

The Catholic

# WITNESS

The Newspaper of the Diocese of Harrisburg

March 27, 2020

Vol. 55 No. 7

*My 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.*

## Spiritual Communion



For those who are unable to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in Holy Communion, making a conscious desire that Jesus come spiritually into your soul is called a spiritual communion. Spiritual Communion can be made through an act of faith and love throughout one's day and it is highly commended to us by the Church. According to the Catechism of the Council of Trent, the faithful who "receive the Eucharist in spirit" are "those who, inflamed with a lively faith that works in charity, partake in wish and desire of the celestial Bread offered to them, receive from it, if not the entire, at least very great

benefits." (cf. Fr. John Hardon, SJ, *Modern Catholic Dictionary*)

### How do I make an act of Spiritual Communion?

Like the acts of contrition, faith, hope, or love, there are traditional prayers already composed. However, sometimes we do not have the prayer memorized. In those cases, using your own words to make a profession of faith in the True Presence of Jesus Christ, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, in the Most Blessed Sacrament while expressing your desire in receiving Him is sufficient.

### Can you recommend a traditional act of Spiritual Communion?

This act was composed by Saint Alphonsus de Liguori:

My 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.

### Where can I read more about this?

Here is a good article. It even shows that many saints made Spiritual Communion.

<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/armstrong/if-you-cant-receive-communion-make-a-spiritual-communion>

## Comunión Espiritual

Para aquellos que no pueden recibir el Cuerpo y la Sangre de Jesús en la Sagrada Comunión, hacer un deseo consciente de que Jesús entre espiritualmente en su alma se llama comunión espiritual. La Comunión Espiritual se puede hacer a través de un acto de fe y amor a lo largo del día y es muy recomendada por la Iglesia. Según el Catecismo del Concilio de Trento, los fieles que "reciben la Eucaristía en espíritu" son "aquellos que, inflamados con una fe viva que trabaja en la caridad, participan en el deseo del Pan celestial que se les ofrece, reciben de este, si no la totalidad, al menos grandes beneficios." (cf. Fr. John Hardon, SJ, *Modern Catholic Dictionary*)



CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

### ¿Cómo hago un acto de Comunión Espiritual?

Al igual que los actos de contrición, fe, esperanza o amor, hay oraciones tradicionales ya compuestas. Sin embargo, a veces no tenemos la oración memorizada. En esos casos, usar sus propias palabras para hacer una profesión de fe en la Verdadera Presencia de Jesucristo, Cuerpo y Sangre, Alma y Divinidad, en el Santísimo Sacramento mientras expresa su deseo de recibirlo es suficiente.

### ¿Puede recomendar un acto tradicional de Comunión Espiritual?

Este acto fue compuesto por San Alfonso de Liguorio.

Creo, Jesús mío,  
que estás real  
y verdaderamente en el cielo  
y en el Santísimo Sacramento del Altar.  
Os amo sobre todas las cosas  
y deseo vivamente recibirte  
dentro de mi alma,  
pero no pudiendo hacerlo  
ahora sacramentalmente,  
venid al menos  
espiritualmente a mi corazón.  
Y como si ya os hubiese recibido, os abrazo y me uno del todo a Ti.  
Señor, no permitas que jamás me aparte de Ti. Amén.

### ¿Dónde puedo leer mas sobre esto?

A continuación encontrará dos enlaces sobre Comunión Espiritual: Comunión Espiritual en Tiempos de COVID-19

<https://www.vaticannews.va/es/iglesia/news/2020-03/comunion-espiritual-tiempos-covid19.html>

If You Can't Receive Communion, Make a Spiritual Communion  
<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/armstrong/if-you-cant-receive-communion-make-a-spiritual-communion>

## The Catholic WITNESS

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## Keeping the Lord's Day Holy: Sunday Prayer at Home

### Introductory Rites

*A hymn may be sung. Then, making the Sign of the Cross, the family begins:*

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: We gather today to celebrate the Lord's Day. We are unable to be with our parish family. However, one with our brothers and sisters at [Name of Parish], and with the entire Church, let us now listen to God's Word and join in prayer.

### Penitential Act

Leader: Coming together as God's family, with confidence let us acclaim the Father's forgiveness, for God is full of gentleness and compassion.

Lord Jesus, you heal the sick.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you forgive sinners. Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you feed us with your Body and Blood. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

### Opening Prayer

*The opening prayer may be taken from Magnificat (or another resource) for the Sunday, or it may be taken from below.*

Leader: Let us pray.  
O God, who willed that our infirmities be borne by your Only Begotten Son to show the value of human suffering, listen in kindness to our prayers for our brothers and sisters who are sick; grant that all who are oppressed by pain, distress or other afflictions may know that they are chosen among those proclaimed blessed and are united to Christ in his suffering for the salvation of the world. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Liturgy of the Word

*The readings should be taken from the Mass for the Day. This can be found on USCCB.org or in Magnificat, or another resource. Families may divide up the readings among those participating.*

#### First Reading

#### Responsorial Psalm

#### Second Reading

#### Gospel

#### Shared Faith Reflections

*Families should spend some time discussing and reflecting on the meaning of the readings and help each other to see God's message for them at this time. Everyone could share something that was meaningful or especially important.*

#### The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

*At the words that follow, up to and including the Virgin Mary, all bow.*  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting. Amen.

