just didn't seem like there was any other option. We had all of our RSVPs already and our guest list was already over 300 people – clearly way over the guidelines. And so we had people from all over the country [coming]."

The couple contacted all of their vendors to find out their options.

"Pretty much everyone was willing to transfer our deposits to a later date... so we're really, really grateful for everyone's [understanding]," Bailey said.

The couple wanted to get married before Bailey started her residency training. She was finishing medical school at Creighton University and her residency would require them to move.

"And we didn't want to move in together until we were married," Bailey said.

"And so by Thursday, I had mentioned to Andy, 'Why don't we just get married? I think our license becomes valid tomorrow,'" Bailey continued. "At first it was hard because that meant even our siblings wouldn't even be there."

But they were all extremely supportive and understanding.

The couple got married the next morning, Friday, March 20 at St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines with just their parents and Father Ed Hurley presiding.

"It was a really intimate ceremony," Bailey said. "We're really lucky employees for St. Francis took a video and pictures for us that we could share with our family later."

"My parents decorated their house really beautifully and thoughtfully for us so it would feel like a mini wedding reception," she said. "Andy's Mom made us a homemade, gorgeous cake."

"It was the perfect day – nothing like we expected it to be at all," Bailey continued. "But looking back I really wouldn't have changed anything."

The small, intimate ceremony allowed them to focus on the sacrament.

The Brooks will renew their wedding vows on January 1, 2021 at St. Ambrose Cathedral followed by their originally planned reception for friends and family.

Though Creighton's graduation was cancelled, the Brooks will be moving to Iowa City soon so Bailey can begin her residency at the University of Iowa hospital in June.



Dan Hamann and Mary Beth Hart
St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish, Des Moines

When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention came out with guidelines discouraging gatherings larger than 50 people, Mary Beth Hart and her fiancée, Dan Hamann, were concerned about the implications for their April 24 wedding.

"And then when [the limit] was 10 people, we talked and met with my parents," Mary Beth said. "We decided that April 24 – regardless of everything that's going on – is our wedding day and that's the day we've pictured and planned for and that we're going to be married on."

The invitations had been sent and plans were in motion. It was a big adjustment, Mary Beth said.

"But it wasn't devastating, because we knew that all along the most important part was our wedding and starting our marriage together," Mary Beth continued. "There were some tears shed. With all of the planning and preparation that goes into a big wedding, we were going to have around 220 people there, and it's a lot of work. And the thought of having to change those plans and have 10 people was a bit of a shock. But at the end of the day, we were going to be surrounded by people that love us and support us."

Mary Beth's cousin Father Ross Parker will celebrate the wedding Mass.

The couple is working out details to stream their wedding so friends and family can watch and participate.

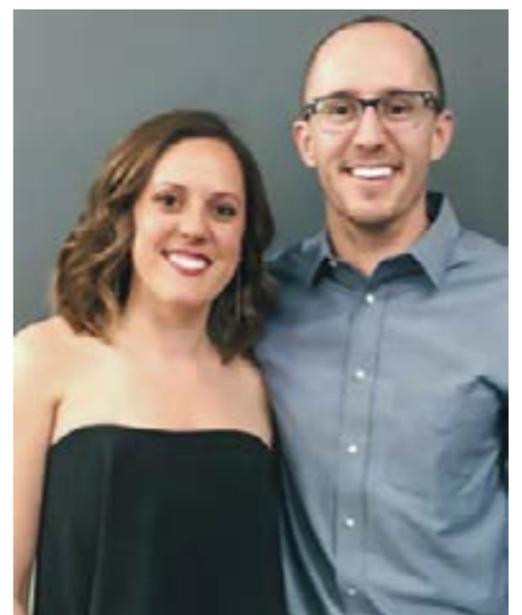
"We're still going to get married, but we're going to change our reception plans and make it a little bit more casual when we can this fall," Mary Beth added. "Instead of having a formal sit down dinner we're probably going to have a backyard garden party."

Their honeymoon plans were a "double whammy," Mary Beth said. They were set to go on a cruise, departing out of Rome, Italy.

"The cruise line and airlines are being very understanding, so we're probably going to book it for this fall if things are looking different," Mary Beth said.

"We're very thankful to be healthy and be in a position where we can make these adjustments and go with that plan," Mary Beth said. "There's been a lot of support and love that's come our way and I can't help but think that God played a role in that...."

"It's been a roller coaster of emotions, but we've landed at a spot that's really positive and the day is going to be very special," she continued. "Despite our global pandemic, we are excited for the sacrament of marriage."



