HOPE FOR THE HOMELESS
It Starts with a Change of Heart

Catholic Health Care on the Front Lines
ArchCare vs. Coronavirus

“We’re Open for Business”
Catholic Charities Keeps Up the Good Works

Dancing to Heaven
A Liturgical Dance Ministry in Harlem

Plus:
Chaplains of the FDNY
What’s in a Creed?
Music for Quarantine
Maggi’s List of Must-Listen Podcasts
I don’t have to tell you that a lot has changed in our world in the past three months. Back in December, when we were celebrating Christmas—despite some disturbing reports about a virus beginning to spread halfway around the world—none of us could have foretold that by Easter a pandemic would keep us from attending Mass together; that 10,000-plus New Yorkers would have lost their lives to the virus, our hospitals would be overwhelmed, our cities and towns in lockdown.

All around the world, humanity is experiencing widespread sickness, death and deep uncertainty. And yet Jesus tells us, “Be not afraid.” How are we to respond to Our Lord’s message? And how are we to reconcile the tragedy of so many untimely deaths with the most joyful time in the Church’s liturgical year: the Paschal season of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension into heaven?

First, let us be humble. We recognize that many of our plans and assumptions have been upended. It turns out that we human beings are not in control of this world, despite our lofty achievements in technology and business. We certainly had to change plans for this issue of Archways. We had put together a six-page feature story about volunteer opportunities around the region. Then the pandemic hit, and our story became instantly outdated.

Not that these charitable organizations have stopped delivering services to the poor, the homeless, the afflicted. For the moment, however, they are unable to deploy volunteers safely in many previous roles. So we decided to put the story on hold. In its place, we’ve substituted coverage of the Church’s efforts during the health crisis, including in-depth interviews with Scott LaRue, president and CEO of ArchCare, and Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York.

Second, let us be hopeful. When Jesus said, “Be not afraid,” He was reassuring the apostles that, although they were helpless in the face of a storm at sea, He would save them. As He will save us. That’s why we decided not to postpone publication of “Hope for the Homeless,” our feature story about a Catholic Charities program that is helping homeless men and women find their way to a new life of stability and purpose. Programs like this will be even more essential in the aftermath of the pandemic, which is hitting the homeless population with particular cruelty. Perhaps the tragedy of Covid-19 will help lead us all to the “change of heart”—remembering to see Jesus in our homeless brethren—that the story calls for.

Elsewhere in this issue, you’ll find a profile of the chaplains of the FDNY, advice on how those who married civilly can bring their union into the Church, and a look at some of the liturgical dance ministries of the archdiocese.

I certainly feel humble and hopeful when I see the responses of New Yorkers to the current crisis—the dedication and courage of doctors, nurses, hospital staff, EMTs, first responders and other essential workers and volunteers whose sacrifices inspire us all.

And I am grateful for all of you, the faithful, who continue to support your parishes and the archdiocese, help your neighbors, and attend—for now, virtually—our Masses and prayer sessions. Thank you for continuing to hold aloft the light of Christ even in this time of darkness.

When the time comes, I can’t wait to welcome you back to church.

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York
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What’s the difference between the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed? Why doesn’t the Church just pick one?

The Nicene Creed is arguably the most important non-scriptural text in the history of Christianity. It came about in the early fourth century A.D. as a result of the Arian crisis. In contrast to accepted Christian doctrine, Arianism maintained that the Second Person of the Trinity (God the Son) was not co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father, but had been created by the Father at a certain point in time. In this view, Jesus would not be fully divine, and therefore He would not be able to redeem us fully.

The question polarized the early Church. Many cities had both a Catholic church and an Arian church, and passionate debates filled street corners, taverns and marketplaces. In 325, fearing that the issue would get out of hand and lead to civil war, the Roman Emperor Constantine, the first Christian emperor, called the Nicene Council, also known as the First Ecumenical Council. The assembled bishops issued a statement of belief that is still recognized today as the Nicene Creed. In the history of Christianity, it came to be known as the Nicene Creed.

