

# St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS

[www.stpaturbana.org](http://www.stpaturbana.org)

January 2021

## Reaching out

*A*re you tired of being cooped up with COVID?

It's funny but, the more we are cooped up, the more we have learned the value of reaching out. It doesn't always work; it's not the same as being there. But reaching out affirms the many ways we are connected to one another.



Perhaps you have family member whom you can't visit as you used to. Because these relationships are important to us, we've tried everything to stay in touch. Different technologies work for different people: Reaching out may mean making a phone call, writing a letter, doing a video call, or waving from a window. Whatever works, we seem to find it, because we love these people. Have you been on the receiving end of someone reaching out to you? You know that, on a day when you're sad or lonely, a phone call or a newsy note can make all the difference.

We've needed to reach out to people in organizations that we were part of before the shutdown. If you work or take classes from home,

how have you stayed in touch with your colleagues? If you are part of a parish or civic group, what has the group done to stay in contact? Reaching out to one another helps us stay connected with the people and groups who give meaning to our lives.

Have you been able to reach out to someone in need? Maybe you've been able to donate to a food pantry or to an organization that works for the homeless, refugees, or those who are ill. Maybe you haven't a cent to spare, but you've found a way to help a neighbor with groceries or medical appointments. Or maybe you've been helped by someone who saw your need and reached out to you.

All this reaching out is valuable. It is an important way of living out our lives of faith. We were doing a lot of it before the pandemic, but we've had to become

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## RCIA, pandemic edition

*W*ith the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing, stay-at-home recommendations, and online Mass, you might think inquiring into the Catholic faith would be one of the last things on people's minds. But God always calls people and draws them to the Church, no matter what is going on in the world.

The RCIA team has been meeting with inquirers, masked and distanced, since September. Father Anthony has been able to join several sessions, since his routine has been changed a lot by the pandemic (no hospital visits, fewer meetings). The group is small and, as usual, numbers have varied, as

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The Word became flesh, and we have seen his glory.  
Today true peace has come down to us from heaven!

# Our lives during the pandemic

Deaf ministry finds many ways to meet spiritual needs  
By Minette Sternke

In recent years ministry to the deaf and hard of hearing at St. Patrick's has included days of reflection for the deaf, participation in the Lessons & Carols programs, and interpreting for deaf people in the pews at Mass. We have not been able to get a certified Sign Language interpreter for Mass for some time due to a shortage of qualified interpreters and conflicts with their schedules. During COVID-19, the deaf community has appreciated the fact that the parish's live-streamed Masses on YouTube have automated captions. We have also experienced a wider ability to pray and worship in American Sign Language on the internet.



Immediately after the initial lockdowns and closures, the various deaf and hearing priests who serve the deaf worked out a schedule to have daily Sign Language Masses on the Internet, and Rosaries and other devotions as well. Deaf people who do not live in areas that offer interpreted Masses, or Masses with deaf priests, have been able to see, for the first time, Mass in their language and feel much more a part of the Church. There is still the challenge to receive the Eucharist, but the overall feeling of inclusion has been wonderful.

Several Catholic Deaf Facebook groups are hosting daily prayers online. Deaf people around the world are leading each other in praying the rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, St. Michael's Chaplet, and other prayers, in support of their intentions and the intentions of others. It's been very inspiring to see how the deaf community has taken up the mantle of support and prayer.

The National Catholic Office of the Deaf (I serve on the Board) has hosted online webinars for pastoral

workers on topics such as "Cyber-Catechesis," "Managing Depression and Anxiety in COVID," and "The Coming of the Holy Spirit." Deaf apostolates in other archdioceses have also posted vlogs or webinars to support the community.

After we "return to normal," I am hopeful that some of these resources and Masses will continue, with perhaps one deaf priest a week live streaming or taping Mass for those who have experienced a greater welcoming within the family of God. At St. Patrick's, I will be working with members of the deaf community to see where we go from here and what will meet the spiritual needs of this wonderful community.

Thank you to the people of St. Patrick's, who have encouraged and supported this ministry from its beginning.

