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## Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church

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**Editor's Note:** *The Spring issue of The Advocate focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on OLQP's mission to serve the poor and to assist the vulnerable in society. Any references in the articles to mitigation measures taken by OLQP to lessen the spread of the virus occurred no later than May 11, 2020.*

*Paula Cruickshank  
Editor, The Advocate*

## A Modern-Day Parable of "Loaves and Fishes"

### Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Food Pantry Responds

By Jack Sullivan

For many years, Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church has been providing bags of food to those who are in need of them. The weekly distribution of groceries from the OLQP food pantry has become part of the fabric of the parish. Then the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic hit. What happened next was an overwhelming response by the church and surrounding community.

"We averaged approximately 235 clients at the food pantry weekly until the arrival of COVID-19," said Sally Diaz-Wells, OLQP's Social Justice and Outreach Minister. "Then the requests grew."

"By April 8, we were providing 461 bags," she said. Still the demand increased. At the end of May, the parish was giving out close to 700 bags of groceries! Word of OLQP's food efforts attracted local and national news coverage. Providing food for the hungry is also a strong reminder of OLQP's commitment to its Matt. 25 mission to serve the poor and assist the vulnerable in society.

"I don't know where the recipients are coming from because we don't ask or care," noted Sally. "The want is there and we want to help people in need as Jesus taught us to do."

The cost of the ministry is now running between \$8,000 and \$9,000 a week. Father Tim sent a letter to the OLQP family on April 5 in which he emphasized that "...It is vital to keep the Food Pantry open and continue to serve this community need." The response of the parish has been impressive, Sally commented. "Many parishioners have donated money."

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## Bishop Suspends Public Celebration of Masses on March 17 Due to COVID-19

### Televised Services and Social Media Keep It Accessible to All

By Paula Cruickshank

In the face of the growing COVID-19 pandemic, OLQP has taken several measures to lessen the spread of the highly contagious and deadly virus. It has been a balancing act, but our church rose to the occasion.

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## Loaves and Fishes

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The Food Pantry has become an interfaith effort with other Arlington churches helping. They include members of the Unitarian Universalist, Temple Beth Shalom, and St. Mary Episcopal congregations who drop off groceries every week. In addition, the Arlington Community Foundation has donated \$15,000 and the Booster Club of Wakefield High School, \$1,000. *The Washington Post* front page story in the Metro Section on April 17 has generated other donations, including a \$25,000 gift from the Rales Foundation of Bethesda.

The publicity also has generated a tripling of volunteers, many not parishioners or Catholics. The volunteers mostly sort the groceries while the parish pantry workers distribute the bags. “All volunteers are wearing gloves and masks and have been for weeks,” Sally noted. “Most clients arrive wearing masks and for individuals who do not have them, we offer one.” For those in line, social distancing is required.

“We have devised a system that allows us to keep our distance,” she continued. “We place two chairs six feet from the double doors in front of Father Ray



Hall. We place bags of groceries on each chair and indicate to the next client to come and pick one up,” she explained. When the clients move at least six feet away, they repeat the process and the next client comes forward to receive a bag of food.

The *Post* story by Emily Davies summarized the “point of light” Queen of Peace exemplifies in the midst of this terrible pandemic: “As the world around it falls into disarray, the parish and its longstanding pantry have become a center of hope and purpose for the community.”

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## Bishop Suspends Masses Due to COVID-19

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[At the direction of Bishop Burbidge](#) of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, effective March 17, OLQP suspended the public celebration of Masses until further notice. In the March statement, Bishop Burbidge recommended “limiting gatherings to 10 people or less. The Bishop’s Message is consistent with CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines for events that serve “high risk” populations.”

“Suspending Masses may safeguard our physical health, but I understand that our spiritual health must also be maintained to the best of our ability. For that reason, I have asked our pastors to keep our churches open to the public, so that those who choose to pray, are welcome to do so in the presence

of our Eucharistic Lord, while keeping a safe distance from one another and not exceeding the 10-person limit.”