In 381, the Nicene Council convened in Constantinople to address further questions related to the nature of Christ and the relationship between the Father and Son. The bishops agreed that the Father is always the same, that the Son is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, and that all other beings are creatures. This council issued the Creed of Constantinople, which was expanded upon in later years. The full name of the creed we recite at Mass every Sunday is the Nicene Creed, or, more commonly, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

So you're stuck at home during the coronavirus lockdown and thinking about marriage? What can you do? Church enthusiastically invites you to consider the possibility of validating your marriage.

What is validation? This is the process of validating an existing union, but the true exchange of consent of the spouses. As such, there will be a period of preparation and formation prior to your ceremony to exchange vows in the Church. Your priest or deacon will guide you in the preparation and/or program you recommend.

In most cases, if one spouse is Catholic, the answer is yes. The specifics will vary according to your situation. If you and/or your spouse were baptized in (or received into) the Catholic Church, and you were married in a civil ceremony or under another religious denomination, your marriage is not valid in the eyes of the Church (unless you received a dispensation). That said, the Church enthusiastically invites you to look into the possibility of validating your marriage.

The process, called convalidation, is a relatively simple one if neither spouse was previously married. You and your spouse must agree to the convalidation of the marriage and then participate in a two-hour session in what is now the parish office of St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral.

What to do in the meantime

Your marriage is valid and fully binding in the States. However, if either of you or both of you are Catholic, your marriage is not recognized by the Church unless it is validated. The process of validation is usually handled by the parish of the Catholic spouse with the assistance of the archdiocesan marriage tribunal. There is no cost to you to have your marriage validated. The purpose of the process is to affirm the bond between you and to guide you in the preparation for a sacramental marriage.

Have you considered marriage counseling to improve your relationship? You might want to talk to the deacon assisting you about how you can make the most of the convalidation process. You may wish to choose a wedding celebration that includes a renewal of vows.

If you and/or your spouse were baptized in a non-Catholic church or were married outside of the Catholic Church, you will need to have your marriage examined by the Church before you are able to be married in the Catholic Church. First, you need to choose the parish in which you wish to have your marriage recognized by the Church. Your priest or deacon will guide you in the preparation and/or program you recommend.

Finally, you will need to choose the date and the most suitable type of ceremony. Again, the parish will be very helpful in guiding you.

There will be a wedding ceremony on the day of your convalidation in which you will receive the sacrament of marriage, the presence of God and the many gifts of the Church into your union. So, it’s a perfect occasion to celebrate with family and friends!
KEEPING THE FAITH
The Church Steps Up in a Crisis

At first, it was a faint, if troubling, rumble of thunder from beyond the horizon: an outbreak of a new and strangely named viral disease in China. Months later, when the first case appeared in New York, few realized how swiftly and brutally Covid-19 would overturn so many of our earthly assumptions. On March 8, parishioners attended Sunday Mass in the Archdiocese of New York, unaware that it would be weeks – or months – before they would be able to do so again.

The effects now are felt in every part of the world and every part of our lives. Our best-laid plans – for Easter Mass, family gatherings, first Communions, confirmations – are on hold. Our daily routines have unraveled; the lucky work from home, the unlucky face unemployment, and most face an altered financial future. The poor are suffering, and vulnerable, and especially those in health care and first responders, put their well-being, particularly those in health care and first responders, put their well-being, at risk every day.

The doctors, nurses and other workers of the world and every part of our lives will be altered directly by the coronavirus, or how the experience of social distancing, however long, may transform the social contract going forward. For this Spring 2020 issue of Archways, we have replaced our coverage of recent news, services and upcoming events from the departments of the archdiocese with this special report on faith in the time of Covid-19: a mix of updates and interviews about how the Church’s ministries are responding to the multifaceted crisis – to community, loved ones and God. Naturally, we have some suggestions.