### Intercessions

*Inspired by the readings and the needs of the family, the Church, and the world, members propose special intentions and invite everyone to say, "Lord, hear our prayer."*

### The Lord's Prayer

*The Lord's Prayer is recited by all.*

### Act of Spiritual Communion

*Explaining that Jesus will come to anyone who invites Him, the family then recites together the Act of Spiritual Communion followed by a period of quiet prayer.*

My 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.

### Thanksgiving

*After a period of silence, the following Psalm is recited together.*

#### Psalm 116

I trusted, even when I said:  
"I am sorely afflicted,"  
and when I said in my alarm:  
"No man can be trusted."

How can I repay the Lord  
for his goodness to me?  
The cup of salvation I will raise;  
I will call on the Lord's name.

My vows to the Lord I will fulfill  
before all his people.  
O precious in the eyes of the Lord  
is the death of his faithful.

Your servant, Lord, your servant am I;  
you have loosened my bonds.  
A thanksgiving sacrifice I make;  
I will call on the Lord's name.

My vows to the Lord I will fulfill  
before all his people,  
in the courts of the house of the Lord,  
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

### Blessing

*Making the Sign of the Cross, we say together:*

May the Lord bless us, protect us from evil, and bring us into everlasting life. Amen.

*A concluding hymn may be sung.*

## Santificando el Día del Señor: Domingo de Oración en Casa

### Ritos Iniciales

*Se puede cantar un himno. Luego, haciendo la Señal de la Cruz, la familia comienza:*

Líder: En el nombre del Padre, y del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo.

Todos: Amén.

Líder: Nos reunimos hoy para celebrar el Día del Señor. No podemos estar con nuestra familia parroquial. Sin embargo, unidos con nuestros hermanos y hermanas de [Nombre de la Parroquia], y con toda la Iglesia, escuchemos ahora la Palabra de Dios y unámonos en oración.

### Acto Penitencial

Líder: Al unirnos como la familia de Dios, con confianza, aclamemos el perdón del Padre, porque Dios está lleno de gentileza y compasión. Señor Jesús, sanas a los enfermos. Señor ten piedad. Señor ten piedad. Señor Jesús, perdona a los pecadores. Cristo ten piedad. Cristo ten piedad. Señor Jesús, nos alimentas con tu Cuerpo y Sangre. Señor ten piedad. Señor ten piedad.

### Oración de Apertura

*La oración de apertura se puede tomar del Magnificat (o algún otro recurso) para el domingo, o puede usar esta oración.*

Líder: Oremos.  
Oh Dios, que quisiste que nuestras enfermedades fueran soportadas por tu Hijo Unigénito para mostrar el valor del sufrimiento humano, escucha con amabilidad nuestras oraciones por nuestros hermanos y hermanas enfermos; concede que todos los oprimidos por el dolor, la angustia u otras aflicciones sepan que son elegidos entre los proclamados bendecidos y que están unidos a Cristo en su sufrimiento por la salvación del mundo. A través de nuestro Señor Jesucristo, tu Hijo, que vive y reina contigo en la unidad del Espíritu Santo, un solo Dios, por los siglos de los siglos. Amén

### Liturgia de la Palabra

*Las lecturas deben tomarse de la Misa del Día. Esto puede encontrarse en USCCB.org o en el Magnificat, u otro recurso. Las familias pueden dividir las lecturas entre los participantes.*

#### Primera Lectura

#### Salmo Responsorial

#### Segunda Lectura

#### Evangelio

#### Reflexiones de Fe Compartidas

*Las familias deben pasar un tiempo discutiendo y reflexionando sobre el significado de las lecturas y ayudarse mutuamente para ver el mensaje de Dios para ellos en este momento. Todos pueden compartir algo que fuera significativo o especialmente importante.*

#### Profesión de Fe

Creo en Dios  
Padre Todopoderoso,  
Creador del cielo y de la tierra;  
y en Jesucristo, su único Hijo, Señor nuestro;

*Ante las palabras que siguen, hasta*

*la Virgen María incluida, todos se inclinan.*

que fue concebido del Espíritu Santo,  
nació de la virgen María,  
padeció bajo el poder de Poncio Pilatos;  
fue crucificado, muerto y sepultado;  
descendió a los infiernos;  
al tercer día resucitó de entre los muertos;  
subió al cielo,  
y está sentado a la diestra de Dios Padre Todopoderoso;  
y desde allí vendrá al fin del mundo a juzgar a los vivos y a los muertos.  
Creo en el Espíritu Santo,  
la Santa Iglesia Universal,  
la comunión de los santos,  
el perdón de los pecados,  
la resurrección de la carne  
y la vida perdurable. Amén.

