



Even in the middle of a global pandemic Christians are called to make Christ present by engaging in the Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy. But how can we feed the hungry, visit the sick, instruct the ignorant or pray for the living and the dead with our public liturgies cancelled and our people confined to their homes? Our parishes are centers of evangelization and as such they are centers of healing and service. What follows are ideas on how parish staff, parishioners and parish resources can be engaged at this unique moment in history. These are suggestions intended to help pastors and parish staff discern a path through the current crisis and beyond.

As you reflect on what may be opportunities of engagement, we remind you first and foremost to be rooted in prayer, keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus in the middle of this storm. Secondly, be conscious and vigilant in staying up to date with, and adhering to, all the latest guidance from the CDC and other officials responsible for keeping everyone safe.

You may also consider reaching out to local government officials to see how the parish can assist the community at this time.

As you discern what you can do, also think about who can help. There will be things that you may encourage everyone to do or there may find a benefit engaging smaller groups of people. Consider those involved in ministry at your parish, the more obvious may be the St Vincent DePaul Society or the Knights of Columbus – but don't forget your liturgical ministers, choir members, catechists, bible study participants, council members and parishioners active in the life of the Church. REMEMBER – one of the struggles people are experiencing is the feeling of not being able to do anything, so just being invited to participate in your initiative may be exactly what your parishioners need!

EXAMPLES OF VIRAL WORKS OF MERCY:

- Since people can't visit in person it is more critical than ever to check in with each other on the phone or over social media. Encourage people to reach out to others, especially
 - The elderly and those at risk
 - Single parents of young children and pregnant women
 - Those who are alone or out of work
- Another way to “visit” is filming “video greetings” that can be posted on social media or sent by text?
- If your parish can live-stream Mass on Facebook, encourage people to turn on notifications so people can see who else is there and maybe exchange a greeting before Mass starts at the sign of peace or at the conclusion of Mass.

This is all about community and connecting with people. Parish staff can reach out to volunteers, maybe using a phone chain model, to check in and assuring people of prayer while asking for specific needs and intentions.

- People may not be able to share a meal, but they can still feed the hungry.
 - Send a virtual gift card to someone to buy food with
 - Deliver groceries or takeout meals to those confined to their homes *
 - Ask for donations or set-up a go fund me page to purchase grocery or restaurant gift cards *
 - Replace your Easter food baskets with gift cards from grocery stores or restaurants you know are open and providing takeout meals or delivery – it might be a good idea to coordinate this with the restaurant, maybe they will provide a particular “St. xx parish meal” *

- One thing a lot of people have now is time; to be with family, to finish projects, and TO PRAY!
 - Invite people to commit to praying at specific times of the day, whether it’s the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary or a simple Our Father at noon!
 - Invite people to commit to pray for specific needs – Catechists to pray daily for their students, choir members praying for nurses and doctors, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist to pray for the sick, etc.
 - Teach people how to pray. The parish can provide resources on different types of prayer.
 - Be especially aware of funerals not being held and [pray for the recently deceased](#) and their families

- Doctors, nurses and others on the “front line” can use support
 - Organize a campaign for people to donate masks, gloves and other supplies (Businesses who have them and are not using such as construction companies, veterinarians, dentist etc...)*
 - Virtual gift cards for gas or meals
 - Texts, emails, or phone calls of appreciation and support
 - Offer a daily Mass for them (and let them know!)

- Your people need to hear from you and from each other!
 - Regular communication from the pastor and parish staff via blast emails, social media.
 - Pastor, DRE or others can videotape reading a story and send it out for children
 - Encourage engagement and feedback
 1. Ask families to share a picture of their family playing a game, reading, praying, singing. How about a picture of the family watching Mass!
 2. Video challenges from parishioners to post on website or social media – maybe keep track of how many rosaries are being said.
 3. Encourage small groups to meet via Zoom or other platforms, for discussion, faith sharing and ongoing formation.

- Be a sign of joy and hope!
 - Encourage people to be intentional about what and how much media they are consuming

- Laugh and share jokes
- Remember Christ is our hope
- Limit social media posts to
 1. Positive and hopeful
 2. Creative ideas
 3. Avoid rumors, complaining, blaming, and politics

Finally, be aware that many families are being inundated by newly implemented remote work and school routines so avoid adding to the pressure – keep it simple, encouraging and engaging!

* Please remember to use caution in delivering items to people by using gloves, sanitizing items before giving it to people, wearing a mask, etc. Volunteers to do this should be people under 60 and without pre-existing conditions.



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