In light of the Bishop’s guidance, OLQP adapted its celebration of Sunday and daily Masses through the use of social media so that the liturgy was publicly viewable to all who have access to Facebook. The Sunday Masses are aired on Facebook LIVE, but can also be viewed at a later time by clicking on “Videos” on the parish Facebook Page.

At all times, social distancing is observed inside the church. The number of individuals at Sunday Masses do not exceed ten. Instead of two lectors at each

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## Bishop Suspends Masses Due to COVID-19

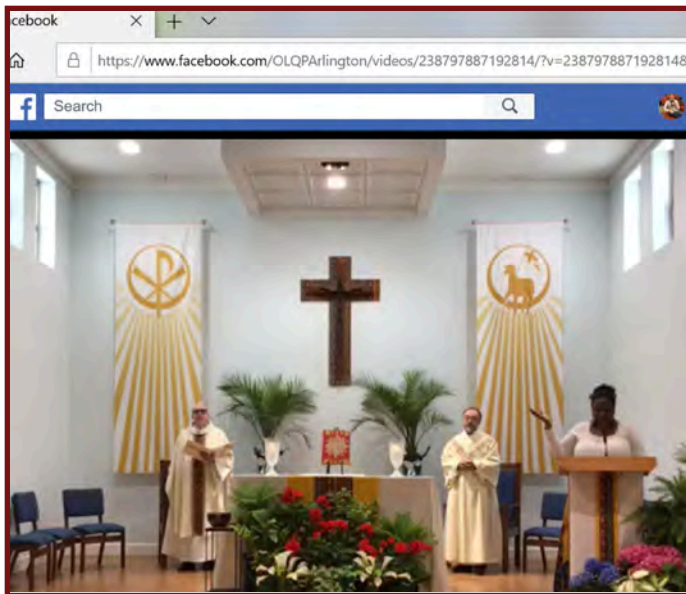
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Sunday Mass, there is now one and there are no longer Alter Servers or Eucharistic Ministers. For example, the 9:30 Mass includes one lector, the choir director, and one or two singers. Fr. Tim Hickey, C.S.Sp. or Fr. Martin Vu, C.S.Sp. celebrate the 9:30 Mass and 11:15 Mass and Fr. Joe Nagle, O.F.M., the 1:00 pm (Spanish) service. Deacon Tony Remedios often assists at Mass, including the reading of the Gospel and offering the Homily. Weekday Masses are now held in a small chapel and celebrated alone by Fr. Martin or Fr. Tim. OLQP also leaves its doors open for prayer daily from 11:00 am – 2:00 pm and 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm, again following the maximum 10-person limit.

Holy Week services also reflected Bishop Burbidge’s COVID-19 guidance. Cecilia Braveboy, the Coordinator of the Lector Ministry, noted that the Good Friday Tenebrae service of sung Psalms by a choir and Lamentation scripture readings by several lectors was cancelled. In the Passion Gospel narrative readings, she noted, the usual number of lectors were reduced from three to one at each Mass and the role of the congregation’s

response was read by few members of the choir who were present.

“What got me through the initial struggle of asking a small group of people to lector was realizing that thousands (not hundreds) people were now watching and listening to the Word of the Lord being conveyed by priests and lay people. I still have mixed emotions and hesitate while [scheduling lectors] for the livestreamed Masses, but I praise God for the possibilities that the mass media technology affords in connecting more people in a community of faith,” Cecilia said.



Celebration of Sunday Mass under COVID-19. (L-R: Fr. Tim Hickey, Dcn. Tony Remedios and lector Keren Charles.)

Although live-streamed Masses have enabled

congregants to join in a worship service from wherever they happen to be, there are some behind-the-scenes changes in the role of the celebrants that make all that possible. “We are keeping a really slimmed down operation,” Fr. Hickey explained. To do so, he and Fr. Martin have carried out all



Fr. Tim celebrates weekday Mass in the chapel



Fr. Martin celebrates weekday Mass in the chapel

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## Bishop Suspends Masses Due to COVID-19

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responsibilities usually done by the Eucharistic Ministers, including setting up the wine, the bread, the Missal, the chalice and Patten. Fr. Tim and Fr. Martin also set up the tripod, turn on the iPad, and make sure the live-streaming works properly.