### Intercesiones

*Inspirados por las lecturas y las necesidades de la familia, la Iglesia, y el mundo, miembros presentan intenciones especiales e invitan a todos a responder "Señor, escúchanos."*

### Padre Nuestro

*El Padre Nuestro es recitado por todos.*

### Acto de Comunión Espiritual

*Al explicar que Jesús vendrá a cualquiera que lo invite, la familia recita el Acto de Comunión Espiritual juntos seguido de un período de oración silenciosa.*

Creo, Jesús mío,  
que estás real  
y verdaderamente en el cielo  
y en el Santísimo Sacramento del Altar.  
Os amo sobre todas las cosas  
y deseo vivamente recibirte  
dentro de mi alma,  
pero no pudiendo hacerlo  
ahora sacramentalmente,  
venid al menos  
espiritualmente a mi corazón.  
Y como si ya os hubiese recibido, os abrazo y me uno del todo a Ti.  
Señor, no permitas que jamás me aparte de Ti. Amén.

### Acción de Gracias

*Después de un período de silencio, el siguiente salmo se recita juntos.*

#### Salmo 116

Yo creía, aun cuando decía:  
"Estoy muy afligido."  
Dije alarmado:  
"Todo hombre es mentiroso."

¿Qué daré al Señor  
por todos Sus beneficios para conmigo?  
Alzaré la copa de la salvación,  
e invocaré el nombre del Señor.

Cumpliré mis votos al Señor,  
Sí, en presencia de todo Su pueblo.  
Estimada a los ojos del Señor  
Es la muerte de Sus santos.

Ciertamente yo soy Tu siervo, Siervo Tuyo soy, hijo de Tu sierva;  
Tú desataste mis ataduras.  
Te ofreceré sacrificio de acción de gracias,  
e invocaré el nombre del Señor.

Al Señor cumpliré mis votos, Sí,  
en presencia de todo Su pueblo,  
En los atrios de la casa del Señor,  
En medio de ti, oh Jerusalén.

### Bendición

*Haciendo la Señal de la Cruz, decimos juntos:*

Que el Señor nos bendiga, nos proteja del mal y nos lleve a la vida eterna. Amén.

*Se puede cantar un himno de conclusion.*

# Strength in Times of Suffering

By Sister Geralyn Schmidt, SCC  
*Special to The Witness*

As I look at the blinking cursor on my laptop, sitting at a desk in the convent since the Diocesan offices are closed and all of the IT staff are working from home, I ponder, "What should I say to you all about the circumstances in which we find ourselves? What spark of hope should I share? What would my 'mother's heart' want to say to you all?"

The environment in which I currently find myself is quite different than my office at the Diocesan Center. I now have windows and am surrounded by plants. From the open windows, I can hear birds chirping, the din of distant traffic, and even the patter of rain. I challenge you to look out your windows and actually see the beauty of nature that is beginning to awaken all around us. The daffodils are out in full bloom! Forsythia, jonquils and many of the flowering trees are beginning to display their spring beauty. Birds are beginning to pair off. Life and beauty are all around us.

We can find this beauty echoed in the many ways that the Church, through the actions of the priests and bishops, is caring for her children. Bishops, in order to protect their priests and the lay faithful, have made a very hard decision to stop pub-

lic Masses. Even so, the priests are still saying Mass for us! Many parishes are either podcasting or doing live video through YouTube of their daily Mass. The clergy are preparing daily homilies to spiritually feed their parishioners. One priest I read about on Facebook actually printed out his parish directory and Scotch taped the pictures of his parishioners onto the pews where they normally sit. He looks out during Mass and sees his parish! Another priest, though social media, announced to his parishioners that he would be sitting in his car and they could drive up to the driver's side of the car for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Another priest is determined, whenever he is called into the hospital or nursing home for Viaticum, to fill a pyx with the Blessed Sacrament and distribute to anyone who presents themselves as Catholic. Another priest that I follow on YouTube is newly ordained. He posted a video voicing his personal pain in being newly ordained and a campus minister to a college that is closed until the end of the school year. If you want to check that out see the link below.<sup>1</sup>

Quite honestly, every time I attend Mass (the Sisters attend it privately) since the closing of the churches, tears stream down my face. "Who am I that my Lord should come to me? Who am I that I can receive the Eucharist while so many of my Beloved's sons and daughters can't?" At every Communion I've received since March 16, I can actually feel your hunger for this source and summit of our faith. Tears actually have flowed down my face. I pray for

each of you as a spiritual mother!

Every one of us is suffering in ways that we never imagined when Lent began four weeks ago. In the midst of what we are all facing, I am reminded of the wonderful children's book, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, by Margery Williams. In it, the main character, the Velveteen Rabbit, has a wonderful conversation with the Skin Horse:

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?" "Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real." "Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit. "Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt." "Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?" "It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."<sup>2</sup>

It's strange that suffering is such a large part of the human condi-

tion. But, EVERYTHING can be used by our God to bring about a grace! EVERYTHING! Every trial can deepen our faith, our hope and our love.

**Faith** – Each of us, I believe, is called to ponder these questions: What is God doing in all of this? Does He really love ME? In a way, our personal trust of God's love

is being put to the test. Our response has to be, "I do trust in You, help my un-trust! I do believe in You, help my unbelief!"

**Hope** – Some more questions to consider: What do we really rely upon? A grocery store having an unlimited supply of toilet paper or hand sanitizer? Do we only rely on our own strength or the strength of a Higher Power? If nothing, the circumstance in which we find ourselves should bring us to our knees and give us the ability to proclaim, "Help me to rely on You alone! You should be my all!"