Dustin Murray and Samantha Sweet
St. Francis Parish, West Des Moines

When Dustin Murray and Samantha Sweet saw the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines continue to tighten, they became concerned about their May 2 wedding day.

"We started to get a little nervous..." Samantha admitted, but agreed the health and well-being of friends and family was most important. "We thought, 'Well, let's get a Plan B put together.'"

"We knew it was going to be really hard to find a new venue – let alone one that was going to be available on a Saturday. Dustin and I agreed that whatever we need to do, we're still going to get married and have all the most important people to us there."

Their back-up plan fell through when the venue was booked by someone else.

"Obviously we're not the only couple going through this," Samantha said.

They finally rescheduled their wedding for Thursday, June 18.

"We had been in a little bit of a panic," Samantha continued. "I had shed some tears. It's just very stressful. But we thought keeping the venue and church location the same would be the best options. It's just working out the other details."

"It's a little emotional from a selfish viewpoint, but we try to keep reminding ourselves that we are healthy, our families are healthy, we have a job and a home and friends, and we're not the only ones going through this," Samantha added. "So today is a better day."

Everybody is pulling together.

"Father Mark McGeary has been fantastic to speak to, as well as other people at the office, even though it's a trying time," Samantha added. "It's encouraging to see people coming together and being kind and thoughtful to one another."

"It's just important to know that even though it's such a difficult time where there are so many unanswered questions, it's important to keep the faith that God is going to lead us where we want to be and need to be," Samantha concluded.

OPINION

Jesus is in our midst

Marriage & Family Life

By
Adam Storey



In his book *Disarming Beauty*, Father Julián Carrón discusses the transformative power of the presence of Christ.

He says Israel was sustained throughout its history, especially in times of trial, with the knowledge that God was with the people. But then, he offers a striking illustration of this reality. He invites us to imagine a child brought to Disneyland by her parents. With four small children at home, I can vividly see their joy and awe as we'd walk around the park. But then, Father Carrón asks us to imagine the child's response if she was suddenly separated from her parents. The rides, the crowds, the noise, everything that moments ago delighted the child, would now seem hostile and terrifying.

I've been thinking of this image recently as all of our lives have been trans-

formed by COVID-19. We are all experiencing uncertainty and disruption of daily living, and even though we're physically distant from one another, the new "routines" and never-ending news updates can feel like sensory overload.

In the midst of this turmoil, without public Masses and easily accessible confession, it can feel like Christ isn't with us, we can feel like the child lost in Disneyland with no parents to guide her.

During this pandemic, some of us may feel like crying out as Christ did on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Yet, our Catholic faith tells us that Christ remains with us, and that it is in our trials that Christ draws ever closer to us.

Even in the midst of pain, uncertainty and fear we can have peace because Christ dwells with us.

Pope Francis reminds us of this reality in *The Joy of Love (Amoris Laetitia)* when he writes, "The Lord's presence dwells in real and concrete families, with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes." He goes on to say that "[t]hose who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is

using to lead them to the heights of mystical union."

The most important thing we need to hear in these days is that Jesus is near us, and that the Lord is using this path, the path of the domestic Church, of every shape and size, to draw us to himself.

There are many things to pray for these days. One of our prayers should be for the grace to recognize Jesus in our midst. To recognize where and how he is drawing us closer to himself, and for peace to reign in our hearts in the knowledge that God is with us!

Adam Storey is the diocesan director of Marriage and Family Life. He can be reached at astorey@dmdiocese.org or 515-237-5056.

Jesus, I trust in you

Guest Column

By Kelly
Mescher Collins



Back in early, cold and snowy January (long before most people took the word "pandemic" too seriously) I felt compelled to write a column on St. Faustina and the Divine Mercy image for the April edition of *The Catholic Mirror* to correspond with Divine Mercy Sunday on April 19.

Though still four months away, I wanted to commit to this column. I made sure my editor knew about it in January so she could reserve space – an unusual move, for sure.

But oh, how the world would change in just a few short months. In January, who would have predicted that we'd soon be faced with a suspension of all public Masses, parish gatherings and yes – even this year's Divine Mercy celebration.

And as we all know, it doesn't stop there – schools closed, sporting events, proms and graduations cancelled. The state has prohibited gatherings of more than 10 people – even for weddings and funerals. The governor ordered almost all businesses closed and new unemployment claims in Iowa have reached a record high.

