

Finding Comfort and Searching for Answers



As you are well aware, COVID-19 recently caused the Archdiocese of Chicago to suspend all worship services and close all of its schools for the foreseeable future. A couple of days before this unprecedented decision, our principal called an impromptu meeting. She wanted to provide teachers with a heads up. Designing alternative E-learning plans requires lots of time and concentration.

I remember teachers leaving this meeting very concerned about how to meet this enormous challenge with such a short timeframe. The finishing touches on my E-learning plans were completed a couple of days later, on Friday morning, the day we were supposed to begin our spring break. After turning in my lesson plans, I remember having just a few minutes to think about what to take with me when I left school that afternoon. I decided upon to just two items, a stack of the most recent parish bulletins and my pyx (pictured above).

The official announcement was delivered at 2 p.m., providing students and their homeroom teachers about an hour to process and quickly review expectations. Backpacks were stuffed with textbooks. As DRE, my singular focus was on delivering parish expectations.

The vibe during dismissal was surreal. While the majority of students quickly scurried into their cars like alarmed squirrels in a city park, a handful of parents decided to stay in the courtyard, lingering around, looking for someone to hug. No one knew what the future might look like.

I began handing bulletins to both the families in their cars and those in the courtyard, encouraging them to pray and go to an on-line mass over the weekend. “Yes, it is still Lent, but the resurrection is not far off. I will send you an email on where to access a good on-line mass for this Sunday. Even though we won’t be publishing hard copies of our bulletin for a while, cherish this last issue,”

Bewildered, I stumbled my way over to the parish rectory, where I hoped to connect with Fr. Li, Joe and Jing. Through the grace of God the Holy Spirit, we did connect. We immediately began shaping a number of parish countermeasures to COVID-19. Thank God for our team!

It has been over a month since implementing different parish and school COVID-19 countermeasures. I love sharing my gifts on a mission-driven team. However, I still miss hearing the Word of God during the Liturgy on Sundays. The pyx, incidentally, has been hard at work, for after filming a mass, it helps me bring the Bread of Life home to my ‘sheltered in place’ wife.

Jing and I serve as evangelization leads for our parish. Yesterday we met with Jennifer Delvaux, our evangelization coach from the Arch. In a nutshell, we concluded that it is critical for us to continue developing creative ways to reach out to those who currently do not belong to any faith

community or even believe in God. Here are some questions that we came up with that we believe might help people spark a new friendship with Jesus Christ:

- What are the questions that your family and friends are asking you these days about faith, God, fear, hope?
- Who do you see that is really struggling with fear, hurt, anxiety, isolation?
- How have you been reaching out to others – what tools, technology, words, and actions?
- Who do you see not connected to any community or finding the consolation they need?
- Who do you think needs to hear the words of hope and comfort and peace that the Gospel brings?

We would be interested in hearing your thoughts, ideas and wonderings about how might the St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta Evangelization Team be more effective. If you have any suggestions on how our parish can reach a larger audience during these trying times, please contact Jing or me.