DIGITAL MINISTRIES
There is a growing array of options for the faithful to connect with the Church and fellow Catholics through the Internet. Step one is to subscribe to the daily Mass, available every day to visit its website and social media pages for opportunities to connect and participate at a safe distance and for words of encouragement and uplift from your pastor and others. If you are not a subscriber, contact the parish office. Beyond the parish level, the Adult Faith Formation Office of the Archdiocese of New York has put together an exhaustible listing of dozens of online services and resources to help Catholics get through this difficult time – including virtual Masses and prayer sessions, playlists, books and videos, counseling services and more. A few highlights:

• Sunday Mass from Saint Patrick’s Cathedral (on cable or web via Catholic Faith Network); live-streamed on saintpatrickscatholicnetwork.org/live and YouTube; and on the Catholic Channel of Sirius XM (Channel 129).

• Divine Mercy Chaplet daily on Catholic Faith Network, every Friday at 3:00 p.m. from the Office of Adult Faith Formation.

• FORMED.org, which offers movies, audios, books, talks, children’s materials and more. (If your parish’s FORMED subscription is inactive, email formed@archny.org to get connected.)

• Family Faith at Home, a weekly religious education resource from the archdiocesan Office of Youth Faith Formation with activities for younger and older children.

• Daily Mass readings, with commentary available from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops or from the Word Among Us.

• Morning and evening prayers available free from Magnificat during social distancing.

THE ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION
My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love you above all things and I desire to receive you in 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.

BRIDGING THE DISTANCE
Staying Close to Christ and the Church

As we prepare to publish this issue of Archways, a stay-at-home order is in effect for all 10 counties in the Archdiocese of New York, and seems likely to continue for at least a few more weeks. The term of the moment is social distancing. We don’t know how long restrictions will last, but until they are lifted (and in the event that they are later reimposed), the best antidote is social connectedness (which does not require physical proximity) and spiritual closeness – to community, loved ones and God. Naturally, we have some suggestions.

BREAD OF LIFE
When we are unable to receive the Eucharist for any reason, we can receive grace by making an Act of Spiritual Communion (see below). While in no way the equivalent of the sacrament itself, the prayer allows us to experience a lesser form of union with Jesus until the time we can again receive Him sacramentally.

A QUARANTINE PLAYLIST
We asked Dr. Jennifer Donelson, the director of liturgical music at St. Joseph’s Seminary in Yonkers, to recommend some tracks to console and inspire us during this time of confinement. For her playlist of great liturgical selections for the season of Easter, click here. Highlights include:

• Giovanni Gabrieli’s 1597 masterpiece, Jubilate Deo, recorded in rehearsal by the renowned Voces8 vocal ensemble.

• William Byrd’s Hae, Dies, a magnificent choral setting of a Paschal antiphon (“This is the day which the Lord has made”), sung by the London Oratory Schola Cantorum Boys Choir.

• Arvo Pärt, Gloria, from the Estonian composer’s 1990 Berliner Messe. Paul Tillier conducts Theater of Voices.

• Charles Tournemire’s passion, mystic Vocal Improvisation on the “Victimae Paschali” motet, performed by Olivier Latry in performance at Saint Patrick’s Cathedral (on cable or web via Catholic Faith Network; every Friday at 3:00 p.m. from the Office of Adult Faith Formation).
As the deadliest pandemic in a century sweeps through New York, the caregivers of ArchCare—the multifaceted health and eldercare agency of the Archdiocese of New York—are working tirelessly to protect their clients, most of whom are elderly or suffer serious medical conditions. Almost all of them are at high risk for life-threatening illness should they become infected with Covid-19.

This critically important effort is taking place on many fronts, because ArchCare serves a diverse patient population with a wide variety of needs. Its programs (see “The Many Mercies ArchCare serves a diverse patient population” in the March 2020 issue of Archways) serve the populations most at risk for Covid-19. How is the agency dealing with the pandemic's first weeks?

