



There is Always Hope.

We asked several parishes 3 simple questions:

- What challenges are you facing right now?
- How are you addressing these challenges at your parish?
- How has your parish community been blessed, despite these difficult times?

The responses have been nothing

short of overwhelming: we received over 6,000 words from over 15 parishes, full of hope and courage to face the unknown in service to God's people.

Through these next few pages, each parish shares their story as we've received them, with minimal editing, to allow the voice of each person to speak, in all their humanness.

We've also included some educational pieces, prayers, resources, and other material you and your family may find helpful throughout these next weeks as we seek normalcy and faith in these uniquely challenging times.

We pray that they inspire you to hope, just as they have inspired us. Stay safe out there, guys.

Parish Appreciation: Online

Each of these stories appeared first online at [archdioceseofanchorage.org/parish-appreciation](https://www.archdioceseofanchorage.org/parish-appreciation). Search for "Archdiocese of Anchorage" on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#) for the latest updates!

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St. Benedict Parish, Anchorage

AS TOLD BY ELISE MARTINEZ

What isn't a unique challenge during this time? We have used social media more especially with upcoming virtual events and getting news out to the students and parish community. The most unique challenge is meeting people's relationship needs as in continuing to develop the community of St. Benedict. In youth ministry we have been doing virtual youth nights and are starting to meet with the leadership team weekly to explore more areas of need and be creative with youth nights.

We have also been making phone calls to each parish family and just taking time to speak with them, check-in on any needs and be there to help them through this interesting time. It's a surprise blessing in making phone calls because it was nice to be able to reach out in a different way. As a more extroverted person, it was great to speak to others and spend time with them, even if it couldn't be in person.

I have seen many students growing

spiritually during this time and diving deeper into their relationship with Jesus and the saints. A couple students are doing more lectio divina and one student is doing a lot of spiritual reading and praying all the mysteries of the rosary throughout the day. I have also seen the hunger and longing for the Eucharist that should always be there, but has been deepened since we cannot receive Jesus at this time other than in spiritual communion.

I believe all ministries are a priority, but in my life as Youth Minister it is focused on the teens. Another blessing is having students join the ProjectYM live youth night Sunday nights even though they have not been to youth night and were not able to participate before because of too many activities. It is a time of slowing down and reflecting on priorities. In successes we are currently doing a virtual youth night via skype and it has been fun seeing the students interact in a new way.

Two weeks ago we did a scavenger hunt and the next day I had a couple reach out saying they are thankful for what we are doing and it has helped their teen. That is why I love doing ministry is to bring Christ to these students and to allow the Holy Spirit to work through this time and through me.

Outreach to Young People

Many parishes are providing ministry and formation opportunities to the young people of their parish. Contact your parish to learn more or for a reference to a nearby parish with an active program. Parish leaders, contact Matthew Beck, Director of Evangelization and Discipleship, or Bonnie Bezousek, Director of Faith Formation and Catholic Schools, for ministry ideas and resources.

St. Mary Parish, Kodiak

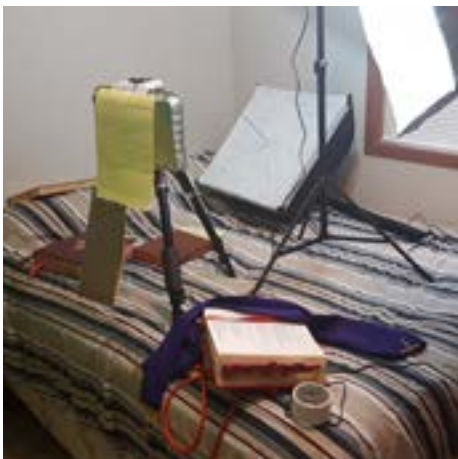
AS TOLD BY FR. FRANK REITTER

Just before this began, I bought a light setup with a green screen and cheap versions of studio lights. That, with a \$99 computer program, lets you put your video on one track and automatically puts the pictures behind you. My goal was to try to keep whatever normalcy we can for Lent: Stations of the Cross, Soup Supper, those sorts of things.

We just started classes yesterday, so I popped in on one of the classes, to pray with them. We're working out a schedule since we can't have Tuesday Mass. I'm trying to call parishioners every day, just touching base with them.

Wednesdays, we usually get together with the Lutherans and the Episcopal community and we have a soup supper. So on Wednesdays, I have a bowl of soup and a lot less formal prayer. I just sit there and eat soup, talk to folks, and say, we miss doing this, so pull up a bowl of soup and let's have a little reflection.

The other thing I'm doing is the



BEHIND-THE-SCENES WITH FR. FRANK

Stations of the Cross. I'm using video files and powerpoint. Last week we did Aboriginal Stations. This week, we're doing family-centered Stations. I'm trying to come up with a Good Friday set of stations to pray through a pandemic. Using pictures and Pope's Stations.



FR. FRANK'S ONLINE BLESSING

The hard thing is that we don't have good contact information for a lot of our people. I've got a pretty good file of pictures from events, though, so we're able to use those. We did a family blessing, where we cast the family photos on the green screen behind me, and that was something important. Since I've started, I've also been using pictures of other Catholic communities across the Archdiocese. I got the idea from a priest in the Philippines. I used to be in Youth Ministry, and we all share resources.