I certainly couldn't have imagined what would transpire.

And now, given the trying the times we live in, perhaps people are thirsting for a message such as this.

Providential? Maybe.

Coincidence? Unlikely.

I'm often surprised by the number of Catholics unaware of St. Faustina and the Divine Mercy image. Here's a brief recap of what happened nearly 90 years ago in Poland.

On Feb. 22, 1931, Jesus revealed himself to St. Faustina for the first time in her cell at a convent in Poland. Jesus was wearing a white garment with red and pale rays emanating from his heart.

As written in *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul*, Jesus told her: "You are the secretary of my mercy. I have chosen you for that office in this life and the next life."

"Your task is to write down everything that I make known to you about my mercy, for the benefit of those who by reading these things will be comforted in their souls and will have the courage to approach me," he told her.

Jesus ordered her to have an image painted.

"Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: 'Jesus, I trust in You.' I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and then

throughout the whole world. I promise that the soul that venerates this image will not perish. I also promise victory over its enemies already here on Earth, especially at the hour of death."

Now, here's the part where Jesus' message gets really interesting. Because if you're anything like me, you may sometimes struggle with surrendering to God's will and fully trusting him. But this is where Jesus can work the most.

"The graces of my mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is – trust," Jesus said, according to the diary. "The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to me, because I pour all the treasures of my graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is my desire to give much, very much. On the other hand, I am sad when souls ask for little, when they narrow their hearts."

After learning of this message, I decided then and there that I needed this image in my home and at my desk at work – not as a good luck charm, but as a reminder throughout my day that Jesus is the beginning and the end, the ultimate goal. If I want to deepen my relationship with Jesus, then I need to trust him. And there's nothing I want more than the deepest relationship possible with Jesus.

When life gets crazy and I start contemplating worst-case scenarios, I stop, turn to this image and silently say to him, "Jesus, I trust in you." When I'm extremely stressed, I repeat it over and over. And on a really bad day, I feel like I'm faking it until I make it. But since I trust Jesus, I trust that he appreciates my effort – even when it's extremely hard to stop worrying and let go.

Trusting Jesus brings me peace and joy. And I want that. Jesus wants that. Who *doesn't* want that?

Jesus said to St. Faustina: "I seek and desire souls like yours but they are few. Your great trust in me forces me to continuously grant you graces."

That first sentence in Jesus' state-



Above is the Divine Mercy image on Kelly Mescher Collins' mantle at home. Jesus told St. Faustina that the two rays in this image represent blood and water. The pale ray stands for the water which makes souls righteous; the red stands for the blood which is the life of souls. "These two rays issued forth from the very depths of my tender mercy when my agonized heart was opened by a lance on the cross. These rays shield souls from the wrath of my father. Happy is the one who dwells in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of him." Learn more about Divine Mercy Sunday and the Divine Mercy Chaplet at thedivine-mercy.org.

ment makes me sad. But it also makes me to want to be better at trusting him.

Jesus told St. Faustina he wanted a day dedicated to his mercy.

"I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy. I desire that priests proclaim this great mercy of mine towards the souls of sinners."

Thanks to fellow Polish native, St. John Paul II, St. Faustina was canonized on April 30, 2000. On that same day, he established Divine Mercy Sunday – a feast day for the Catholic Church – falling on the octave Sunday of Easter each year.

"This is the happiest day of my life," St. John Paul II said.

The Holy Father died April 2, 2005 – the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday.

Coincidence? Unlikely. Providential? I trust so.

Kelly Mescher Collins is multimedia journalist at the Diocese of Des Moines and a member of St. Francis Parish in West Des Moines. She encourages you to find a Divine Mercy image (similar to the one above that's on her mantle) and display it in your own home.

OPINION

The Dispelling of an Illusion

Ask a Priest

Q. Why isn't there a pope in America?

A. The pope is the bishop of Rome. We don't have a pope in the United States because Rome is in Italy. Primarily, the Holy Father is a bishop. He's often referred to as the first among equals – one primary bishop among other bishops. For centuries the bishop of Rome has been the visible sign of unity for the Church throughout the world. Could an American ever be elected pope (bishop of Rome)? The answer is yes. In the past half-century we have seen a Polish pope, a German pope, and an Argentinean pope.

