

May 22, 2020

Dear brother priests,

The Covid-19 virus has certainly put us in some uncharted territory. Many are in need of our prayers-- the sick, those recovering, the poor, the fearful, those with economic troubles, those who have died and their grieving families, among others. As so many voices have adequately stated, we are grateful for those who have been on the front lines of this pandemic especially those in the medical community and more. Yes, we live in uncertain times, yet we know One who is, was, and will always be constant. He is the reason for our hope and joy.

Resources

As we follow guidelines for reopening our Churches for liturgies, I want to share two resources to which I have been recently introduced. The first is a parish made video instructing the parishioners of St. Anthony of Padua Church in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, about their policies and procedures as all return to Church for Masses. Every (arch) diocese, county, and state have different nuances to their procedures. Some of Galveston-Houston's are different from ours. We in the Archdiocese, follow our own guidelines. I share St. Anthony's video not to confuse anyone but to show the creativity of a pastor, his parish leadership, as well as his parish Covid-response team. This video, found on St Anthony's website was sent to every parishioner's email address to be both instructional and to relieve concerns by showing what the parish is doing to keep parishioners safe.

<https://ap.church/media/covid-19/> Scroll to the video "*St. Anthony of Padua Reopening Phase 1 Continues*"

The second resource addresses our Archdiocesan guidelines, stating that pews and other areas need to be sanitized between Masses. Pastors from around the US are learning that alcohol based disinfecting products and wipes can begin to dissolve the varnish on pews. Some parishes have found a product from a Florida and New York based company, which sanitizes pews and other surfaces without being harmful. The company is Viking Pure Solutions. The products are Pure San and Pure Clean. To learn more go to: <https://vikingpure.com/> or contact Steve Anello at 914-610-0833. (Steve2vikingpure.com)

Effective Evangelization

Fathers, as we move into the various phases of post-COVID life and ministry, please do not forget that now is an important time to Evangelize. Many parishes that have live stream liturgies saw attendance grow more than 5% than on those Sundays before the social distancing regulations were put in place. Who are these 5%? In addition to our regular parishioners, are they individuals who have returned because of the pandemic? Are they "seekers" grappling with the God-shaped hole in their lives? I suggest that in addition to important and necessary post pandemic concerns regarding both the Masses and finances, that pastors and leaders highlight three additional areas: Team, Church, and the Mission Field.

TEAM: Through a variety of technologies stay connected with all of those who are in positions of leadership (team) in your parish. Ongoing communication with staff, pastoral council members, ministry leaders, major benefactors and others is key. Communicate often with a “clarity of vision” to move the mission of the Gospel and your parish forward. With these and others ask: “*What is God’s dream for our parish?*” Asked another way, *What is our “Why?”* Often parishes run to the “*How*” question before they answer, analyze, and understand the “*Why*.” The second question: *What is our “where?”* This is the vision question. Vision casting, based in prayer and deep listening, is a very important part of pastoring and co-responsible leadership. Once a community understands God’s vision for their Church, pastors and the team need to help parishioners get behind that vision.

CHURCH: Staying connected to our Church members should have leadership focused on: *how* to care for them, *how* to grow them, and *how* to mobilize them. Leadership done well gets others mobilized to assist in building the kingdom of God and to care for others. Here the words of Jesus, found in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20, should speak boldly to us, “Go make disciples...”

MISSION FIELD: Pope Francis warns the Church not to be closed in on itself or self-referential, as disciples we are to be outward focused reaching “the very outskirts of existence” with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In doing so as disciples of Jesus, we make it a goal to reach the lost and serve the least.

In the *Joy of the Gospel* and his other writings, Pope Francis’ pastoral wisdom introduces the notion of “encounter” and “accompaniment” of our neighbors, including seekers, as ways to think about the essential mission of the Church which is Evangelization. May we continue to pray for a new Pentecost and look for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit who is with us every step of the way as we reach out to introduce others to Jesus, even in the midst of Covid-19. May your parish’s attentiveness to that Spirit enable you to see and hear what God is calling you to next.

If we in the Office of Evangelization can assist you, please let us know. Stay safe and healthy.

Our Lady of Prompt Succor, hasten to help us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Caron". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial 'D'.

Very Rev. David G. Caron, OP, D. Min.
Vicar of Evangelization