**Love** – As I type this word, I find myself looking up at the crucifix that hangs on the wall. Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to die for us! Love gives of itself. As we experience our personal inconveniences, God's mercy and love for us hasn't changed. Allow the pain of social distance to crack your heart open to love Him more and more; making you more real – the person that God created you to be! Rather than screaming at God, "Why this?" ask Him, "How do you want me to respond?" Allow His whisper to reach your heart. It can be as simple as saying a prayer for one another!

View the Masses on TV, pray the Rosary, fast and consciously sacrifice every annoyance for your spiritual brother or sister. By doing this, the mystical Body of Christ is strengthened.

It's not easy. But it is possible!

<sup>1</sup> [https://youtu.be/\\_rEz8L-OG9k](https://youtu.be/_rEz8L-OG9k)

<sup>2</sup> <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/williams/rabbit/rabbit.html>

(Sister Geralyn Schmidt is the Wide Area Network Coordinator at the Diocese of Harrisburg and the Director of Formation for Wives in the Diaconate Program. An educator for 30 years, she is responsible for Professional Development Programs for every age learner. Through her presentations, she challenges her audiences to be the individual God has called them to be.)



Sister Geralyn Schmidt, SCC  
*"Thoughts from a Catholic Evangelist"*



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Faithful from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in New Holland gather for their parish anniversary Mass last summer.

## Social Media Campaign Highlights

### #CatholicsAtHome

Catholic parishes, schools and parishioners are finding unique and creative ways to stay connected, even though we are apart. Social media has long been a tool for staying connected over great distances and now many are using this form of communication to stay connected with their parish, teachers, coworkers and family members.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is encouraging parishioners, parishes and schools to highlight their activities on social media by using the hashtag, #CatholicsAtHome. A quick search of this hashtag on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook produced a range of posts regarding live streamed Masses, prayers, video messages from clergy, uplifting comments, and posts on how Catholics are continuing to keep their faith in these times of uncertainty.

So how are you keeping Catholic while at home? Share your #CatholicsAtHome moments to your chosen social media platform to help spread hope and faith during these uncertain times.

## Pope Francis' Prayer to Our Lady for Protection

*O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.*

*At the foot of the Cross you participated in Jesus' pain, with steadfast faith.*

*You, Salvation of the Roman People, know what we need.*

*We are certain that you will provide, so that,*

*as you did at Cana of Galilee, joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial.*

*Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform ourselves to the Father's will and to do what Jesus tells us:*

*He who took our sufferings upon Himself, and bore our sorrows to bring us, through the Cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.*

*We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God.*

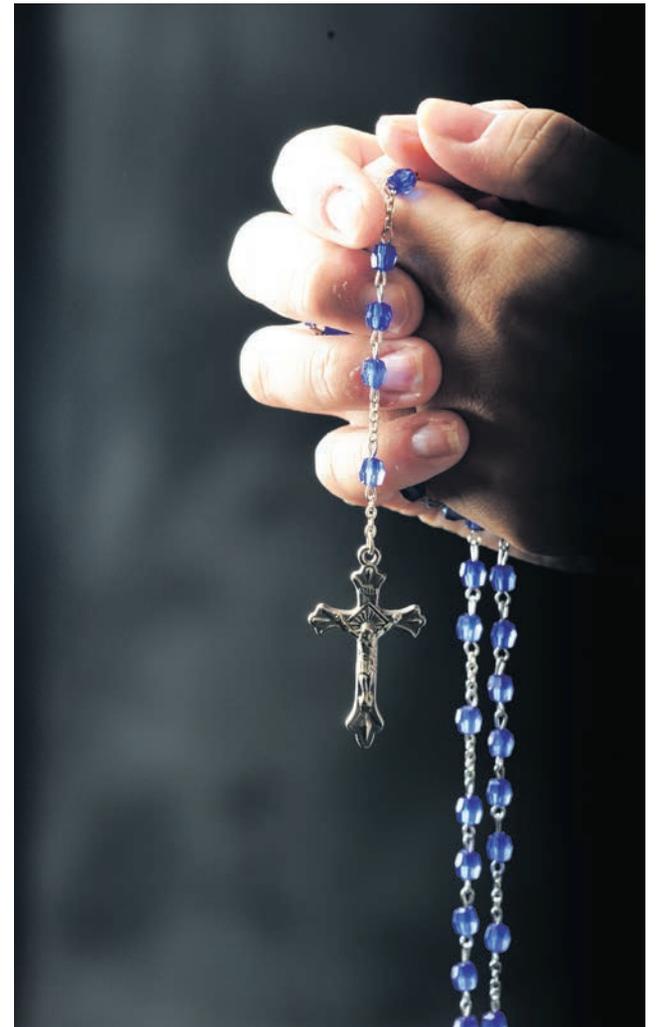
*Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to the test – and deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.*

## Tools for Building a Domestic Church

*From the USCCB*

According to the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: "The family, is so to speak, the domestic church." (*Lumen Gentium* #11) This means that it is in the context of the family that we first learn who God is and to prayerfully seek His will for us. In the following bullet points you will find some suggestions on how to build your "domestic church" through a life of prayer that can help all the members of your family.