We're having some success. People seem appreciative. I got an interesting comment, talking to someone in the parking lot- we're shouting at each other across the way- and she said, "I really like your stuff online, I like it better than the live stuff."

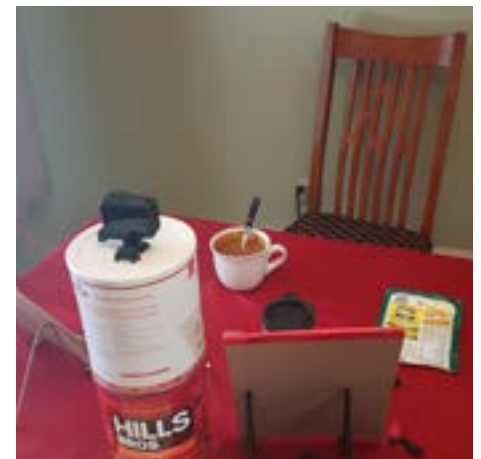
So we're getting a lot of "likes" from

the larger community. I don't know if anybody's watching it, but they're seeing that we're proactive and reaching out to provide for people's spiritual needs. We're evangelizers.

My brother and sister saw my video, my first one, and sent me a new GoPro camera so I could do a better job. The first one was an old GoPro but I figured I'd give it a shot. This one does a better job.

With this one, I can start and stop it with my voice, and I always forget to edit out, I always say "Stop GoPro," but that's the wrong one, so then I say, ""GoPro, stop," and then it will go off. And I always forget to edit that part out, and everybody laughs at me.

They interviewed me on the radio the other day, and I was talking to the announcer, who asked, "What's it like to be Catholic?" We are a tactile religion. It's physical communion. It's holding hands during the Our Father. We are the Body of Christ, not the Spirit of Christ. It's anointing, it's laying hands on someone's head, you know, and so for us, it's making me aware of how tactile and physical we are. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.



BEHIND-THE-SCENES WITH FR. FRANK



WHILE WE CAN'T BE
"IN CHURCH."

WE CAN STILL
"BE CHURCH!"

We Must "Be Church" Despite the Distance

You may recognize the above image from a postcard. It was sent to all registered parishioners on Holy Week, and it recommended 5 ways to "Be Church:"

- Worship together in Mass online
- Be patient with your family
- Pray for the whole world
- Check in on your neighbors
- Support your local parish

Many- if not all- parishes are facing financial challenges throughout this time. Sunday collections are key points of financial income, and even though public Masses are not being celebrated, parish staff members and pastors are still employed, and operational expenses may have decreased, but are still a factor.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY LOCAL PARISH?

All parishes are still accepting tithes and donations via mail, and many offer a convenient online donation option for their parishioners. Contact your parish office to learn more about your

giving and planned giving options.

Even if you aren't in a position to support a parish financially, there are still ways you can support the mission:

- Pray for your parish and your fellow parishioners daily.
- Practice your faith in your home, and help your family to do the same by establishing a prayer space or family prayer routines.
- Contact your parish for volunteer opportunities, such as phone trees, outreach programs, and education needs.
- Follow your parish on social media, and evangelize by sharing their posts.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Anchorage

AS TOLD BY DIANA WEBER

Perhaps the greatest challenge is our isolation! We cannot stand close and talk, or shake hands or hug. We cannot receive the Eucharist. It is difficult for high risk folks to get groceries and supplies without being afraid of risking their health. And many of the Ministry tasks we are accustomed to do, are very hard to carry out if we can't do them in person. So, with Father Scott's leadership, and the generosity and goodwill of parishioners and clergy, we are figuring out how to be Christ to one another, with six feet (or a computer screen) between us.

Parishioners Andy and Kathy Rzeszut offered to livestream all Masses and Stations of the Cross on the parish's Facebook page. They have taught our clergy how to use the video camera. Hundreds are watching the livestreamed masses, even parishioners who are out of state. An unanticipated blessing: parishioners watching the Mass can post their praise and gratitude on the Facebook livestream page. It helps us feel we are celebrating Mass and praying together. Stations of the Cross and a daily Holy Hour with benediction are also being livestreamed.

Our school children can no longer attend Wednesday morning mass, but Father Scott has preached

some wonderful homilies to help the children overcome fear in a troubled time. He gave such a comforting description of how a Christian understands death that many adults watching the Mass voiced their gratitude for his wisdom.

Father Scott established a SEAS Covid Outreach Ministry to call all 1150 households in the parish to see how parishioners were faring while "hunkering down" at home. Ministry protocols were rapidly written, a training video posted on YouTube, and Team Leaders assigned to supervise the volunteers making calls. The Ministry also established a rapid referral process that made sure high needs parishioners got connected to medical, emotional, technical and spiritual supports. Thanks to Father Scott's vision, many volunteers are pitching in and are working very hard so that no parishioner feels alone. A special shout out to our valiant Knights of Columbus, St Paul Miki chapter, who took on grocery delivery to the parishioners who can't shop online or risk going to the store.

All our clergy—Father Scott, Father Whitney and Deacon Kurt Adler—are working hard to keep our parish family connected and cared for. Preaching homilies that comfort the suffering, responding to emails and phone calls, even distributing daffodils to people who need extra cheering up, they are being Christ for us in a diligent and loving way.