Q. Why are the sacraments (especially confirmation) so important and necessary?

A. The sacraments are rituals that connect us to one another and to Christ. Confirmation is the completion of our initiation into the faith that began at baptism. In fact, if an adult is baptized, he or she is immediately confirmed at the same time. Sacraments are only as helpful as the effort we expend to understand and live them. Think of it this way: A marriage ceremony is only the beginning. If the husband and wife don't work every day to live that sacrament by the way they love and care for each other, the ceremony seems kind of empty. So too with the other sacraments.

Q. If you are new to the faith, where would be a good place to study the Bible?

A. The Bible is a collection of sacred writings. It's like a library. So to read and study the Bible, you should not try to read the whole library. Rather, take one of the gospels and get familiar

with it. Or take one of the epistles. My best suggestion is to read the Bible the way the Church does – each Sunday, over a cycle of three years, we are exposed to one of the Gospels. This year, the Gospel is St. Matthew. Next year it's the Gospel of St. Mark. The following year it is the Gospel of St. Luke. If you prefer to explore the Old Testament, you might want to check out Genesis or Exodus. Many parishes have Bible study groups that you can join. That's a good place to start.

Q. Any pointers on how to stay diligent in your prayer life when you live in a society that persecutes Catholics?

A. Persecution might be a pretty strong word. Many people would agree that we live in a fairly secular society. That's not the same as a persecuted society. But because our culture is secular, we need to rise above the ordinary and the everyday nature of our surroundings. There are some wonderful prayer books that can help us to develop a prayer life. Also, there are websites and apps that can help us to pray. Most of all, it takes a decision to be prayerful. All the resources in the world won't be helpful if we don't make the decision to pray regularly. See if your parish has some of those resources. Ask your pastor or youth minister if there are prayer groups or retreats that will help you in your quest.

Got a question for "Ask a Priest" and its author, Father John Ludwig? Send it to: communications@dmdiocese.org.

Guest Column



By Father
Ron Rolheiser

We don't much like the word disillusionment. Normally we think of it as a negative, something pejorative, and not as something that does us a favor. And yet disillusionment is a positive, it means the dispelling of an illusion and illusions, unless we need one as a temporary tonic, are not good for us. They keep us from the truth, from reality.

There are many, many negatives to the current coronavirus that's wreaking a deadly havoc across the planet. But there's one positive: Against every form of resistance we can muster, it's dispelling the illusion that we are in control of our lives and that, by our own efforts, we can make ourselves invulnerable. That lesson has come upon us uninvited. This unforeseen and unwelcome virus is teaching us that, no matter our sophistication, intelligence, wealth, health, or status, we're all vulnerable, we're all at the mercy of a thousand contingencies over which we have little control. No amount of denial will change that.

Granted, at one level of our consciousness we're always aware of our vulnerability. But sometimes after we have walked a dangerous ledge for a long time we forget the peril and are no longer aware of the narrowness of the plank upon which we're walking. Then too our sense of our vulnerability to a hundred million dangers is, like our sense of mortality, normally pretty abstract and not very real. We all know that like everyone else we are going to die one day; but normally this doesn't weigh very heavily on our consciousness. We live instead with the sense that we're not going to die just yet. Our own deaths aren't really real to us. They are not yet an imminent threat but only a distant, abstract reality.

Generally, such too is the vagueness of our sense of vulnerability. Yes, we know abstractly that we are vulnerable, but generally we feel pretty secure. But as this virus spreads, consumes our newscasts, and brings our normal lives to a halt, our sense of vulnerability is no longer a vague, abstract threat. We're now much more aware that we all live at the mercies of a million contingencies, most over which we have little control.

However, to our defense, our innate sense that we're in control and can safeguard our own safety and security should not be too-hastily and too-harshly judged. We can't help it. It's the way

we're built. We're instinctually geared to hate our weaknesses, our vulnerability, our limitations, and our awareness of our own poverty and are instinctually geared to want to feel secure, in control, independent, invulnerable, and self-sufficient. That's a mercy of grace and nature because it helps save us from despondency and helps us to live with a (needed) healthy pride. But it's also an illusion; perhaps one that we need for long periods in our lives but also one that in moments of clarity and lucidity we're meant dispel so as to acknowledge before God and to ourselves that we're interdependent, not self-sufficient, and not ultimately in control. Whatever else about this virus, it's bringing us a moment of clarity and lucidity, even if this is far from welcome.

We were given the same lesson, in effect, with the downing of the Twin Towers in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001. In witnessing this single tragic incident we went from feeling safe and invulnerable to knowing that we are not able, despite everything we have achieved, to ensure our own safety and safety of our loved ones. A lot of people relearned the meaning of prayer that day. A lot of us are relearning the meaning of prayer as we sit quarantined at home during this coronavirus.