- Begin praying as a family and reading from Scripture daily, certainly before meals, but also first thing in the morning or before bed. Find a time that works for your family. Use the liturgy of the Church as a model for prayer, and try to include heartfelt unstructured prayer as well.
- Pray a Family Rosary (each member leads a decade, and everyone shares intentions).
- Have a crucifix in a prominent place in the home, and in every bedroom.
- Join in livestreams of Masses or the Rosary
- Begin family traditions based on the seasons celebrated in the liturgical calendar.
- Make your vacation a holy pilgrimage by virtually visiting the shrines and saints of our land and the world.
- Teach stewardship and charity to your children, through word and example.
- Demonstrate love for your spouse, your children, your neighbors, and the world. Remind children that they are loved by God and have been given gifts to serve others.
- Talk freely about the presence of God in the joys and sorrows of your life.
- Allow your children to witness you in private prayer. Encourage your children to pray



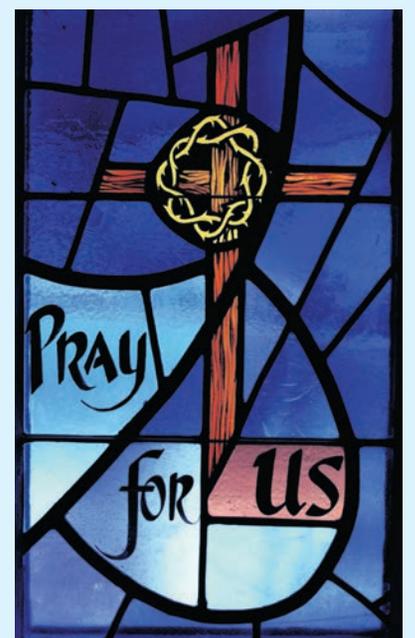
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daily on their own, to listen for God's call, and if heard, to respond.

- For more ideas on how to build your home as a Domestic Church, go to: [www.domestic-church.com](http://www.domestic-church.com) or search "The Family Fully Alive," sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.

## USCCB Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe

*Holy Virgin of Guadalupe,  
Queen of the Angels and Mother of the Americas.  
We fly to you today as your beloved children.  
We ask you to intercede for us with your Son,  
as you did at the wedding in Cana.  
Pray for us, loving Mother,  
and gain for our nation and world,  
and for all our families and loved ones,  
the protection of your holy angels,  
that we may be spared the worst of this illness.  
For those already afflicted,  
we ask you to obtain the grace of healing and deliverance.  
Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful,  
wipe away their tears and help them to trust.  
In this time of trial and testing,  
teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be patient and kind.  
Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and to our hearts.  
We come to you with confidence,  
knowing that you truly are our compassionate mother,  
health of the sick and cause of our joy.  
Shelter us under the mantle of your protection,  
keep us in the embrace of your arms,  
help us always to know the love of your Son, Jesus. Amen.*



CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

# Prayer, Education Occur in Creative Ways as Schools Continue Mission



COURTESY OF ST. ANDREW'S

The smiling faces of Colleen Kassman's first graders from St. Andrew School in Waynesboro fill her Zoom screen as she joins the class for virtual games.

**By Jen Reed**  
*The Catholic Witness*

In Catholic schools, education is more than academics. It's about caring for the whole person: emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually.

In the days since Pennsylvania schools were ordered to close on March 13 from coronavirus concerns, Catholic schools throughout the Diocese have risen to the occasion, discovering and implementing ways to carry on their mission in uncertain and challenging times.

Traditional classrooms have been replaced with Google Classrooms and Zoom Cloud Meetings; daily prayer in school chapels are offered now on Facebook Live or in e-mail links to parents.

For many, digital connectivity is not new, and such plans have been in place with the advent of Flexible Instruction Days. But those practices were intended for short-term needs, and with necessity comes ingenuity.

## Comfort in Culture, Connection

In her fifth-grade social studies class at St. Joan of Arc School in Hershey, Lynne Shapiro tells her students, "Culture is comfort."

Adapting to the challenge of educating during times of social distancing, Shapiro is putting that classroom lesson into practice.

"We are in such unsettling times, and the kids feel it too. They can't go to school, they can't see their friends, they can't do their school activities. Giving them a routine to let them know that we still have some work to do and they can connect with me sends a message that we're still here, and that we're all still connected," she said.

"Kids need to feel secure. Culture is comfort, and school is very much their culture. Our job as teachers is to nurture them and help them to know that someone is always there for them, even if they're at home," she remarked.

Prepared as all Diocesan schools were with educational packets for Flexible Instruction Days, St. Joan of Arc School also equipped students with a week's worth of materials from the start of the shutdown. Since then, teachers having been adding more materials, videos and links through digital platforms so education and connection can continue.

Andy and Joanna Sheehan, parents of four children there, said they "have been very pleased and excited about the opportunities that SJA is making available to our children."

That includes formal instruction as well as the encouragement of continuing routines and practicing acts of kindness in their daily activities, the Sheehans said. "As parents, the fact that the staff at SJA has been accessible, thorough and prompt with communication has allowed us to continue and develop new routines and provide continued instruction."