Diana Weber and Tessa Wilson co-coordinate the parish's COVID Outreach Ministry.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Co- Cathedral, Anchorage

**AS TOLD BY
FR. HANK GRODECKI**

Our priorities are staying in touch with our parishioners, offering liturgy, and providing community outreach. We're trying to figure out how best to stay in touch and support each other as the Body of Christ at this time. We're figuring out how as a faith community to celebrate the liturgy "apart together."

Another challenge is discerning what is absolutely necessary and what isn't (triage). The church law and norms are helpful with this, but there is still a need to prioritize always mindful of the common good. At Guadalupe we're attempting to stay in touch by phone and other media with the parishioners.

I have a deeper appreciation of the importance of our gathering as church for worship, celebration, and mutual support. We are blessed by the kindness and understanding of the parishioners, and their checking in on each other by social media. The community is yearning for the sacraments and are anxious to celebrate them together again. I also appreciate living in a religious community.

St. Patrick Parish, Anchorage

AS TOLD BY FR. LEO WALSH

Obviously, the biggest challenge is that we are not meeting as a congregation and that is one of the very things that defines a congregation...we congregate! So we have had to get creative. I started live-streaming Mass from the parish church so that people could at least see their pastor and their church building online.

The second challenge in not being able to gather is to help people stay connected. Technology again comes to our rescue here. Teleconferencing and video conferences, social media all provide ways that folks can keep in touch. We have had to get very creative. For example, we reorganized our website so that important information can be more easily found.

The third challenge is financial. Most people are used to giving to their church in the Sunday collection. Since that is not happening, we have seen a marked drop in stewardship of treasure in the parish. Online giving helps tremendously and many are mailing in their envelopes and donations. Still, when folks are experiencing financial uncertainty, that will be reflected in what they are able to give to their parish.

A fourth challenge is formation, catechesis and evangelization. Like the school districts, we have had to go online for much of our formation and catechesis. Our confirmation

retreat was cancelled and the ceremony is postponed until the fall. A virtual retreat is simply not possible. Although we can keep the information flowing. This points out the difference between "formation in the faith" and simply passing on information "about" the faith. We are formed in community. That is a challenge when we do not gather as a community.

Despite these challenges, I think there is a lot more personal prayer going on among the people of God. Folks have a little more time and have been very creative in setting up prayer spaces and "cyber chapels" in their homes. I hope they continue to make as much time for personal prayer when this is over as they are now. Personally, I've had enough time to get working on the chapel in the new parish house here at St. Patrick's. It's a slow process, but it is coming along.

Being in East Anchorage, we have

a very large senior population. Many of them are not as familiar with technology and therefore are not connected in that way. However, our St. Pat's Seniors ministry has really risen to the occasion and established a prayer chain and phone tree as soon as it became apparent that we would be hunkered down for several weeks.

When all this is over, we are going to get together and have one heck of a party!

AS TOLD BY JOHN GAGNON

We are very fortunate at St. Patrick's to have Fr. Leo Walsh who is very adept at dealing with technology. We also have several volunteers who regularly assist our staff with technology issues, and they have been very helpful. Fr. Leo has been able to successfully live stream Masses on a daily and weekly basis. As parishioners, our family has been very grateful to be able to watch the



Tips to Build a Home Altar

- Choose your space. Make sure it's somewhere the whole family can gather.
- Use a side table, desk, or other surface. Cover it with a nice cloth (bonus points if you iron the wrinkles).
- Include holy items that raise your mind to prayer: a Bible, a statue, holy water, holy cards, last year's Palm Sunday palms, or other special faith-filled items.
- Every person's / family's space will be unique. Have every family member include something special to his or her uniqueness.
- Use the space! Choose a prayer to pray together daily, or take turns finding a new prayer to pray each day.

Masses and join in prayer with Fr. Leo and many others. With much kind assistance, we have been able to update our parish website with a lot of very helpful resources and information. We also continue to post our weekly bulletin with updated information.

My biggest challenge has been trying to keep my office work in order with very limited time actually in the office. Blessed by our relatively new cloud based accounting program, I am happily surprised by the ability to do a significant amount of bookkeeping right here at my home computer. As a parish staff, we have been richly blessed by how well our online staff meetings have worked.

As Fr. Leo wrote several weeks ago, we are now not able to receive God's Grace through the ordinary means. This has given me a new appreciation of those ordinary means of receiving God's Grace through the celebration of Mass and the sacraments. Fr. Leo encouraged us to discover "extraordinary means" of receiving God's Grace. I have been blessed by having more time to pray. A prayer I have rediscovered from my early years is The Angelus which includes the words "Pour fourth, we beseech you O Lord, your grace into our hearts..." I have found this, and many other moments in prayer to be those extraordinary means by which God is bestowing His Grace on me and my family.

**AS TOLD BY
DEACON MICK FORNELLI**

The challenges to ministry are in many areas. The Mass in general is very different without the assembly

present. The video streaming is helpful to those unable to attend mass. On other levels and in other areas, most liturgical ministry events have had to be cancelled.

In addition, Diaconate formation classes have been cancelled in March and April, and the Engaged Encounter Weekend scheduled for May has had to be cancelled. We have been using video conferencing to stay in touch but the complexity of the classes and session would be almost impossible to present even with Video. Staff meetings have worked through video conferencing but the physical presence of people is difficult.