## Reaching out

Continued from P. 1

more intentional about it now. We don't want to leave anyone in isolation. We learn new ways to reach out. And maybe, when we look back at 2020 in the future, we'll discern that this is one of the lessons that we've learned from the pandemic: the importance of reaching out, of actively seeking ways to be a friend, trying to leave no one behind.

Of course, the world's record for reaching out belongs to Jesus. Jesus is God reaching out to his beloved people in the most direct and intimate way that he could, by becoming one of us. No one has ever reached out as far as he, from heaven to earth, from boundlessness to neediness, from safety to pain, hunger, and death. He reached out to us, giving us his teaching and way of life to learn of God's love. This is what we celebrate at Christmas: the love of God, reaching out to us in every possible way. When you see Jesus in the manger, think about how far he was willing to go for us. And so, when we reach out to others, we are doing what we have learned from him.

*Believe  
that He has led you in His love  
to this, your place.  
If to the day  
the evil will suffice,  
so, too, the Grace.*

—Ruth R. Rains

## Letter from Susan Nagele

December 6, 2020  
Feast of St. Nicholas

To all the good people of St. Patrick Parish,

What a year this has been! I never expected to become a bit of a public health consultant for Maryknoll Lay Missioners worldwide. It has been a great opportunity to extend our services and try to work for the common good and build solidarity like never before. This pandemic has touched everyone's life in one way or another.



Rich Tarro

Now it is time for me to step aside; I retire at the end of December. All of you have been with me every step of this journey, which began in December 1984 when you sent me to Tanzania. After six years, I moved to Sudan for twelve years. Then, I ended up in Kenya, serving six years in Kitale and eight years in Mombasa. You've always supported us financially and again this year, you have given \$5000 from the parish and \$3000 from the Women of St. Patrick. All of these funds have gone to assist with extra expenses needed because of the pandemic. We are very grateful.

So, I would like to pass the baton. I hope that you will continue to support Maryknoll Lay Missioners through Rich Tarro who is doing great work in Mombasa Kenya. Rich is related to another St. Patrick parishioner, George Pennacchi, and you can read about his ministry at the following link:

<https://mklm.org/welding-education-and-hope/?bblinkid=246040272&bbemailid=26640638&bbejrid=1768887575>

In short, he manages the HOPE = Helping Orphans Pursue Education project. They provide education to orphans to break the cycle of poverty. Because of the pandemic, they are also providing food assistance. I know both the project and Rich, and have contributed, to their endeavors.

Kenya lacks adequate Covid testing and health care facilities. Reports from our missionaries say that many people are getting sick and the number of deaths is obvious from increased burials. Many health care workers in Mombasa have also died, lacking adequate PPE. The hospitals are full and overwhelmed. Earlier in the year there were floods and huge swarms of locusts that ate all the crops. Then the tourist industry collapsed with the pandemic. The economy is bankrupt and food is scarce.

Because there is only so much money available, funds for health care have been diverted to manage Covid. Therefore, daily medicines for treating HIV/AIDS and TB are in short supply. The bed nets to prevent malaria are lacking. Schools have been closed and the number of teenage pregnancies has risen because girls lose protection from assault and early marriage when forced to stay home. For people who live on the edge, any little crisis pushes them over and they suffer the consequences.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, let him remind us that we are one very big global family of brothers and sisters. Please continue to support missionaries with your prayer. One of you has prayed for me by name daily over the years. I encourage each of you to accompany a missionary in this way too. Living in another culture and language, far from family and friends, has special challenges that need prayerful support. And remember, if you hear the Holy Spirit calling you to serve overseas, please contact us and find out if we can be a good fit for you!