"This is all new territory for all of us. It is helpful for us to maintain a routine while allowing our children some opportunity to express their individuality with how they complete some optional activities - for example, service-based activities versus strictly traditional class work," they said.



COURTESY OF SEVEN SORROWS

Sixth-grader Madison Stark works on a video recap of "Amoeba Sisters" for her science class at Seven Sorrows BVM School in Middletown.

"Sharing the laughing points as well as the frustrations of these new circumstances reminds us that we are not alone," the Sheehans remarked. "It also serves as a reminder of how important it is to pray for each other through this struggle until we resume some normalcy in our lives."

Shapiro communicates with students and parents via ClassDojo, a communication app that connects classrooms and parents. She uploads video messages of well-wishes and encouragement to her students, and also of herself presenting lessons.

"Students have responded that it was nice for them just to see me and hear my voice," Shapiro said.

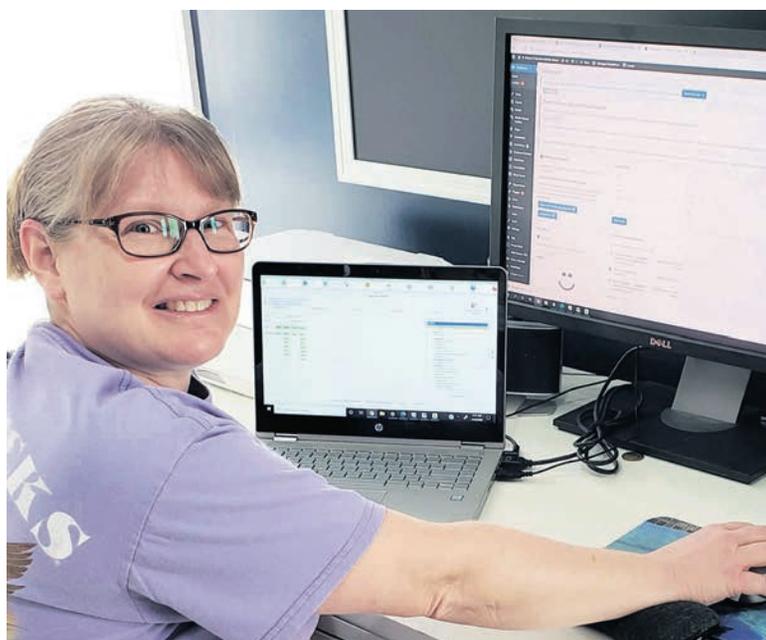
As the days of distance learning continue, teachers are challenged to develop and implement methods of education and connectivity, and to do so in a way that is beneficial to students with various needs.

"As a teacher, I have to consider how I pare down the curriculum so that it can be distributed and equitable for everyone," Shapiro said. "We have students with learning issues and ADHD. In school, we can help them. When they're at home, I can't help them refocus or reread a sentence to them. The challenge is finding a way to balance things that the students can do, without also overwhelming them or their parents. Yes, I still want them to learn certain things, but I also want to keep equity in learning."

She's also established ways for students to connect in prayer and maintain school spirit.

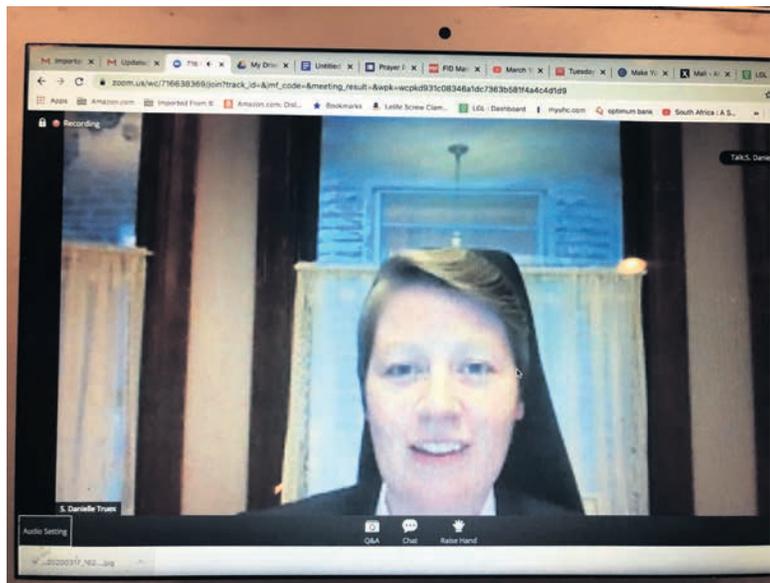
Shapiro adapted her in-class WhiteBoard, where students write their prayer intentions, into a digital WhiteBoard, where they can continue to post. "Everyone can still see the intentions and we can continue to pray together as a class," she said.

Shapiro also helped initiate "virtual days" on Facebook, where students submit pictures of themselves dressed in different themes, such as "crazy sock day," "wacky pajama day" and "team spirit day." Shapiro said sharing the photos "has been a great way to maintain school



COURTESY OF ST. TERESA'S

Marketing and enrollment efforts continue at St. Teresa of Calcutta School in Adams County, as Mrs. Guy works on enrollment and website updates from home.