The blessings I have received have centered around a more focused family time. Many more hours spent with Michelle and actually in face time conversations with my sons. The joy of being able to do a little recreational reading has been a great resource for some of the down time.

Still, ministries still occupy many of my hours. I have been working with the Bishop on various liturgies, dealing with the administration of another parish and its staff, and fulfilling my on-call hours as an APD/AFD Chaplain. This latter ministry has allowed me access to AK Regional Hospital to be able to minister to the Catholic patients where the hospitals, due to COVID-19 have restricted visits by even family members.

I have also been trying to call all the parishioners of St. Patrick's to check in with them to make sure they are well and if they have any

needs. I had started with the elderly and those individuals who have been living alone and will ultimately expand the calls to the rest of the St. Patrick's community.

How to Pray the Angelus

Prayed at 6am, noon and 6pm:

Leader: The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,

Response: And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

All: *Hail Mary...*

Leader: Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

Response: Be it done unto me according to Your Word.

All: *Hail Mary...*

Leader: And the Word was made flesh,

Response: And dwelt among us.

All: *Hail Mary...*

Leader: Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

Response: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

All: Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech You, O Lord, Your Grace into our hearts; that as we have known the incarnation of Christ, your Son by the message of an angel, so by His passion and cross we may be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Holy Family Cathedral, Anchorage

**AS TOLD BY
FR. STEVE MAEKAWA**

One of the great challenges is that people are feeling- rightfully so- the inaccessibility to the Eucharist. There are many people who come to Sunday Mass, daily Masses during the week, or have holy hours during adoration, or are involved in ministry groups. There's an absence in their life that's really obvious, particularly in the Eucharist and they're feeling it- an explicit presence of God in their life that they've lost, that's been taken away. It's understandable that people feel the way they do.

We've tried as a Church to respond with things such as livestreaming Masses, things such as the sacramental life of the church that sustains the faithful, even if they may not be able to attend Mass or receive the Eucharist. We know that whenever the Eucharist is celebrated, it is for all the baptized faithful, and it's just that they can't experience it in the way they're used to. And that's why the Eucharist is given to us in the first place, so there can be this closeness to such a great miracle, this gift.

The other challenge, too, is that with the current mandates, we are aware that some people are isolated and don't have a lot of contact. Other people are raising families and have the additional stress of kids being at home and them making

sure the kids are doing their school work, there's the present worry of economic impact that's affecting people already. We are all creatures of routine, and all of our routines have been disrupted in ways that are really critical in of life: our practice of faith, our abilities to earn a living, the ability for kids to feel happy and stable, to be able to do things that kids are supposed to be able to do when they're kids.

One of the blessings is that there's a certain amount of creativity: the desire to make the best of a bad situation, and I think that's a blessing. I think when parishes livestream Masses, Stations of the Crosses, classes, other things, meeting and stuff are all really great to see the faithfulness of people being expressed and coming up with stuff that isn't a preference to do, but it's the best we can do for now. That is a sign of faith.

One of the things we've been doing this week is with our parish staff and some of our parishioners- we're making personal calls to every person in the parish. We're going through the parish registry and that is an opportunity, it's a blessing to be able to say that we've reached out to all of our parishioners, to check in with them, ask if they're okay, how they're doing, if there's anything we can do to help them. We are discovering that not everybody is online, not everybody is technology savvy, and some people are feeling more removed and we need to reach out. It's good for us to know and to be able to help out with.

Given our Church, there's always a number of people who are going to

want to be able to do something, and that's a challenge, too. Right now, there's not much we can do, it's hard and we don't have a remedy to do that, but it's great to see the creativity coming out. In every parish, there's parishioners who are naturally leaders, directed toward action, toward service, a challenge of having to do that more remotely, and looking for ways we can do that.

We have electronic versions of the bulletin, we post it on the website, and you know, something we're finding is how different generations use technology. There's no one universal platform- even for some people, for old and young adults, some use email and some don't. Everybody's really spread out right now and things like this matter more now. We try to reach out to all platforms: Facebook, email, website, MyParish app or whatever we can use. That's why we started making phone calls: we don't want to miss anyone. Sometimes, people are unaware of the ways people can look things up. We want to let them know that we're praying for them and we're concerned about their well-being.



HOLY FAMILY CATHEDRAL IS THE OLDEST CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE ARCHDIOCESE..

St. Joseph Parish, Cordova

AS TOLD BY FR. MICHAEL KIM

I know that the church is not a building. I know Sunday is just a part of church life, but the last few weeks felt like a condensed symbol of loss. It hurt to know that our people would feel the loss, too. I missed standing in the narthex before Mass. I missed my parishioners coming forward for prayer and confession. I missed singing together, shaking hands, hugging, raising their voices, and receiving Communion.

To overcome these difficult and suffering times, I am hosting Facebook Live to encourage people to make spiritual communions from home. For those who are not familiar with online platform, I am mailing some letters to notify them of the guideline and precautions from the Archdiocese of Anchorage.

In addition to our online service for Sunday Mass, we are hosting Bible reflections, Rosary prayer, Stations of the Cross, and Eucharistic Adoration. By hosting online services through Facebook Live, we were able to reach people locally and globally, and it provided a sense of community. St. Joseph's parishioners have a special affection and love for their local parish as the presence of the church in their community, and that's a beautiful thing.

