

WE'LL TRIUMPH THROUGH OUR SORROWS AND RISE TO BLESS HIM STILL

A Message from Fr. Daniel Scheidt, Pastor of St. Vincent's, to Our Whole Parish

March 19, 2020---Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Grace and peace to you in Christ, and blessed St. Joseph's Day to you! Claiming the grace of St. Joseph's loving care of the Holy Family in threatening circumstances, I am writing to share with you the latest updates regarding our Parish family's response to the challenges of this trying time in our life of faith. These updates include: 1) safeguards to bodily health; 2) growing our social networking; and 3) building the domestic church of our home.

Safeguards to Bodily Health

St. Vincent's School All classes and activities of St. Vincent's School are suspended for the foreseeable future. During this suspension, our School administrators and teachers have already shown heroic and creative determination to continue our children's education through distance learning.

Parish Meetings and Activities All Parish meetings of any size or public activities of any sort at our Parish are suspended for the foreseeable future.

Parish Masses All weekday and weekend public celebration of Holy Mass at St. Vincent's is now suspended for the foreseeable future.

Reception of the Sacraments In this public health quarantine, ordinary reception of the Sacraments, including the Sacrament of Confession, is now restricted to pastoral emergencies involving serious illness or possible danger of death. Baptism of a child can still be scheduled through the parish office, under very strict health precautions. Priests are continually available for individual administration of the Anointing of the Sick for those who are seriously ill or in danger of death. Those who have questions regarding Weddings or Funerals should contact the parish office for more details.

These safeguards to public health are excruciatingly difficult for us Priests and go painfully against our every pastoral instinct to be physically present to you and to call people together to work through whatever problems need to be faced. We acknowledge, however, the importance of these preventative measures so that we ourselves do not become vectors of transmission to multiples of other people because of our ordinary daily schedule of interactions with lots of people. For the time being, we must restrict our in-person ministry to pastoral emergencies requiring sacramental attention for serious illness or danger of death. This temporary disruption must be the occasion for us to draw on the hidden graces constantly circulating in the Mystical Body of Christ---the Church's deepest spiritual immune system---even beyond the visible ordinary means the Lord has given us.

Growing Our Social Networking

Now is the time for us to get creative and proactive in our networking for the good.

Live-streamed Masses The Priests and Staff of St. Vincent's are working to provide live-streaming (and hence also archivable recordings) of the 8AM daily Mass (Monday through Saturday), as well as the 9AM Sunday Mass. These will be accessible on our website (saintv.org). Thus every day you can be spiritually and visually united with the celebration of Holy Mass at St. Vincent's as a steady anchor for your family's prayer. The Word of God and our homilies can be welcomed into your own home, as you unite your prayers to the prayers

of the Holy Mass celebrated around the world and from the heart of our own Parish church. St. Teresa of Avila wrote: “When you cannot receive Communion and cannot attend Mass, you can make a Spiritual Communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you.” St. Thomas Aquinas defined “Spiritual Communion” as “an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him.” You can use one of the following prayers, the first from St. Alphonsus Liguori, to make a “Spiritual Communion”:

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 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.

--or, in another form--

As I cannot this day have the joy of assisting in person at the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, I ask You, Heavenly Father, to bring me in spirit to the Altar of Your Son. Supported by the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. Vincent and all the Angels and Saints, I unite the prayer of my heart with the Offering of the whole Church in Heaven and throughout the world. Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, I adore, praise, and thank You, offering myself to Your mercy and calling on Your assistance for the intentions I entrust to You. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, I ask to share in all of the spiritual graces abiding in the Most Holy Body and Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, present in all of the Tabernacles of the world. Even when I cannot receive Him in my body, I ask to receive Him in my spirit, all for Your greater glory and the triumph of Your love. Amen.

Social Media Fr. Jay is pioneering additional forms of social media presence (YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, etc.---links to these will be on our website), so that we can constantly be aggregating and sharing the best spiritual supports on a daily basis. Our hope is that inspiring and edifying graces for our life of faith will spread even farther and faster and deeper than any virus.