Wishing you a joyful Christmas season that brings you blessings in the New Year,

Susan Nagele

We are grateful for your prayers and financial support. If you would like to know more about Maryknoll Lay Missioners log onto our website, [www.mklm.org](http://www.mklm.org), or call toll free: 1-800-867-2980





*Thanks to all who donated to the Winter Coat Drive! Organizers were able to collect and deliver ten boxes of coats, jackets, gloves, and other winter wear, to be distributed to people in the community.*

The annual **Pro-Life Interfaith Service** is tentatively scheduled to be held at St. Patrick Church at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, January 22. Currently the public health department has limited the number of participants to fifty. Participants must register with St Patrick before the event. As the time draws near, be sure to check St. Patrick's website ([www.stpaturbana.org](http://www.stpaturbana.org)) for updated information.

*Joy  
with glimpses sometimes rare  
among the clouds,  
like sun,  
is always there.  
—Ruth R. Rains*



**Q: Who are the Fourteen Holy Helpers? Might they help us during our pandemic?**

**A:** Between 1347 and 1351, in a far less populated world, bubonic plague killed 25-60 per cent of the total population of Europe. Outbreaks rumbled on for more than 300 years; in 2019 there were still a handful of deaths from bubonic plague across the world. The 1918-19 flu pandemic killed 25 million people. From these we can assume that Covid-19 is not an unprecedented horror, bad as it is.

The devotion to the Fourteen Holy Helpers was established in response to the plague. Some of their names would be unfamiliar to us today: Margaret, George, Blasé, Erasmus, Pantaleon, Vitus, Christopher, Denis, Barbara, Cyriacus, Acacius, Eustace, Catherine, and Giles. (Giles is usually last on the list because he is the only one not a martyr.)

They all had their own “specialty”—Erasmus would be invoked by those suffering from stomach pains, including women in labor; Christopher is the patron saint of a holy death; and Catherine is particularly helpful to philosophers and students. But they are all, both individually and collectively, powerful and effective against epidemic diseases.

There may still be individual Catholics who seek succor and support from the Holy Helpers, but perhaps we need a new list, one that reflects our current needs and concerns. We might re-galvanize devotion to St. Agatha of Sicily, patron saint of nurses, or St. Bernardino, whose responsibilities included respiratory illnesses and chest problems. Or you can include your favorite saints in your own list!

The point is that the Fourteen Holy Helpers must have provided people suffering in a pandemic with solace, courage, or help. This devotion caught on quickly, deeply,

and widely even across language barriers and poor international communication systems.

If the Fourteen Holy Helpers succored plague victims, then also the heroism of “self-isolators” during the plague can inspire those of us who are fed up with social distancing. If indeed there is nothing new under the sun, we can be glad of it!

## Thanksgiving Food Baskets, 2020

Many brave volunteers stepped up to help the regular Food Pantry folks with the annual Thanksgiving food baskets.

Over the week of November 14-21, helpers picked up food items from local stores, sorted them into the parish center classrooms, and packed them into 500 bags. Using the classrooms enabled socially distanced preparing and packing of the supplies. Then even more helpers passed out the Thanksgiving bounty to a seemingly endless line of cars that waited patiently for service on Saturday morning, November 21.



Two hundred and thirty-six families enjoyed a Thanksgiving dinner and some additional groceries! This act of mercy and charity couldn't have happened without your financial gifts, the time of many volunteers, and the prayers of all.

Much joy to you all this holiday season from the Food Pantry Gang!

## How Mass ministry has changed during COVID-19

The biggest change due to the pandemic that I have seen is that liturgical ministers are no longer able to decide if they *wish* to serve; rather, they must discern if



they *can* serve during the pandemic. When our 110 commissioned EMs were asked last Spring if they could resume serving during COVID-19, 35 were able to say yes.

All of St. Patrick's EMs are very dedicated ministers, but the coronavirus has presented them with great service challenges: EMs with an immune-compromised child; EMs whose spouse has severe asthma or other underlying conditions; EMs whose elderly parents live with them; EM grad students, who served at many Masses during the late spring and early summer, but now need to begin teaching virtual weekend classes; EMs who have become educational assistants for their children or grandchildren now attending virtual classes at home; EMs who served for several months, but then needed to go into quarantine when tested positive for COVID-19; EMs who needed to go into quarantine when potentially exposed to someone with the virus.

