

## Ministry at St. Vincent de Paul During and Beyond the Covid-19 Crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought disruption to our lives and to the ways we strive to be Church, but it also calls us to look to new methods and opportunities to be disciples of the Lord. I would like to explain some of the changes you will see in the parish as we plan for a new program year. Greater details will follow. There are two challenges and one opportunity affecting these decisions:

1. Our limited ability to gather in groups.
2. A loss of 20 – 25% of our Sunday Income
3. The Archbishop's call for parishes to focus on the Eucharist this year.

The Mass is one of the most essential things we do as Catholics. We currently have two Sunday Masses, limited to gatherings of 120 each. As need grows and volunteer base expands we will be looking at developing more opportunities for Mass. The 10:30 Mass continues to be live streamed for those at home. Its one way we can stay connected.

The parish office has reopened with limited office hours. We will be open Monday through Thursday from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. We have had to lay off some staff, and are reducing the hours of other staff members.

Our parish school opened on August 31<sup>st</sup> with on-line instruction starting September 8<sup>th</sup>. We had hoped to provide an on-site study hall for first responders and families in desperate need, but that does not look possible with the present situation. We do have a strong and robust on-line program that we would encourage all parish families to explore. Call the school for more information (253) 839-3532.

In faith formation for this year, we will be focusing on the Eucharist in answer to the Archbishop's call. We are incorporating much of our Grapevine, Edge, Life Teen and Adult faith formation into a family based, intergenerational program through a combination of onsite and online offerings on Wednesday evenings. Brita Jaingue will be developing and overseeing this unique opportunity to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the Lord and his gift of the Eucharist. Additional online resources may be available.

Stephanie Gray Nguyen will continue working with families for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist preparation. Mission Trek will be put on hold for one year. The inability to gather for fund raising and service projects as well as the uncertainty of any programs operating next summer make this a necessity. Under mutual agreement, Vanessa Tompkins will take a year's leave of absence.

The archdiocese has recently lowered the age for confirmation to those in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. With the lower age for confirmation, the faith life of the family becomes more important. Our year of focusing on family faith formation centered on the Eucharist will be the pre-requisite and preparation for our confirmation program that will resume in 2021. High school seniors will have the option of participating in the adult confirmation program this winter. We will use this year to develop a new way of preparing both high school and middle school youth for this sacrament.

John Simpson will continue leading the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults that begins September 16<sup>th</sup>. We plan to start with on- line sessions. Please encourage anyone you know who might be interested in becoming a Catholic to contact John. John will continue to help parents prepare for the baptism of their infants and assist couples preparing for marriage. John will also be helping returning Catholics get reconnected to the community. He will also be involved in our family focus on the Eucharist.

Kate Goodson will continue to focus on lay ministry, taking on more responsibility for our Safe Environment program. She will also oversee our advocacy and outreach ministries and explore ways to foster our being a diversely rich community. Our Vincentians (Senior Group) and Mothers & Others will be incorporated in our family, intergenerational focus on the Eucharist.

Stephanie Gray Nguyen will also take on more responsibility for coordinating our liturgies. This will include overseeing the reservation process as well as the training and scheduling of ministers. We have had to lay off Patrick Shriver as the choir director and music coordinator. He will continue as one of our accompanists at Mass together with Gus Labayen. Occasionally you may even see our organist emeritus, Lois Hansen, at the organ bench.

Tracey Rockwell continues to serve as our parish administrator. Diana Carasa serves as our bookkeeper and communications director. Kim Bowman serves as an administrative assistant. All will have slightly reduced hours. Jennifer Tankiewicz will continue to serve as receptionist taking on additional administrative duties. We did have to lay off our second receptionist, Mari Hagen. Marty and Rafael will continue on our maintenance staff with slightly reduced hours. Elias, who was part-time on the maintenance team, has been laid off.

This re-organization is a cumulative reduction of practically two full-time positions (78.02 hrs. /wk.). I am sad to have to let some staff go and am most grateful to others who have graciously accepted a reduction of hours and of pay for the good of the parish and continuation of our vital ministries. As painful as they are, these reductions and other major cuts (such as our school subsidy and some costs for liturgy) will allow us to reach a balanced budget that anticipates a \$300,000 drop in Sunday income while maintaining essential ministries.

In the midst of this pandemic and beyond, we strive to protect and develop six pastoral areas.

- The Sacramental Life of the Church
- The call to Discipleship and deepening of Spirituality
- Finding new methods for Evangelization
- Fostering a Multi-Cultural Community
- Sustaining Ministries of Charity and Service
- Providing Parish Administration and Finance Management

We can choose to confront these challenging times with a sense of resiliency rather than negativity. To strengthen our resiliency it will be vital that we focus on our social connections, big or small; that we re-orientate and develop a sense of purpose; that we become adaptive and flexible; and that we focus on hope. Being active in the parish will help you be resilient in combating this pandemic. Here you will be connected with others. You have the amazing purpose of being a disciple of the Lord. We will practice flexibility as we try new ways of ministry. Even in these tough times we are called to be *“a growing Catholic community united and passionate in deepening and sharing our relationship with Jesus Christ through justice, love, and compassion”* as our parish vision states. This is our hope. Get involved, stay involved; and we will get through this together and be even stronger. More details to follow.

Fr. Bill McKee, Pastor