Keeping Phone Tabs on One Another It is vitally important that we remain more personally connected with each other, even when we cannot be physical connected. Each of us should identify a network of people in our life who would most benefit from a regular check-in and expression of loving support, especially those who are elderly, infirm, or live alone. Please check out the *Our Sunday Visitor* article by Leonard DeLorenzo entitled, “Why community is needed now more than ever” (osvnews.com). It proposes that a core group of parishioners takes the initiative in personally contacting all of the households of a parish as a way to establish loving networks to discern need and provide specific help, such as grocery shopping or trips to the doctor. Our Parish Staff is already starting to work with the leadership of our various parish organizations to catalyze the beginning of this effort. Our Parish is named after St. Vincent de Paul, who specialized in this kind of networking. His life and mission show us who we are to become this Lent. Start by making your own contact list, and let the experiment in loving connection begin from there!

Building the Domestic Church of Our Home

The unusual circumstances of the moment require us to face an obvious truth: Before the Church is where we go to, the Church is first where we live. Our own home is the first church, the most basic place where the Lord is worshipped and His charity is extended. We need to use this time to build the domestic church that is our family, our “little St. Vincent’s” within our “big” St. Vincent’s.

The extraordinary circumstances we’ve suddenly found ourselves living in actually give us a tremendous opportunity to reconnect with our families in beautiful, intimate ways that may have been lost over the years amidst the world’s many distractions.

Building on the great ideas of Fr. Andrew Budzinski, I have added various suggestions of our own parishioners to the following ideas for taking responsibility for building up the spiritual life of our families from within our home.

LIVESTREAM ST. VINCENT'S MASS OR LISTEN TO THE ST. VINCENT'S HOMILY TOGETHER DAILY AS A FAMILY: Check out the St. Vincent's website for live-streaming and recorded homilies, both past and most current (saintv.org). And visit 52Sundays.com, a website of the Archdiocese of Detroit, for the Sunday Gospel, dinner recipes, and more. This is an amazing resource!

PRAY THE ROSARY TOGETHER AS A DOMESTIC CHURCH: Let your family members take turns leading the decades (even over the phone, if necessary!). If you need a refresher course, Google it. Ask Our Lady, the Mother of Divine Love and Health of the Sick, to intercede with us for the life of the world.

COOK AND EAT TOGETHER AS A DOMESTIC CHURCH: The entire family eating together at the dining table has been lost over the years. Get the kids involved: Teach them how to cook, family recipes, chopping and dicing. They'll love eating food they made.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR CATHOLIC FAITH: Visit formed.org for an abundance of great Catholic videos, courses, movies and other resources. Our parish code is 4PGDMC.

RESIST THE PHONE AND SPEND TIME TOGETHER IN COMMON AREAS: The last thing we need right now is more isolation of the unhealthy sort. Don't let the phone exile each family member to separate rooms or eliminate conversation. Set a time limit for phone use and enforce it.

WHATEVER YOUR USE OF TV AND COMPUTER FOR NEWS, REDUCE IT BY 90% AND DO SOMETHING REAL. The 10% of time remaining to keep yourself informed day by day will be more than enough to remain updated without becoming enslaved to the endlessly recycled negative feedback loop of the media environment. Be an active participant in real life rather than a passive, terrified consumer of misery.

DO OUTDOOR PROJECTS TOGETHER. The best antidote to the artificial light-emitting screens of the gadgets is the natural light of the great outdoors. Do outdoor projects together: Get the garden started, fix things, tend the landscaping, start your own seeds and have the kids sell the plant starts in May.

WRITE CARDS AND LETTERS. Who is the person throughout your childhood, high school, or adult years who has most shaped your life for the better? Write them a thank-you letter. This written keepsake will likely be treasured long after all of our scroll-up-and-delete virtual word output has vanished in importance.

PLAY MUSIC: One of the reasons why people are tempted to sing less and less in church is because many of us have stopped playing music in our homes. Give your neighbors a pleasant surprise and stick the speakers in the window. If you play a musical instrument, play it on the front porch as weather allows.