Mass ministry has drastically changed because the number of volunteers needed are not available at this time, but we have learned to safely adapt. Two lectors at Mass are wonderful, but one can do just as well on a regular basis. Now that we have a better understanding of the number of parishioners that attend our Masses, we can safely serve with fewer EMs at some Masses.

Safety protocols are of utmost importance for both the congregation and ministers. St. Patrick's follows all diocesan safety protocols. Ushers strictly follow protocols while guiding Mass attendees to their pews and safely out of church at the end of Mass. In order to maintain social distancing, ushers regularly seat Sunday 10:00 Mass attendees in the main church, as well as in Brigid and Trinity halls. Before every Mass, lectors announce the use of masks during Mass and when receiving Communion. Father Anthony and EMs sanitize their hands several times during the distribution of Communion. An EM hand sanitizer stands in the center aisle during Communion, just in case extra hand sanitizing may be needed.

To address the safety concerns of our more vulnerable parishioners, our summer Sunday 8:00 Communion Service in the parking lot has evolved into winter's more restricted 8:00 Mass, where attendance is by registration only. Ushers take the temperatures of arriving Mass attendees, more extreme social distance results in a smaller number of attendees seated in the main church and, usually, in both halls. We continue to broadcast this Mass on FM97.8, so that those who wish may remain in their cars and listen to Mass. At

Communion, these parking-lot attendees come into the lower Gathering Space to receive Communion.

I, and probably the other Mass ministers as well, feel blessed to be able to *choose* to serve during the pandemic. We feel blessed to be members of a parish that has seen the need and adapted three weekend Masses to be welcoming and safe for parishioners. We feel blessed that today *all* our weekday and weekend Masses, as well as Masses (upon request) for weddings, funerals, and even Confirmation are now live-streamed and available for viewing on the St. Patrick Urbana YouTube channel.

Yes, we are blessed indeed!



## Praying via Zoom

St. Patrick's gatherings for centering prayer continue despite the pandemic. Although those who come to pray now must "gather" via Zoom, somehow the support of praying together is experienced despite the separation of distance!



Have you sometimes wondered a little about centering prayer, thought you might like to learn more about it but hesitated because of an inconvenience or lack of understanding about what it is or transportation difficulties? Well, this might be just the time to give it a try.

Sr. Audrey Cleary defined Centering Prayer simply as "sitting with God." Some helpful guidelines:

- Choose a "sacred word" as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
- Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, silently introduce the sacred word.
- When engaged with thoughts, return ever so gently to the sacred word.
- At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

The parish gatherings begin with Lectio Divina (prayerfully rereading a Scripture passage from the following Sunday's liturgy) before centering. After centering, the group shares in a few moments of intercessory prayer and may follow this with conversation on a brief passage from a recognized spiritual writer.

*Who?* Anyone. *Where?* Anywhere. *When?* Tuesdays, 7:00-8:00 p.m. *How?* Zoom. (If you need help, one of the centering prayer "regulars" will be happy to assist.)

*Overall time?* 45 minutes to an hour.

*Interested?* Contact Mary Lou Menches (344-1125, mmenches@illinois.edu).

## Did you know . . .

The Roman Catholic Church of the United States has moved National Migration Week from January to the last week in September to align it with the World Day of Migrants and Refugees (the last Sunday in September). However, when we are remembering Joseph and Mary's flight to another country seeking safe haven for



themselves and their newborn child, we might reflect on the experience of migrants—immigrants, refugees, victims and survivors of human trafficking, and others—whose journeys and lives have been made ever more dangerous and difficult by the pandemic.

### Can you help *In Focus* happen?

Many people contribute their time and talents to help *In Focus* come out each month. We're happy to have all kinds of help, but we have two special needs right now.

**Page Layout:** Three or four times a year, you would receive files of edited articles and photos, lay them out using whatever software you prefer, and create a PDF.

**Committee Member:** We meet monthly (virtually, for now) to brainstorm articles for the next issue. Meetings are usually held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month at 7 p.m.