COURTESY OF SACRED HEART

Sister Danielle Truex, IHM, principal of Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Lancaster, conducts a meeting for parents via Zoom to share expectations, resources and encouragement during the school closures.

## SCHOOLS

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spirit and feel more connected.”

Maintaining connection with students was so important for Colleen Kassman, a first-grade teacher at St. Andrew School in Waynesboro, that she brainstormed an idea to connect them via Zoom, and now gathers with her class several times a week to read, play games and enjoy virtual field trips.

Kassman sent instructions to parents on how to download the free Zoom service and set up a group test to ensure ev-

eryone could connect. She typically offers 40-minute sessions at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m., but has since added in more days and times, especially at the students’ request.

On the screen, Kassman and her students see everyone else’s smiling faces, similar to opening credits of *The Brady Bunch*. “They spend the first few minutes saying hi to each other, and you can see their faces light up when they see each other,” Kassman said.

The first graders have enjoyed virtual games of Candyland and Bingo,

reading books, watching videos and a field trip to the San Diego Zoo.

And sometimes, things can go off the rails, like when the savvy students figured out how to “unmute” their microphones while Kassman was leading them in a scholastic program. “One by one, I heard them say, ‘I unmuted myself,’ and it was hysterical!” Kassman said. “I said, ‘Well, it’s just like being in the classroom! Sometimes you lose complete control.’”

“But honestly, connecting with them has been my saving grace,” she said. “It has been so devastating, as every teacher knows, to say goodbye. We found out on 2:30 on that Friday that schools were closing. I didn’t want to scare them, so I said, ‘Take these packets with you, and we’ll see you in a couple weeks!’ It was so fast. They left and we all cried. It was just awful. And right away I knew I had to do some video calls with them so that we can continue to be a classroom.”

### Rising to the Challenge

“We’re being creative in how we’re continuing our mission of educating students. Our major focus at this point is really just to provide some continuity in education, so kids aren’t just sitting there stagnant,” said Vince Harper, principal of Bishop McDevitt High School in Harrisburg.

“We had already been using some platforms for remote learning, and a lot of teachers were already familiar in getting lessons online using Google Classroom and other mediums,” he said. “When we had a feeling schools would be closing, President David Gardiner and I met to strategize...and with the teachers, we went right into preparing to deliver our lessons via an online learning style.”

“We know education is going to look different. We know it’s not going to be business as usual, but we want to do everything in



COURTESY OF ST. JOSEPH'S

Third-grader Ireland A. from St. Joseph School in Mechanicsburg, completes assignments with the help of a furry friend.

our power to make sure we’re not shortchanging these kids, especially our seniors. That’s a lot to go through in their senior year,” Harper said.

In calling students to rise to the challenge of distance learning, Bishop McDevitt’s faculty and administrators are also trying to help balance students’ physical and emotional needs, adapting assignments, workloads and deadlines to keep them from being overwhelmed.

“We are going to continue to keep an eye on where they’re at,” Harper said. “Some of the adaptations give them a little more flexibility in their approach to their education, help them self-monitor and self-pace so they don’t have to feel they need to sit from 8:00-3:00 in front of a computer screen and just push through.”

Daily updates via Facebook, continued connection to students and parents, and video from school chaplain, Father Joshua Weaver, are helping connect the McDevitt community in the midst of isolation and uncertainty.

“This experience has reinforced for me the family atmosphere that I’ve always known we’ve had. I’m sure there is a lot of anxiety parents, students and teachers are feeling as far as where we’re going to

go, but our Crusaders have always had a sense of family,” Harper remarked. “What I can see right now is that they’re appreciative that we’re continuing education, they’re appreciative that we are trying to do what’s best for them, and that we’re being flexible. They know that at the end of the day, this is going to be a unifying experience for all of us and will reinforce that family that we love so much.”

“We want everybody to hang in there and know that we’ll get through this. As long as we have faith in Christ and we do what we need to do to protect ourselves, he’s going to get us through,” he said.

### A Community of Faith

Art Bamert, campus minister at Lancaster Catholic High School, asked himself, “What can I do?”

With a campus ministry center open throughout the day and a chapel that is home to morning Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy each day, campus ministry interaction at Lancaster Catholic is intentional and constant.

“For me, being out of school is like hitting a brick wall,” Bamert said. “The part of me that wants to minister to my students can’t engage like I normally do”.

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COURTESY OF ST. JOAN OF ARC

Walter and Lillian Thomas of St. Joan of Arc School in Hershey work on classroom assignments during the first week of school closures.

# Stewardship in Times of Crisis

By Kim Roche

*Special to The Witness*

While the doors to our churches may be closed, the virtual doors to our Church, and our faith, are open. Our parishes have stepped up to the challenge and have become places to gather via social media, to reach out to others in need and become closer to God while keeping our social distances.

Many of our parishes are streaming Mass or the Stations of the Cross on Facebook or on the parish website. Some have engaged volunteers to pray for the needs of parishioners through prayer chains. Other parishes are working to identify volunteers to help community agencies deliver meals to those who can't get out or place a phone call to older parishioners to check on them and offer friendly "human contact" during these times of social distancing. Those

who are able may be asked to increase their giving to allow the parish to survive and thrive when this crisis is over. Our dedicated religious education instructors and the faculty at our Catholic schools continue to teach our students in new and creative ways.