“We are the TV producers,” Fr. Martin explained in a phone interview (no doubt with a smile).

Fr. Martin also noted restrictions were placed on some services during Holy Week. Among them was the Easter Vigil, which was allowed to be livestreamed, but could not be replayed since the service could only take place after sunset on the eve of Easter Day.

The faith community has been blessed with a technology that enables churchgoers to attend Mass while staying at home, but there is one essential part of the Mass that cannot be replaced: the physical act of receiving the Eucharist. It is during that sacred moment, the celebrant says aloud the “Act of Spiritual Communion”:

### Act of Spiritual Communion

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.

The prayer of spiritual communion assures us that God is with us at all times. As we are promised in Psalm 27:1:

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

## Building Community in a Pandemic: Calling Care

By Kathy Desmond

Jesse Remedios and his mother Katie had been caring for two of Katie’s elderly aunts living in a nearby apartment in Arlington before the coronavirus emerged as a deadly threat. Jesse would shop for them and visit when dropping off groceries and Katie would touch base by phone, several times a day once they became housebound due to the virus. As the threat grew in February 2020, Jesse said, “Let’s help others in the parish, like we do for Took and Pat. We can check in with everyone at high risk.” So, Katie contacted her colleagues at OLQP. Business Manager, Christina Kozyn, produced a list of those 70 and older with some tie to the parish as a place to start. Katie and Jesse were surprised to learn there were 1,000 people, 70 and over! It was more

than two people could handle themselves, so they needed to create a way to involve the whole community.

“We’ve heard wonderful, sweet stories. It is OLQP discipleship in action.”

Katie and Jesse used their aunts as a test and realized that what they needed most was someone to talk to, especially as “social distancing” and “stay at home” policies threatened to isolate more people.

But what if someone they called had no food, no medicine, no money, or were overwhelmed with anxiety and paralyzed by fear? The Stephen Ministry said “We are here” to help those struggling with grief and loss. If someone needed help with rent or a job, the Social Justice and Outreach Ministry could offer direction. The clergy could provide spiritual support.

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## Calling Care

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The parish ministries were equipped and agreed to help the new ministry.

Christina also had a list of ten people who offered “If anyone needs anything, just let us know.” These ten volunteers became the Emergency Response Team. Jesse surveyed them to identify specific things they could do. Also, during the first part of March, Katie met with Fr. Tim and OLQP staff. They discussed questions including: How to maintain CDC guidelines? How to identify people to be called? How to prepare the volunteer callers? How would Governor Northam’s Stay at Home Order, announced on March 30, affect this activity? What should the new ministry be called?

Katie prepared a guide for the volunteers, *Welcome to Calling Care, An OLQP Neighbor-to-Neighbor, Coronavirus Outreach Ministry*. “The Ministry is designed to check in and serve each other, as we physically distance ourselves due to the threat of the virus. The objective is to build community and boost morale during these challenging times.”

Calling Care was launched on Palm Sunday, April 5, during the announcements at the end of the livestreamed Masses. The call went out “for parish volunteers to ‘adopt’ a fellow parishioner, preferably someone who is more vulnerable than you.” Each would be given the name, email address, and phone number of an OLQP community member to contact from the safety of home.

The guide provided a script for the initial call, which introduced Calling Care and screened for any immediate needs (e.g., no food, no medicine, no money, overly anxious). Another initial check was to see if they were able to participate in the Masses’ broadcast on Facebook. After establishing a

relationship, participants are encouraged to continue to contact the fellow parishioner once a week. The guide includes examples of ways to engage in



Jesse calls Took and Pat, during a pre-COVID visit.

conversation and companionship and it lists resources that are available. For example, Jesse took advantage of the free meals for seniors, offered by the Medium Rare Steakhouse and surprised his aunts with a delivery. He shared the idea with fellow callers.