**Archways: What can be done for families of Covid patients who are unable to visit their loved ones?**

**Scott LaRue:** We've enhanced family communication throughout the crisis. We implemented a text message and email notification system, and I host a live webinar for our community to answer family members' questions. Our goal from day one has been to communicate transparently. Several families have sent in notes of thanks at how supportive staff has been during this time.

We're in a circumstance where it's possible that a family member was not able to be with their loved one when they passed. That adds complexity and difficulty for everyone involved, and it requires additional support and caring.

We are working with Calvary Hospital and their bereavement program so that we can offer bereavement services and support to families affected by Covid-19. This bereavement support is virtual at this point. Over time, it could become part of an in-person bereavement support group, but right now you're not allowed to do that.

**Archways: Anything you’d like to say in closing?**

Scott LaRue: This is an unprecedented crisis. It’s occurring everywhere in the community. To get through it, we just need to pull together for the benefit of the people we serve.

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**CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE ON THE FRONT LINES**

**ArchCare vs. Coronavirus**

**OTL: We enacted our disaster plan in the third week of February. We actually implemented procedures before the CDC suggested them.”**

**— Scott LaRue**

**Archways: Covid-19 is impacting every one of our programs. It’s widespread in our community, and if it’s widespread in the community it’s going to be widespread in the programs. We enacted our disaster plan in the third week of February. We actually implemented procedures before the CDC suggested them. We started screening all our staff for temperatures and international travel before they came into any of our facilities. We put infection control monitors in each of our program locations to make sure people were following proper procedures, and to answer questions of family members. Eventually, we prohibited visits by anyone who did not work for ArchCare, which the state later came to require. We set up a special Covid-19 hotline [877-239-1998 or email info@archcare.org] for the people we serve. We’re a remnant at widespread in the archdiocese. Whatever they might need to get through this crisis, that’s what the hotline is there for. They should feel free to call it. It’s staffed 24 hours a day.

Currently we’re taking calls from people in need of answers to medical questions and getting resources to people who are sheltered in place and unable to get out – especially the elderly and the chronically ill. The hotline is also a resource if someone is trying to reach a patient in one of our programs and they can’t get through. If they call that hotline we’ll connect them to the right people so that they can get information about their loved one.

Our agency is caring for people with Covid-19 throughout the archdiocese. We increased bed capacity at Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center, in Harlem, by 67 beds, all for Covid-19 patients.

**Archways: ArchCare administers the hospital chaplaincy program for the Archdiocese of New York. Is that program functioning during the crisis?**

**Scott LaRue:** We’ve worked with the hospitals to make sure that the priests can continue to visit patients. At the request of Cardinal Dolan, we also requested from the CDC suggested them: “We started implementing procedures before the CDC suggested them.”

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A conversation with Msgr. Kevin Sullivan

For Business

Catholic Charities is open for business. The problems we had been providing two months ago are suspended. Some of our classrooms, where we’re helping kids with early intervention for learning delays — those are closed. We’re still trying to keep in contact with families by reaching out to them and, to the extent possible, providing them with resources where they can work with their children. We have a huge number of in-school and after-school programs that involve tutoring, some counseling, some college-prep programs — those can be done in the same way, because schools are closed. However, our staff tries to stay in touch with the families.

Many Catholic Charities workers have been reassigned to the enrichment centers, which are providing day care for children of essential workers. That’s important work that can’t be done remotely. So there’s been a certain amount of reassigning of people, a lot of working remotely. Even though we’re open for business, it’s certainly not business as usual.

Archways: What about immigration services and mental-health and addiction services?

Msgr. Sullivan: Catholic Charities immigration services continue to be provided, but remotely. Our staff are taking calls and responding to requests for help through the New York State New Americans Hotline, ActionNYC and other helplines. Attorneys are now providing counsel via phone, only meeting in person when absolutely necessary — for example, to get forms signed. Day laborers served by Catholic Charities, in particular, are acutely feeling the impact of Covid-19, with so many job sites closed. While observing social distancing guidelines, our staff are out there providing bags of food, handing out personal protective equipment and answering questions.