I am trying to figure out how we can continue to serve our community and make people feel not isolated and alone. The first time I celebrated Sunday Mass without people on March 15th, I decided to pray Novena and began praying Rosary via Facebook Live.

Every evening, 5:30pm, I prayed the Rosary with my parishioners, some Catholics from California, and my friends from Korea, Japan, Mexico, and Italy. During nine days, I realized that we are all closely connected with each other and deeply united with our God. The Church is being changed by the coronavirus pandemic. But, I sense a new spirit of fraternity emerging from our collective suffering during this hard time.

I hope this time of crisis brings out new and better ways of taking care of each other, praying for neighbors and doing stewardship and charity for those in need. In these difficult and suffering times we follow the ongoing stay-at-home order to slow the spread of the coronavirus. We do this, not out of fear, but out of love for our neighbors. We are not a people of fear because we know Christ is always with us, even in these moments of challenge. We will hold onto each other in thoughts and prayers because of our love for each other.



FR. MICHAEL PREPARES FOR MASS IN AN EMPTY CHURCH

AS TOLD BY DEBBIE COLLINS

"Father Michael is doing a great job with video Mass. He offered a novena for everyone's safety, stations of the cross and Adoration. The faith formation teachers have not put anything in place at this time, however most work in the school as support staff and teachers, so are in contact with the students on a daily basis."



DID YOU KNOW?

Of the 33 parishes across the Archdiocese of Anchorage, 18 of them share a priest with at least one other parish or mission.

Both St. Mary Parish and St. Joseph Parish have one priest serving their community all year. Many other rural communities have a "traveling priest" that serves several parishes at once.

St. Michael Parish, Palmer

**AS TOLD BY
FR. MICHAEL SHIELDS**

The challenge is how to meet the people and get the Gospel, the healing, and the Word of God to our people. We don't have Wifi in the church, so we bought a phone and have been working with that. Now, three times a day, we have Mass in the morning, livestreamed, we have a rosary livestream and we have the Chaplet of Mercy livestreamed. We have anywhere from 20-100 people on each of those, and it's truly incredible. We had a benediction, with a thousand people joining us online. So it's amazing to see how some of the elderly are connecting in this way. Now they're there at Mass time. So that's a challenge and a victory.

A lot of the elderly are really homebound because of the challenges to their health, this is really giving them what they need, that support and sense of attending Mass. We've worked on the sound system so they're able to pick it up. One woman had a problem hearing with her hearing aids, so we adjusted our microphones and she's delighted because now she can hear everything. That's the main thing we're doing- making sure people have the Word of God preached to them in their home.

We also have something called "Fr. Mike's Spiritual Conversations," and we're doing the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. It's a 20-30 minute presentation to help people

reflect and use as material in their own homes. We're going to do a teaching on the Triduum so people can understand what the Triduum is, and how we celebrate it.

The challenges, again, are the technological challenges for us. For me, I was a little slow in picking it up, but now I can see how important all this is, and the communication is so cool because we have a parish email that goes out to everyone- we have emails for maybe half our parishioners- and they can share it with other people. So the challenge is getting the word out, but we have a system in place, our website is being viewed all the time and the information is all available online. The technology stuff I always downplayed is really key right now. It's incredible what can be done with it. We're planning to do a livestream faith formation on Sunday morning, getting people to dive in. We can have anywhere from 100-200 people tied in on our livestream account, so that we can do our Faith Formation on Sunday morning. We have family faith formation.

One of the cool things is that our people are very creative and calling in creative venues. We have a movement that people are making altars in their homes now, a Holy Week altar, with statues and the Bible and something that looks like palms. We've sent out coloring pages for children to color their own palms on Palm Sunday. That's a suggestion one parishioner had, and people really loved that.

People are listening, and if we're going to be doing this for a while, we're going to start a Wednesday

night teaching and that will be from 40 minutes to an hour, in addition to our Sunday morning Faith Formation. We have anywhere from 60-90 adults in our regular Sunday Faith Formation, so those people are at home with their families and need support that way. So we'll celebrate Mass, pray some Lectio Divina, and then enjoy each other's company and see each other's faces.

Another suggestion we had was a phone tree, so we have everybody called at least once every couple weeks. There are 15 volunteers and they're connecting with members of the parish, just making sure people are okay. A parishioner said, "I'll take it on, I'll organize it," and so that's really cool. We're now doing youth groups via livestream, apologetics, actually, really fun, and young adults are also meeting on a regular basis through livestream, but that's pretty normal for people of those ages, it's not so normal for my age. It's kind of cool to see how this really does work.

We use phone calls to schedule confession, that can happen 8 hours a day, we have a lot of confessions scheduled out so people can come and go, it's all by the rules but it's incredible to see how this has touched their hearts and lives. They're taking this deep into their spiritual faith, building faith, and reflecting on their faith. That's one of the gifts that I really see in this, I see people taking this deep in their lives. We are so thankful for what we have in communicating with the parishes, so they have connection with the community and aren't feeling isolated.

We have more people going to daily Mass now than we would have on a normal day! We have 25-30 attending daily Mass in the morning and by the end of the day, there's 100 views. That's pretty impressive. I've decided that every daily Mass will have a Sunday-sized homily, anywhere from 5-10 minute homily, focusing on building faith: how we can build our faith now, what the Gospel is talking about? I'm focusing on my side, to make sure that they have something they can take with them.