By the end of April, 51 volunteers adopted someone to call, selected by age,

starting with those in their 80s and 90s. Ministry Team Leader Katie matched everyone who was eligible and on the original list with a caller. By then, volunteers had contacted about 800 on the list. Originally envisioned as a short-term ministry, a month later it looks as if this ministry will be needed for some time.

Results so far are encouraging. Not one person has needed emergency help. People appreciate the outreach. Some have not been to church in years because they could not get there. Someone requested a missalette. “Quite a few” are going to Mass on Facebook. Several required assistance to access the Masses on the parish Facebook page.

One of the volunteer callers, Grace Leckey, was in school in Indiana and is sheltering in place. After watching Mass livestreamed on Palm Sunday, she is making calls from Indiana.

Katie says that she and Jesse “are really pleased with the way it turned out. No one seems in crisis or dire need. Neighbors are filling in. We’ve heard wonderful, sweet stories. It is OLQP discipleship in action. We are called to live the faith. Participants are doing this by checking on each other, hearing stories, making friends.”

# The Coronavirus Pandemic in Medor, Haiti

by Sue Carlson

On May 22, 2020 there were 734 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Haiti and 25 people had died from the virus. Many fear that these numbers do not accurately reflect the reality, especially given the much higher numbers recorded in the Dominican Republic, which shares the island with Haiti and has a similar population. As of May 22 the Dominican Republic had 13,657 confirmed cases and 448 deaths. For Haiti, many predict that the effect of the coronavirus is just starting its damage.

The Haitian government mandated a lockdown on March 19, canceling public gatherings and closing airports, schools, churches, and many businesses, but there is little enforcement and many people simply cannot afford to stay home.

Complicating matters are Haiti's fragile health system, underlying health conditions, poverty and malnutrition.

The country, with a population of about 11 million, has only 124 intensive care beds and only 30 are fully functional. Of the 60 ventilators in the country only some 20 are operational. Haiti has 911 physicians, in comparison to 20,000 in the Dominican Republic.

The country has a high incidence of diabetes and hypertension, the highest incidence of tuberculosis in the Americas and the most HIV/AIDS cases in the Caribbean- the region with the highest HIV prevalence outside sub-Saharan Africa. These increase the risk of mortality from the virus.

Over 6 million Haitians, 58.6% of the population, live on less than \$2.41/day, the poverty line. With this level of poverty it is difficult for families to feed themselves, much less buy soap for hand washing, practice social distancing and stay home.

**"Tout Moun Se Moun"**  
**"Every Person Is A Human Being"**  
*Haitian proverb*

Haiti has the highest rate of childhood malnutrition in our hemisphere and more than 33% of Haitians are in need of urgent food assistance. The resulting compromised immune systems may increase susceptibility to the virus.

Because of these factors many state that Haiti is more vulnerable to the pandemic than any other country in the Americas.

Thankfully, as of May 22, Pere Frantz, the pastor of St. Joseph parish, did not know of any Medor residents with the virus.

The schools are closed but the teachers and other school employees are being paid.

Pere Frantz is encouraging everyone in the parish to follow the prevention guidelines.

*Raising Haiti Foundation*, which is partnering with the twinning relationship of St. Joseph of Medor parish and Our Lady Queen of Peace, received a \$75,000 COVID-19 urgent response grant.

The projects that the grant supports in 7 regions, including Medor, are:

- 1 Provision of training on COVID-19 prevention
- 2 Provision of hand-washing stations that use purified water and soap
- 3 Provision of food banks to feed the sick. Medor received 100 25 kg bags of rice for this purpose.
- 4 Provision of facemasks to participating farmers. Medor received 600 facemasks. They were distributed to the trainers, nursery workers and farmers.

Thank you to *Raising Haiti Foundation* for its help for the people of Medor.