What is a constant through these challenging times is the common denominator of our faith. We are called to reach out to those in need, and while we can't physically be present, we certainly do our part virtually. I'm continually impressed by the resourcefulness our parishes have displayed, the talent of our incredible teachers and volunteers, the unwavering faith of so many dedicated souls and the generosity of the faithful to support those in need.

Despite the unknowns – how long will this last, when will we be able to return to work, or attend Mass again – I am reminded of

how blessed I am. Recognizing our respective gifts and talents during a crisis, when we are only thinking about how our lives have been changed, helps focus our attention on others and helps direct us in ways that have positive impacts.

Stewardship, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. The idea of stewardship during times of crisis is a difficult one to comprehend. Our daily lives have been upended. Many of us are working from home, and while the idea may have been exciting at first, it has proven to be more of a challenge each day. What were easy tasks in the office have turned into more difficult and time consuming exercises.

I believe that God is asking each of us during this time to examine our own gifts and talents to see where we can help. For some,

it may be volunteering to assist neighbors, friends or other parishioners. For others, it may be lending our expertise of technology and helping our parishes reach those who are craving the spiritual content which we so sorely need. Just as we have been given different gifts, our individual responses will be different but, collectively, we will get through this. I ask you to continue to pray for our Diocese, our Bishop and our dedicated priests and deacons. It is my prayer that when we are able to gather again, our churches will be full with grateful hearts, fully cognizant that we have been good stewards of the gifts we have received. We will indeed hear God's voice telling us "Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:21.)

*(Kim Roche is the Director of the Diocesan Office of Stewardship and Development.)*



COURTESY OF  
CORPUS CHRISTI

Preschooler  
Everly Brake  
from Corpus  
Christi School in  
Chambersburg  
pauses to say  
the PreK Lenten  
Prayer of the Day.

## SCHOOLS

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Sorely missing the 7:30 a.m. daily Rosary in the school chapel that he shares with several students and faculty, Bamert decided to continue the effort – just in a digital way.

Now, each weekday at 9 a.m., he leads an online community in the Rosary, live from Lancaster Catholic's Facebook page. He begins with a few words of encouragement, and then turns his camera to a laptop showing various images to reflect on during the prayer – including scenes of Jesus' life and works, and of the Stations of the Cross.

"People can open Facebook at 9 a.m., and we can spend 15-20 minutes reminding ourselves that,

while we are separated by miles, we are connected as the Catholic High community through our faith. We can pray for each other and ask the Blessed Mother to wrap us up in her arms as we suffer through this," Bamert said.

He encourages people to turn to prayer especially in these times of isolation, uncertainty and anxiety.

"There is clinical evidence that prayer is effective for anxiety, particularly the Rosary," he remarked. "When you pray the Rosary, the pacing of it slows your heartrate and regulates your breathing. It doesn't shock me that the God who created us would give us a vehicle to connect with him and help us spiritually, emotionally and physiologically. There is a direct benefit to prayer."

"It's a healing balm to be able to pray. So much goodness can come from doing it," Bamert said. "My hope is that, when this is all over and we come back to school, people will be more engaged in the Rosary daily, and we have more people coming to our chapel to pray."

Sister Danielle Truex, IHM, principal of Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Lancaster, regularly participates in Lancaster Catholic's digital Rosary.

"One of the hardest things about all this is the very human reflexive need in times of uncertainty to be

with one another, and that's the very thing that we can't do in the normal way right now," she said.

"On a normal school day, I stand outside the building and see how everyone's feeling, and I'm the first one to greet them in the morning. I am really missing the face to face connection and communication that we do on a daily basis," she said.

To help alleviate that loss, Sacred Heart has been conducting regular meetings with faculty and with parents via Zoom, in addition to daily e-mails of prayer and uplifting messages that Sister Danielle sends. This followed the school's action plan to send students home with educational materials to continue learning from home.

"In the first Zoom meetings, we gave parents information about our plans going forward, and Father [Michael] Metzgar, our pastor, talked to them about the importance of their spiritual life. Our school counselor also talked about the social and emotional challenges for the kids," she said.

Sister Danielle is now planning to have office hours, and while they won't be in her normal spot alongside a bustling school office, her availability on Zoom will give parents and families additional opportunity to connect and update her on how the students are far-

ing.

"Educationally, we know that relationships are important things to provide our children," she said.

"All things considered, with God's grace and a strong sense of community, we've been able to pull together to do the best for our kids. I'm really proud of our community. They've showed such charity, patience and positivity."

She said the pause to normal life "has been a great opportunity for me to really focus on what the essentials of mission are. A huge part of our mission is in building relationships with our families, parishioners and friends. It's very apparent to me, through this situation, how valuable those relationships are and how they bring us closer to God, together."

"Catholic education is about caring for the whole person. We're still doing that," Sister Danielle said.

"We have parishioners who are supportive of our children and families, Families who are sharing their life with us in such a positive way, and teachers who are generous in sharing their time and spirit. None of this would be possible without all of them," she remarked. "It's a community effort, and God has given us the graces to respond to this, and I'm confident we'll have the graces to do so, whatever comes next."