Our staff is all working from home, but we have people contributing online, which is lovely, I really appreciate that, dropping by checks and giving online. We certainly don't have the funds we would

normally have on a Sunday, but people are picking up and realizing that the parish does need those contributions to continue, we do, so I think that's something that a parish like St. Michael's really understands, there's a maturity there that they will likely bring in a bit of backpay when we gather again.

We can't do the visitations we'd like to do, that's a pain. I'd like to go to people's homes, it's something I really like to do, but that's not possible right now. Every priest would say that's the heartbreak of this whole thing. As priests, we love to see our people, and we love to see them face to face, we love to be with them. Most people think they understand, but as a priest, it's hard because this is exactly the opposite

of what we've been ordained to do. This is anti-priesthood, and it's such a heartbreak not to be out there with people, to say you can't gather in the church because it's closed down. It goes against everything you learned when you were formed as a priest. It's a real discipline, and it's under obedience to the Bishop that we don't gather, but it's a real discipline to move that direction because it's counter-intuitive for us.

I was walking into the store the other day, and I saw a parishioner, and I yelled out, "A parishioner! A parishioner!" Everybody looked at me kind of strangely, but I was so relieved to see a member of my flock. We're really blessed to have another priest and deacon in our community, it's much more difficult for the priests who are alone in their community. You don't have the same community to bounce ideas off of.

Another cool thing is that there are people who are wanting to join the Church in all this. There's one young woman who just moved up from Philadelphia and she's not joining yet because of the isolation, but she's really excited because she's coming into a church that, even though it's closed down, is active. She immediately got into contact via phone with our Youth Minister, and our Youth Minister got her in contact with the Youth Group, so they're welcoming her, even though she's new to the community, even though she's not baptized, someday she'll be brought into the church, but she's already a member of our community.

How to Read Scripture, "Lectio Divina" Style

LECTIO.

First, invite the Holy Spirit to be present with you during your reading. Then read your selected passage, and listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. It could be something that catches your attention, or a part that surprises or confuses you.

MEDITATIO.

Read the same reading again, listening to the whole reading in context. Ask God what he's trying

to say to you. How is this reading challenging you, consoling you, or teaching you something new?

ORATIO.

Read the same passage a third time, and respond to God. in light of your reflection so far, What do you want to say to him? What will you change in your life in response to your time spent dwelling in God's word?

CONTEMPLATIO.

Read the passage one final time. Take a moment of silence and thank God for the time you've spent with him. Don't jump up immediately and rush off to the next part of your day: take one more minute to rest in his presence.

St. Francis Xavier Parish, Valdez

**AS TOLD BY
FR. ERIC WISEMAN**

One of the obvious challenges is not being able to celebrate Mass with the good people of St. Francis Xavier. It is especially hard for parishioners (and their priest!) during Holy Week. There is some comfort in the available live-streamed Masses; however, they will never fulfill the need for true person-to-person contact.

We have used livestream technology successfully for Wednesday evening meetings, reflection and prayer--the nice part about this tool is that people who don't have internet can call in and at least hear the voices of their parish family. We will pray the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday in this way, too. It doesn't substitute for the ecumenical stations we had last year with our Lutheran/Episcopalian neighbors, but it will suffice. We pray that we can return to "normal" for next year's Holy Week.

One of the bright blessings in this dark period is contact by telephone.

Meeting with each other provides an avenue of light as we joyfully talk with each other. Another bright blessing is calling those persons I used to visit in their homes. Just saying the Prayer of Spiritual Communion together lifts my spirits.

St. Andrew Parish, Eagle River

AS TOLD BY MARGARET HOLTZ

"The inability to be physically close to one another is challenging in ministry that is primarily based on face to face human contact. We're also challenged by the inability to have mass and offer the sacraments in the usual format, and not being able to comfort those who are living alone, so we're calling all parishioners and touching base on the phone.

Our Pastoral team learning and utilizing technology during this time including, website, Facebook, Instagram, MyParish App, Vimeo, YouTube. We're using video conferencing software for staff meetings, small group meetings & continuing Bible Studies at a distance. We've also done online streaming of Mass and Stations

of the Cross, and are using video for evangelization and continued outreach and ministry.

We have been blessed by increased participation on our parish Facebook page, Instagram account, website and MyParish App. People are watching our Facebook Live mass locally and in different parts of the country. We have been connecting with former parishioners via Facebook, which allows former parishioner's who have moved away to participate in the Mass with St. Andrew. We have also seen an increase in online giving donors.

We invited families to send photos of their Domestic Church and share it with the community on Facebook. A parishioner made 14 wood crosses, attached the picture and number of each station and placed them outside the church six feet apart so people can participate in Stations during quarantine.

We have made personal connections over the phone with people we may have never talked to before, and praying with these people as well has been very fruitful. We are learning and utilizing of new forms of communication and outreach, proclaiming the Love of Christ and the message of hope to our community in a time of pain."

How to Get Connected

Here are a few ways to stay in the loop with the latest news & updates:

- **Follow along online.** Search for the "Archdiocese of Anchorage" on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, or email Anna Schulten to be added to a special email list: aschulten@caa-ak.org
- **Connect to your parish.** Make sure you know how your parish communicates: via website, bulletin, MyParish app, phone tree, or other means. If you're not sure, ask!
- **Offer to help.** Contact your parish to learn about volunteer opportunities.

