

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CHURCHES AFTER COVID-19?

We've all been through the wringer with the COVID19 virus and responses. But, as long as there's life, there's hope. In good times and bad, the mission of Jesus of healing hurting people and a broken world go on.

What are the broad areas that the church of today needs to keep in mind as we move forward?

- **We Are People on a Mission** – The mission of Jesus goes on. This mission of gathering God's people into His Kingdom, of healing, doing justice, acting lovingly, showing mercy, and making a practical difference in our neighborhoods, towns, and cities goes on. In whatever circumstance, we strive to keep our eyes on the goal and respond as Jesus would.
- **The Prize Goes to the Flexible, the Adaptive, the Resilient** – Following on being faithful to Jesus's mission is the necessity of being flexible, adaptive, and creative. Nature shows us it's not the strong that survive, but those species and individuals that can adapt to changes. Just as a porpoise looks ahead adjusts herself to the currents, so we as Christians must keep our eyes on Jesus and adjust ourselves to life's circumstances; this is resilience!
- **We Must Engage Our People in New Ways** – As COVID19 has shown us, we are in a new age. Our parishioners are not always at worship and around the parish community. Now we must amp up our communications with such things as 1) having text numbers and emails, 2) sending out weekly Flocknotes, Facebook, Twitter, etc. messages, 3) consider more online options, and 4) recruit young people to help us in these efforts.
- **Address the World's Real Problems** – COVID19 has shown us the real issues and challenges some people face every day. As Christians and parishes we will only be relevant to people if we real issues. As Cardinal Newman once said, "A good preacher has the Gospels in one hand and the newspaper in the other." We can get in touch with the issues of our day by 1) reading five reputable news sites a day to survey the issues or 2) surveying our people and young people to surface the issues they really struggle with. And then, once we grasp the issues, we can use the Gospel to address those issues. Pope Francis shows us that we don't have to address things perfectly, but we have to try.
- **All Parishioners Should Be Signed Up with Electronic Giving** – With people traveling, with irregular attendance, and with outbreaks like COVID19, we must move everyone to electronic giving. The church relies on the regular financial support of our people. This support enables our vital ministries and groups to continue. Electronic support will go a long way toward stabilizing our weekly and monthly and yearly donations.
- **All Parishioners Should Prayerfully Consider the Church in Their Estate Plans** – The great opportunity that EVERY Catholic parish is MISSING is asking parishioners to remember the church in their wills. This is important because a faithful generation is passing away. Every organization you can think of is in line ahead of us. The parish must have regular messages in every communication piece possible: homilies and pulpit announcements, television screens, announcement boards, bulletins, newsletters, websites, emails, Facebook, Twitter, special brochure mailings, etc. Parishioners can be asked to remember the parish in their wills through 1) a residual amount, 2) a percentage, or 3) as one of their children (if they have four children, consider the church as their fifth).
- **Continue Your Planning and Campaign Planning** – Today, thriving churches make long-range plans. Every successful organization is making plans right now. When COVID19 subsides, all kinds of organizations will be at the capital campaign starting line. If you have 1) building needs, 2) debt retirement needs, or campus renovation needs, you must make your plans and be one of the first ones out of the chute. The earlier your start, the more successful your fundraising campaign will be.
- **Be Intentional About Community Building** – The church is God's people. Just as we enjoy and family and friends, we enjoy each other. COVID19 has taught us not to take our friendships for granted. Look for opportunities to bring people together and to celebrate.