Richard Rohr suggests that the passage from childhood to adulthood requires an initiation into a number of necessary life-truths. One of these can be summarized this way: You are not in control! If that is true, and it is, then this coronavirus is helping initiate us all into a more mature adulthood. We are becoming more conscious of an important truth. However, we may not see any divine intent in this. Every fundamentalist voice that suggests that God sent this virus to each of us a lesson is dangerously wrong and is an insult to true faith. Still we need to hear God's voice inside of it. God is speaking all the time but mostly we aren't listening; this sort of thing helps serve as God's microphone to a deaf world.

Illusions aren't easy to dispel, and for good reasons. We cling to them by instinct and we generally need them to get through life. For this reason, Socrates, in his wisdom, once wrote that "there is nothing that requires as gentle a treatment as the removal of an illusion". Anything other than gentleness only makes us more resistant.

This coronavirus is anything but gentle. But inside all of its harshness perhaps we might feel a gentle nudge that we help us dispel the illusion that we are in control.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted through his website ronrolheiser.com or [facebook.com/ronrolheiser](https://www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser)

My identity that matters most is "Beloved by him"

There is a stereotype set by society that an "immigrant mentality equals always preparing for the worst."

There may be some truth in this. But in reality, it comes down to perception.

As immigrants, my family and I don't always prepare for the worst. We prepare for unexpected change. But where's the faith in that?

How I perceive my status as an immigrant correlates with the dignity I uphold for myself, and the dignity that God calls and challenges me to uphold. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: "The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God...human beings make their own contribution to their interior growth..."

I don't see my immigrant status as a limitation – I see it as a path towards growth – growth in strength, perseverance

Guest Column



By
Jessica Hernandez

and overcoming obstacles in life. Through my personal relationship with God, I see it as an opportunity to receive his mercy and unending love. Through the "limitations" my immigrant status brings, I find hope, recognizing the gift of a life free of persecutions, poverty and death. This divine perception, of course, did not reveal itself to me without the help and guidance of others, including the faith-filled commu-

nities that have stood in solidarity with me and my family. The catechism says: "The divine image is present in every man. It shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the unity of the divine persons among themselves."

Through the accompaniment of this "communion of persons," my family and I were able to move forward, finding God amid the unknown of a new culture, country and language. My potential as a human being, legal or "illegal," is not defined by the labels society puts on me as an immigrant. It is defined by my actions and how I contribute to the common good.

Our catechism says: "Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. By free will one shapes one's own life. Human freedom is a force

for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude."

No matter the title I am given by society – immigrant, daughter, Hispanic, cousin, friend, student – the title that matters most is the one of beloved by him. "He must increase; I must decrease" (John 3:20). When my perception, actions, will, and vision are directed toward God, I am able to find the strength and fortitude needed to continue the journey called life.

Jessica Hernandez is coordinator of Hispanic Youth Ministry at the Diocese of Des Moines and a member of St. Anthony Parish in Des Moines.

Pope at Urbi et orbi: Full text of his meditation

The following is the full text of Pope Francis' address on March 27 at the Urbi et orbi blessing.

"When evening had come" (Mk 4:35). The Gospel passage we have just heard begins like this. For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in the air, we notice in people's gestures, their glances give them away. We find ourselves afraid and lost. Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying "We are perishing" (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this.

It is easy to recognize ourselves in this story. What is harder to understand is Jesus' attitude. While his disciples are quite naturally alarmed and desperate, he stands in the stern, in the part of the boat that sinks first. And what does he do? In spite of the tempest, he sleeps on soundly, trusting in the Father; this is the only time in the Gospels we see Jesus sleeping. When he wakes up, after calming the wind and the waters, he turns to the disciples in a reproaching voice: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (v. 40).

Let us try to understand. In what does the lack of the disciples' faith consist, as contrasted with Jesus' trust? They had not stopped believing in him; in fact, they called on him. But we see how they call on him: "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" (v. 38). Do you not care: they think that Jesus is not interested in them, does not care about them. One of the things that hurts us and our families most when we hear it said is: "Do you not care about me?" It is a phrase that wounds and unleashes storms in our hearts. It would have shaken Jesus too. Because he, more than anyone, cares about us. Indeed, once they have called on him, he saves his disciples from their discouragement.