Holy Cross Parish, Anchorage

**AS TOLD BY
FR. DAN HEBERT**

I really believe God is working in this terrible virus. I have been discovering as a priest that God is basically saying to us that we're "human beings" and not "human doers." Even though we're separated, I'm finding that we're coming together: people are talking that normally don't talk.

When I go to the grocery store- which is not too often- I notice that people are moving slower. Another example, I had to go to the bank and it took me an hour and a half to get through the line, there was like 30-40 cars ahead of me. I got through, but there was this one car that had to pass me sitting still, and another parked car, and the guy turned and waved, and the way he smiled was like, "we're all in this together," there was no anger there.

We're keeping our webpage up to date and letting people know how they can celebrate Holy Week. One thing that I found so strange and hard is that we had to put a sign on the door: this church building is closed. Unbelievable. It seems like a war. It's very challenging, but we're being very blessed. I keep praying to myself, "God, what do you want me to do more?" And he answers that. He really does. It's challenging that in over 40 years of priesthood, I've never in my life ministered like this before.

I don't like this any more than anybody else, I'm a priest who lives alone, and I'm an extrovert. This reminds me of 9/11. That hit us really hard, I experienced that as a priest and it was awful. I've been back there since, to Ground Zero, but this is lasting longer. It's worldwide and it's bringing people together, it's bringing our church together. We're zeroing in on what's important.

As a spiritual director, I do a lot of spiritual direction over the phone. I'm sitting on the phone over here, it's all I've been doing. The next time you see me, my left ear is going to look like cauliflower. Somebody told me I should get one of those headphones setups and I said, well, when I'm on my cell it's a different story because I can put it on speaker, and that helps.

As a priest, I've been hearing many confessions. People sit in their cars for it: they call and make appointments, and then they come to the parking lot and call me, I come out- six feet apart- and they roll the window down just a little bit and I have them park on the side of the church so I can hear them a little better against the road traffic. One person thought they couldn't go to confession because they'd been in contact with a person who was positive with the virus. They thought, "I can't go to confession," but I said, "Yes, you can." So the person came in their car, and there was so much joy that when the person left, it was like the wheels of the car weren't even touching the parking lot. There was a really beautiful joy here.

We've been livestreaming, video taping, and putting the Masses on our website. We've done a couple holy hours, taped with music and everything. A week ago, the taping stopped because of my limitation, I haven't been able to video tape by myself anymore. But we're still calling people in the parish, just calling and letting them know that Holy Cross Parish is here for you. I've been calling the shut-ins and the sick, that's been the big project for me.

Theresa Austin has been dealing with the youth, while I've been dealing with the heads of ministry and what they're doing. What they're doing is calling the people on their list- the person who's the head of readers has been calling all the readers throughout the parish, he's been working with them. Theresa has gone above and beyond the call of duty in what she's done. With her expertise and giftedness with videotaping, sound, the computers... that's not my gift, I don't have that, and she's so right on the ball. It comes naturally to her, and she's really helped me a lot, so I need to praise her for that. She deserves the kudos.

I really believe this is God's way of saying, "I'm with you." A couple people called me prior to Palm Sunday and said they were sad because there were no palms, no candles, no oil during Holy Week, no washing feet, no choir... can't have all that. And I said, you know what, maybe what God is saying is that all that is not really important. What's important is Me.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Soldotna

**AS TOLD BY
FR. PATRICK BROSAMER**

“My biggest challenge has been being away from my community. It just occurred to me a few days ago that it has been over a month since I have had any kind of physical contact with another person. That is a first! More importantly, though, I just miss everyone.

It’s been a great challenge and a

blessing to many families as they have learned to share the sacrifices of being cooped up together at home. I have a huge rectory to myself, but I can’t share it with anyone due to stay at home and social distancing regs. But many of my parishioners have expressed to me how much this has been a reminder of the importance of spending time together, even when families do drive each other stark, raving bonkers.

I have been livestreaming my Masses each day, and learning how to do that was a huge pain. I had to say Mass four times back-to-back Saturday evening the third weekend of Lent because each

time the camera wasn’t working right. The first two times I couldn’t get the camera I borrowed to stay filming for more than a few minutes, and the third time I was using my iPhone to record myself at the altar, but I had the phone set to ‘Photo’ instead of ‘Video’. Grrrr! By the fourth time I was pious on the outside but seething with anger and frustration on the inside. But people have expressed how much they appreciate it, and most of my congregation tunes in on Sunday. So it keeps the community going during physical separation.

When we get back together again (hopefully after a few weeks) we’re going to have a rager of a party!”