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## COVID-19 in Haiti

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Our Medor family is doing what it can to deal with a very difficult situation but the reality of life in the area makes it hard to follow preventative guidelines. The community does not have running water, making hand washing difficult. Soap is rare. Most families live in one-room homes, making it difficult for anyone who gets sick to self- quarantine. There is little doubt

that the poor are more severely affected by the pandemic than those with means.

Thank you to everyone in Our Lady Queen of Peace for your love for the people of Medor. Please continue to pray for them and all the people of Haiti during this crisis.

About 100 people were allowed to attend and everyone practiced social distancing. On typical Sundays up to 1,000 people celebrate Mass in Medor.



Each person was given some hand sanitizer during the service.



A COVID-19 prevention training was held in one of Medor's secondary school classrooms, with everyone following social distancing protocols. Pere Frantz, pastor of St. Joseph parish, Soirisne, the director of the parish clean water program, Elcana, a newly graduated nurse, and Rismene, a secondary school teacher, were among those who attended.

120 hand washing stations, along with water purification product and soap have been distributed to gathering places around the 74-square miles that make up St. Joseph parish. Someone is assigned to each station and is responsible for assuring that it has clean water and is used properly.



## Zooming in on Ministry Meetings

By Paula Cruickshank

With the Stay at Home order in place and the church no longer open for Sunday and weekday Masses, the OLQP community faces many challenges in staying connected. While there is nothing like gathering for breakfast in Father Ray Hall to catch up on family news or wrestle the world's problems over hash browns, OLQP has come up with at least one alternative to on-site ministry meetings: ZOOM. *Continued on page 8*

## Zooming

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In early April, OLQP Business Manager Christina Kozyn sent a letter to the heads of OLQP ministries and groups inviting them to sign up for a ZOOM videoconferencing license. The church had purchased several licenses for staff, ministry and group use. The extraordinarily popular audio and videoconferencing platform makes it possible to schedule meetings and events that can't be held face-to-face until COVID-19 restrictions on group gatherings are lifted.

At last count, Christina said 16 ministry heads applied for Zoom licenses. Here is a sampling of ministries that have begun to ZOOM their meetings. (You know your business has arrived when the noun becomes a verb.)

### **Labor and Income Inequality Ministry – Laura Bandini**

The labor ministry held its first ZOOM gathering on May 1. The group discussed the documentary, "American Factory." This led to a broader discussion about the COVID-19 crisis and how it could potentially pave the way for systemic changes, particularly the working conditions for low-wage earners who too often are not recognized as valued members of the workforce. During the COVID-19 crisis, these unsung heroes have proven how essential they are in meeting the basic needs of society.

Health care and emergency first responders receive the recognition they deserve, but so should our grocery clerks, delivery workers, mail carriers, and countless others, who put their own lives at risk daily. At a time when so many of our brothers and sisters feel isolated, anxious and helpless, the labor group

also recognizes the importance of keeping ourselves spiritually and emotionally healthy. To that end, members agreed to start each meeting with a prayer and to check in on how everyone is faring in these uncertain times. They also recognized the importance of social interaction so their next meeting on June 5 will be a Happy Hour, beginning with a prayer and a toast. After also checking in on everyone's wellbeing, the members will discuss another chosen documentary.

### **Minkisi Ministry – Cecilia Braveboy**

On May 4, former Minkisi group members were invited to join the ministry group for an evening of scripture prayer, reflection, and an African heritage reading from Fr. Maurice Nutt's book, *Thea Bowman: Faithful and Free*. For the next few months, the group members plan to become more familiar with Zoom's video and audio features before broadening the scope of attendees.

### **Parish Advisory Board – Maureen McGuiness**

The Parish Advisory Board (PAB) has been using Zoom to continue its normally scheduled meetings. In April, the Board transitioned from the 2019 PAB membership to the 2020 PAB members. The transition meeting included a large group of new members, continuing members, and those whose terms are expiring. Zoom sessions are proceeding smoothly with most attendees already comfortable with virtual meetings.

No doubt our ministries will continue their activities and missions. ZOOM and other virtual conference services will help to keep our OLQP community together and continue its outreach to others.

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