The storm exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the

very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our communities. The tempest lays bare all our prepackaged ideas and forgetfulness of what nourishes our people's souls; all those attempts that anesthetize us with ways of thinking and acting that supposedly "save" us, but instead prove incapable of putting us in touch with our roots and keeping alive the memory of those who have gone before us. We deprive ourselves of the antibodies we need to confront adversity.

In this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more that (blessed) common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging as brothers and sisters.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Lord, your word this evening strikes us and regards us, all of us. In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling powerful and able to do anything. Greedy for profit, we let ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste. We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick. Now that we are in a stormy sea, we implore you: "Wake up, Lord!"

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting in you. This Lent your call reverberates urgently: "Be converted!", "Return to me with all your heart" (Joel 2:12). You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing. It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others. We can look to so many exemplary companions for the journey, who, even though fearful, have reacted by giving their lives. This is the force of the Spirit poured out and fashioned in courageous and generous self-denial. It is the life in the Spirit that can redeem, value and demonstrate how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people – often forgotten people – who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines nor on the grand catwalks of the latest show, but who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time: doctors, nurses, supermar-

ket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves. In the face of so much suffering, where the authentic development of our peoples is assessed, we experience the priestly prayer of Jesus: "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all.

Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons. "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Faith begins when we realize we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we flounder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God's strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

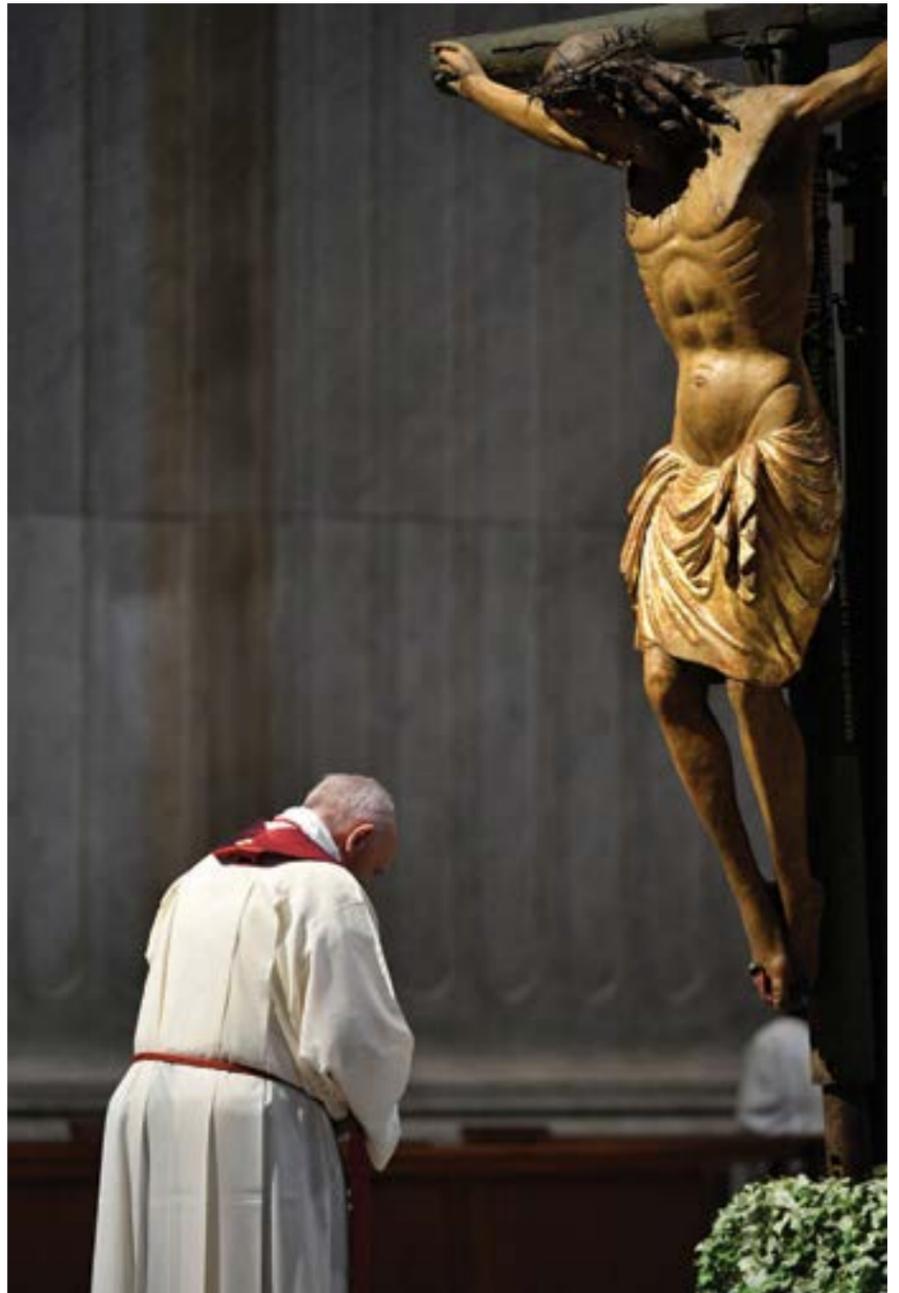
The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to awaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to awaken and revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed.