Celebrating Joy in Times of Uncertainty

Through these times of uncertainty, it can be difficult to find joy amidst so much loneliness, isolation, and fear. But as Pope Francis reminds us, we are all called to joy. “The Joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.” -Pope Francis

“HAPPINESS” VS. “JOY”

While Christians are not called to a false “positivity” about everything, we are called to share the reason

for our hope. This sharing often has less to do with the words we speak and more about the lives we live. “To evangelize is to make the kingdom of God present in our world, Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God’s presence.” -Pope Francis

TRANSFORM YOUR HEART

While we find ourselves with a little extra time on our hands, let’s turn our hearts to the Lord, and seek a deeper relationship with him. Jesus, how are you calling me to serve you? “Do not be afraid to aim for holiness and turn yourselves

over to the love of God. Holiness does not mean performing extraordinary things but carrying out daily things in an extraordinary way - that is, with love, joy, and faith.” -Pope Francis

SHARING JOY EVERY DAY

Part of being a Catholic is being willing to encounter Christ in the most mundane of human experiences: our everyday interactions with our family, and our everyday chores and responsibilities. “Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place.” -Pope Francis

Holy Rosary Parish, Dillingham

**AS TOLD BY
FR. SCOTT GARRETT**

The cost of gigabytes in the bush is expensive, and the internet connection is flaky, so that's been a challenge. Another issue is copyright music that can't be live-streamed during livestream Mass. I contacted OCP and discovered that we can live stream their music for free until April 15. The communication from the bishop has been very good and the archdiocese has been very supportive.

I have been able to connect with more people from the Alaskan bush and lower 48 by live-streaming the Mass, I have been able to have a more personal relationship with parishioners by calling them on the telephone, which I normally don't do as often. For me, it's not as nerve-racking to say Mass into a camera as it is to a congregation, I normally get a little sick before every Mass, but I have not during the live stream.

I consider it a blessing that several Catholics who don't normally attend Mass watched the live stream. Through the livestreaming and comments that I received on the livestream, I discovered a few new Catholics that I never even knew existed, who live in this area.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fr. Scott Garrett, priest and pilot, serves one of the largest regions in Alaska. His home base is at Holy Rosary Parish in Dillingham, Alaska, but he also serves St. Peter the Fisherman Mission in Clarks Point, St. Theresa's Mission in Naknek, and is the canonical pastor at St. Christopher by the Sea in Unalaska. He also periodically visits 24 other villages in the region.

You can watch videos from Fr. Scott and learn more about the cluster of parishes, called the "Saint Paul Mission," online at holyroaryalaska.org.

Our Lady of the Angels Parish, Kenai

AS TOLD BY FR. MICHAEL KO

Before I moved to the United States in 2016, I worked in Mendi Diocese, Papua New Guinea, for six years, where there's no power, no tap water, and no internet at all. That's when I gave up all the internet stuff and became a dinosaur in that category. What I did with the internet since I moved to the United States is mostly emailing, googling, ordering stuff. So, clicking and typing emails were all that I did.

I didn't even have an account on YouTube and Facebook before

COVID 19. I just visited and watched YouTube once in a while. But I have to learn how to do live-stream Mass since COVID 19 situation. I had to figure it out myself.

It took more than a week, but most of the time, I spent hours and hours and failed in the end. If I succeed, it was just a small thing, and I did it even with mistakes. I was that ignorant about the internet. It was so frustrating. But every time, the solution and right directions came from my parishioners. They were blessing to me. With their help, I could do live streaming on Facebook and uploaded it on YouTube all right.

The challenges that I face are the same as other priests do today. I

work alone now in the office and the Church. I cannot celebrate Mass with parishioners. Only Private Mass, Eucharist, and lack of face to face communication. But I've been doing live streaming, Mass, daily Rosary, Adoration and stations of the Cross on Facebook and upload saved files on our YouTube Channel later. Also, I'm calling parishioners regularly to check how they are doing.

I have some volunteers who take part in serving the parishioners in education planning, prayers, doing our homepage, and Facebook. Our priorities are prayers, education (via Faith Formation), and phone call ministry.

The Facebook Conundrum: Overcoming Technical Difficulties

Are you having trouble staying connected online? Here are a few tips to overcoming technical difficulties:



“I don’t have a Facebook account.”

- **Use the “Not Now” button** on public Facebook pages. When you visit a Facebook page, you will see a pop-up, asking you to sign in. But! If your parish’s Facebook page is a public page, there will be a “Not Now” button in little letters underneath the username/password boxes.
- **Watch Mass online instead.** Some parishes use YouTube, or browse a national online Mass site, such as WatchTheMass.com
- **Visit your parish website** for other options, resources, and happenings. If you’re not sure if your parish has a website, you can find out here: archdioceseofanchorage.org/parishes



“I don’t have the Internet.”

Here are a few ideas for connection that involve zero digital tools:

- **Watch Mass on TV.** This works if you have access to EWTN on television. As of this time, we are unable to provide livestream Mass via our local television stations, due to health concerns for the TV crew.
- **Listen in.** If you’re in the Anchorage area, you can listen to daily Catholic programming live on our Catholic radio station, KHRM, 94.1 FM.
- **Make a phone call** (or join a phone call ministry). Find ways to reach out! If you’re an introvert, try writing a letter or card to a friend.



“How can I help my fellow parishioners?”

Here are a few ideas for connection that involve zero digital tools:

- **Mail a paper bulletin.** Send a paper copy to those without the internet. Even better, ask your parish when the bulletin is usually complete and get it in the mail BEFORE Sunday happens!
- **Make a supply run.** Make sure those that can’t get out have the support and supplies they need: food, medicine, toilet paper, etc.
- **Be a listening ear.** Join your parish’s phone tree ministry, or offer to help coordinate and begin a new one.

“Where can I learn more?”

Call your local parish for more information, or visit archdioceseofanchorage.org/coronavirus.