FAMILY MOVIE NIGHTS: I hear Disney+ is releasing Frozen 2 today, but actually you can do better! Go for the gold: Seek out the best, most edifying and inspiring movies you can find or other people can recommend, films that leave you feeling ennobled and inspired rather than washed-out or otherwise diminished.

BOARD GAMES: Not just "Bored Games." My family and I played Trivial Pursuit a couple weeks ago before all this mess. It was the most interaction we've had with one another in a long time. Most of it was civil.

READ: I hear people say all the time, "I'm so busy. I wish I had more time to read." Here's your opportunity.

DECORATE YOUR DOMESTIC CHURCH: Is the Crucifix prominently placed in your home? Do you have a pictures of the Lord Jesus, Mary our Blessed Mother and the heavenly friends of Christ and us, the Saints, on the walls? Commission your children to be modern-day Michelangelos and Raphaels and have them draw, color or paint. Let them paint the living room ceiling like the Sistine Chapel. What's the worst that could happen?

DADS, YOU ARE THE PRIESTS: Our kids are giving up the faith in droves. Statistics show that when Dads do not practice the faith, only 2% of their children will practice the faith. Even if Mom practices, if Dad does not, in those cases only 3% of children practice the faith. Dads are the key. Dads, you are responsible for getting your wives and children to Heaven. You are to lead your family in your daily rosary, in daily prayer, and reading of the Sunday Gospel together. You are the Priests of your family, your domestic church. The salvation of your family literally depends on you. Schedule: 1) what needs to be done, 2) what you most want to do that is a good initiative, and 3) extra time for what just comes up unexpectedly.

FINALLY, A TIP FOR EVERYONE: USE THE CALENDAR AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PRAYER, SETTING ASIDE TOGETHER A NEW, WORKABLE SCHEDULE ADAPTED NOT JUST TO THE LIMITATIONS BUT THE ADDED OPPORTUNITIES OF THESE DAYS. If we don't actively order our time, we will waste it and feel distracted and miserable. Now is the time to be more creatively involved in educating our children about what is most important and the best ways to learn it.

As I have noted on several occasions and repeat now, it is a deep truth of the spiritual life that the best penances are those we do not choose but rather those we must simply accept with patience and offer to the Lord. These next few weeks may be for us the most radical introduction to the heart of Lent we have ever lived. Christ asks us to follow Him unreservedly through His suffering---and that of ourselves and our brothers and sisters---tenaciously and creatively looking for the good that we can bring from these circumstances. The antidote to panic is not calm but rather courage---the power to pursue difficult goods and resist attractive evils. We will have a lot more time on our hands this month. We must invest it in things that deepen our spiritual life and charity for one another, rather than being hypnotized and unhinged by the endless drama of the 24-hour news cycle. Even as we stay reasonably informed, we must spend more time and energy investing in being formed and transformed by Jesus Christ, from the power of His Passion, Death, and Resurrection. We are in it for Easter this year as never before!

In Vincent's love of Christ,

Fr. Daniel Scheidt
Pastor

P.S. ELECTRONIC GIVING FOR OFFERTORY SUPPORT Many people have asked about how to keep up their stewardship of offertory even when, for the time being, there is no basket to pass but still commitment to give. The need for the Church's work is now greater than ever. In addition to mailing in your contribution (St. Vincent de Paul Parish, 1502 East Wallen Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46825), you might consider Text-to-Give from your smartphone. Your donation will be applied to the parish offertory.

Text whatever dollar amount of your choosing to 260-296-2065. You will receive a "Thank You" message referring you to St. Vincent's Online Giving webpage. Log into your Online Giving account if you have one OR create an Online Giving account if you would like to OR continue as a guest. You may enter bank account information or scan a credit card. Your transaction will be processed and you will receive a Thank You message. If you have any questions, call the Parish Office (489-3537ext 3). I am so grateful for your continued support of the work of St. Vincent's---thank you, we couldn't do it without you!