We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love. In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side. The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. Is 42:3) that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled.

Embracing his cross means finding the courage to embrace all the hardships of the present time, abandoning for a moment our eagerness for power and possessions in order to make room for the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of inspiring. It means finding the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognize that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity. By his cross we have been

saved in order to embrace hope and let it strengthen and sustain all measures and all possible avenues for helping us protect ourselves and others. Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from fear and gives us hope.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Dear brothers and sisters, from this place that tells of Peter's rock-solid faith, I would like this evening to entrust all of you to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, Health of the People and Star of the stormy Sea. From this colonnade that embraces Rome and the whole world, may God's blessing come down upon you as a consoling embrace. Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (cf. 1 Pet 5:7).



Pope Francis venerates the cross April 10, during the Good Friday Liturgy of the Lord's Passion in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Though you can't be AT church, you can be there FOR your church. Please support your parish during these trying times.

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catholicfoundationiowa.org/make-a-donation, where 100% of your gift will go to the parish of your choice.

Pope: Pandemic is prime time for conversion

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The COVID-19 quarantines, lockdowns and stay-at-home orders are the perfect opportunity for conversion: for individuals, for the church and for governments, Pope Francis said in an interview. "What we are living now is a place of 'metanoia' (conversion), and we have the chance to begin," Pope Francis said. "So, let's not let it slip from us, and let's move ahead."

The pandemic crisis is an opportunity to reflect on how people use their time and resources, how the church responds to new pastoral needs, how society has allowed the economy to be the first consideration when making decisions about people's lives and how governments still spend billions on weapons when they cannot provide adequate health care to all their people, the pope said in the interview published April 8 in the U.S. magazine *Commonweal* and the British journal *The Tablet*.

Austen Ivereigh, an author and journalist, submitted written questions to Pope Francis; the pope sent an audio recording of his responses, in Spanish, April 3.

Asked how he is living the lockdown, the pope responded, "I'm praying more, because I feel I should," and he is trying to focus on the needs of other people because "it takes me out of my self-preoccupation."

"Of course," he said, "I have my areas of selfishness. On Tuesdays, my confessor comes, and I take care of things there." But Pope Francis said he also is thinking of "what will come afterwards. What will be my service as bishop of Rome, as head of the church, in the aftermath?"

"That aftermath has already begun to be revealed as tragic and painful, which is why we must be thinking about it now," the pope said, adding that the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development already is looking at strategies to mitigate the impact on the poor.

"I'm living this as a time of great uncertainty," Pope Francis said. "It's a time for inventing, for creativity."

"It's not easy to be confined to your house," he said, but he cited advice from Virgil's epic poem, "The Aeneid," in the midst of defeat: "The counsel is not to give up, but save yourself for better times, for in those times remembering what has happened will help us."

"Take care of yourselves for a future that will

come," the pope said. "Take care of the now for the sake of tomorrow -- always creatively, with a simple creativity, capable of inventing something new each day."

Pope Francis said he knows it is not easy to be creative as the lockdown drags on, "but don't run away, don't take refuge in escapism, which in this time is of no use to you."

The church needs creativity, too, he said. It needs to learn to live with and value the "disorder" that comes from the Holy Spirit raising up new charisms and calling people to find new ways to live and share the Gospel and, at the same time, to recognize the "harmony" the Spirit creates in bringing believers into communion with each other in the church.

"A church that is free is not an anarchic church, because freedom is God's gift," he said. The only proper view of "an institutional church," he added, is "a church institutionalized by the Holy Spirit."

"About a week ago an Italian bishop, somewhat flustered, called me," the pope said. "He had been going around the hospitals wanting to give absolution to those inside the wards from the hallway of the hospital. But he had spoken to canon lawyers who had told him he

couldn't, that absolution could only be given in direct contact." "What do you think, Father?" he had asked me. I told him: 'Bishop, fulfill your priestly duty.' And the bishop said, 'Grazie, ho capito' ('Thank you, I understand')," the pope said. "I found out later that he was giving absolution all around the place."