Interested? Contact Cathy Salika at 367-7861 or csalika@illinois.edu.

### Vocation Prayer

Loving Father, thank you for calling us at Baptism to be your people. In response to your call we again say a joyful "Yes!" Keep us faithful to your mission and our vocation and bless with a renewed spirit of enthusiasm all who dedicate their lives in service to your people.

## RCIA, pandemic edition

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some inquirers find that this just isn't the right time for their exploration of the Catholic faith. It's a strange kind of introduction: distanced or online Mass, no parish events or celebrations – and no snack break in the RCIA sessions (we usually have really good snacks!).



After Thanksgiving, with local COVID-19 rates on the increase, we moved to Zoom for a while, at least, trying to keep our inquirers (and team members) healthy.

We ask you to pray for our Inquirers, soon to be Catechumens and Candidates. Ask God to fill them with his grace and blessings and draw them ever nearer. Pray that we all be “ambassadors for Christ,” that by our lives and words we invite others to know the great love God has for us, and to seek the faith.

*I trust in the Lord;  
my soul trusts in his word.*

--Psalm 130:5

## Christmas prayer of St. Pope John XXIII

O sweet Child of Bethlehem,  
grant that we may share with all our hearts  
in this profound mystery of Christmas.

Put into the hearts of men and women this peace  
for which we sometimes seek so desperately  
and which you alone can give.  
Help us to know one another better,  
and to live as brothers and sisters,  
children of the same Father.  
Reveal to us your beauty, holiness,  
and purity.

Awaken in our hearts  
love and gratitude for your infinite goodness.

Join us all together in your love.  
And give us your heavenly peace.  
Amen.

## *Our Father,*

Who art in Heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name;  
Thy Kingdom come,  
Thy will be done  
on earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil

*Amen.*

Angel of God  
My Guardian Dear,  
To whom God's Love  
commits me here.  
Ever this day be at my side  
To light and guard  
To rule and guide.  
Amen.



### You can read *In Focus* online

Did you know you can read *In Focus* online at the parish website? Click on the image of *In Focus*, or go directly to [www.stpaturbana.org/focus/](http://www.stpaturbana.org/focus/). From there you can

- read recent issues
- subscribe to receive an email when future issues are available
- review our complete archive of issues going back to 1981
- search the archive

It's a great resource for history buffs, genealogists, and people who love the story of our parish.

## Quick Fixin's from the kitchen of . . . Elizabeth Hendricks

### Leftover Stuffing Strata

2 c leftover stuffing  
3 eggs  
1-1/2 c milk  
1/2 c cheese (cheddar-jack, swiss, or other that melts well), divided  
Optional: cut-up bits of leftover turkey, ham, or cooked breakfast sausage or bacon  
Salt and pepper to taste



Beat eggs and milk together with a little salt and pepper. Put stuffing into buttered casserole dish in big chunks. Mix in about one third of the cheese. If using cut up meats, mix them in now. Pour the egg and milk mixture over the stuffing mixture, and let the stuffing soak up the liquid for about 10 minutes. Sprinkle the rest of the cheese over the top, then bake for 40 minutes in a 375 degree oven until the filling is firmly set. You can also assemble this the night before: cover the casserole with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, remove the plastic wrap and allow the casserole to sit at room temperature for about 15 minutes before baking.

*If you have a recipe you'd like to share, please send it to Mary Lou Menches (344-1125, mmenches@illinois.edu). The only requirement is that it be easy and quick to prepare!*

*St. Patrick's Parish In Focus* is published on the last weekend of the month in Urbana, Illinois. News items and information may be submitted by mid-month for the next issue. Materials must include the name and telephone number of the person submitting them.

Please send news items to infocusstpats@gmail.com. You may also send them to a Communications Committee member, leave them in the committee's mailbox in the parish center, or call a committee member. All submissions are subject to review and/or editing by the committee and staff. Bylines are generally omitted.

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The deadline for submitting articles and news items for the next (February) issue of *In Focus* is **Sunday, January 10.**



January Patron Saints by Fr. George Wuellner