"This is the freedom of the Spirit in the midst of a crisis, not a church closed off in institutions," he said. Canon law is important and necessary, but the church's laws and rules are "for the salvation of souls, and that's what opens the door for us to go out in times of difficulty to bring the consolation of God."

The pandemic also has revealed how, "all our thinking, like it or not, has been shaped around the economy," which, in effect, made it possible "to sacrifice" people through pre-natal selection, for example, or deciding it is not economically feasible to give top medical care to the elderly.

He said St. Paul VI's encyclical "Humanae Vitae" (On Human Life) was "prophetic" in warning of a culture where "people are selected according to their utility or productivity -- the throwaway culture."

"This crisis is affecting us all, rich and poor alike, and putting a spotlight on hypocri-

sy," the pope said, pointing, for example, to "certain political personalities who speak of facing up to the crisis, of the problem of hunger in the world, but who in the meantime manufacture weapons."

"This is a time to be converted from this kind of functional hypocrisy," he said. "It's a time for integrity. Either we are coherent with our beliefs or we lose everything."

Once the pandemic is past, he said, people must not "file it away and go back to where we were."

"This is the time to take the decisive step, to move from using and misusing nature to contemplating it," he said. It is time to really see the poor and the homeless as people and not "settle for a welfare policy such as we have for rescued animals. We often treat the poor like rescued animals."

Pope Francis encouraged people to follow the example of "the saints who live next door" and give their lives in service to others. During the COVID-19 pandemic "they are heroes: doctors, volunteers, religious sisters, priests, shop workers -- all performing their duty so that society can continue functioning."

Vatican approves special 'Mass in the Time of Pandemic'

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments has approved a special "Mass in the Time of Pandemic" to plead for God's mercy and gift of strength in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Mass opens with a prayer that God would "look with compassion on the afflicted, grant eternal rest to the dead, comfort to mourners, healing to the sick, peace to the dying, strength to health care workers, wisdom to

our leaders and the courage to reach out to all in love."

In a letter dated March 30, Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the congregation, and Archbishop Arthur Roche, congregation secretary, said, "In these days, during which the whole world has been gravely stricken by the COVID-19 virus," many bishops and priests have asked "to be able to celebrate a specific Mass to implore God to bring an end to this pandemic."

The congregation granted the request and provided special prayers and suggestions for the Scripture readings to be used.



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Victim Assistance Advocate

The diocese's Victim Assistance Advocate is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He helps victims of sexual abuse of minors by clergy through a complaint process and in seeking support and counseling services. He can be reached at 515-286-2024 or Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov.

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Most of you know me as your Knights of Columbus Field Agent but before that I'm a Brother Knight and as such I wanted to send you a quick note that reflects the posture of the Knights of Columbus and my own commitment to serve you and your family in these unprecedented times.

As a framework, I want to employ the five pillars that Supreme Knight Carl Anderson has pointed to as characteristics found in men who, in time of crisis, not only survive but lead.

First, **we remain rooted in the truth of the faith.** We pray for one another, for the sick and the dying, and for the Church and world. In this we remain true to Fr. McGivney's vision of protecting families within the sure tracks of the Catholic faith.

Second, the Knights can be counted on to **step into the breach.** When disasters strike, the Knights are there with prayer and work, supporting first responders, providing shelter and assistance to those affected. This time is no different. Working together, we remain united and strong.

Third, **a Knight stays at his post.** I understand that you have concerns about health, finances, job security, savings, retirement, and these have only increased in these days. I am here to help allay those concerns and to answer any questions you may have.

We are ready to **suffer for the good.** It has fallen to us agents and our Supreme Council leadership to roll up our sleeves and get to work so we can remain effective as we work remotely and maintain social distance. To that end, we are employing new technology that allows us to meet "virtually," using a secure video conferencing software. It allows us to see each other, and to share a screen that features forms and other graphics.

Finally, **a Knight maintains humble confidence.** My commitment to you, our members and families, remains steady and is built not primarily on my qualifications but on the strength of our Order, which has grown and strengthened over more than 135 years. Our Order is strong and our guarantees remain in place.

As always, I stand ready to help. If you or anyone you know are in need of assistance of any kind during these trying times, please feel free to contact me.

Fraternally,
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