Catholic Charities also continues to operate the Parish Counseling Network (PCN), which offers mental-health counseling to parishioners in the archdiocese — though now only remotely. Given the anxiety that many are experiencing, this resource is more in demand than ever.

Msgr. Sullivan: Some of the traditional services that we had been providing two months ago are suspended. Some of our classrooms, where we’re helping kids with early intervention for learning delays — those are closed. We’re still trying to keep in contact with those people — in a number of cases, with severe adjustments in how we do it. And with some challenge.

For example: We still have people who are in residences because of developmental disabilities. They need personal care. They need people to go in and help them to get through the day. You can’t do that type of work socially distanced. So our workers are continuing to perform those services. We obviously want to ensure their safety.

To that end, we reduced the number of people we are sending in, but you can’t reduce that number to zero. So at our food pantries: What we have been trying to do is the past four or five years is to make the food pantries “client choice.” People come in, they “shop” a little bit, and they choose the particular foods they want within guidelines that govern quantity and encourage good nutrition.

Well… you can’t do that now. You can’t just let everyone in to look over the selections. So we changed client choice. At this time, for the most part, we pack the food and put it outside in boxes so people can grab the food and go at a social distance.

Msgr. Sullivan: We are still taking donors. Some of our food pantries need volunteers, because we have to pack the bags of food for our clients.

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CULTURE CORNER

MAGGI’S LIST

If you have never listened to a podcast, it’s probably only a matter of time. According to the latest surveys, 90 million Americans listen to at least one per month. Not bad for a format that didn’t exist two decades ago.

During social distancing, a podcast can also be a great way to connect with family and friends. You can listen together while preparing meals, or set a time to chat with a friend about a podcast you’re both listening to.

But with some 750,000 podcasts out there, the hunt for a really good one can seem daunting. We asked Catholic podcast producer Maggi Van Dorn (host of America Media’s Deliver Us, a deep dive into the Church’s sexual abuse crisis), to suggest a few that are well-produced, thought-provoking and oriented toward strong faith values.

ON BEING

Long before the explosion of podcasts, On Being was presenting in-depth radio interviews with great thinkers of our day, from poets to scientists to religious luminaries. Host Krista Tippett combines a background in journalism and religious studies with a thorough immersion in the work of her guests. Each episode is an intimate, deeply personal and intellectually rich conversation about the human experience and our relationship to the cosmos. To sort through a catalogue of interviews by subject area, visit onbeing.org.

HEAVYWEIGHT (GIMLET)

A podcast that will make you laugh and possibly cry in the same episode. Comedy writer Jonathan Goldstein talks to ordinary people about “the moment everything changed.” Usually this involves the guest revisiting a conflict, separation or unresolved question with the help and hilarious commentary of the comedian host. It’s surprising–poignant, expertly crafted and a must-listen.

KIND WORLD (WBUR)

If you’re looking to dip your toes in some heart-warming, day-brightening, short-form podcasts, look no further than Kind World. These are short stories of human kindness that can make you cry. (In a good way) in 10 minutes or less.

This American Life (WBEZ Chicago / PRX)

The gold standard of narrative reporting in the radio/podcast space, This American Life has taken home pretty much every broadcasting award. Each hour-long show elaborates on a unifying theme through a series of true stories—a highly literary form of journalism with fascinating characters and a well-developed plot.


The top news stories explained by New York Times journalists in conversation with host Michael Barbaro. The result is 20 minutes of super-focused yet accessible storytelling about the biggest events and issues of the day—a remarkable feat of audio journalism and my favorite way to hear the news.

America Media

The digital media arm of America magazine produces podcasts every week. Its slate of podcasts, including Plague, a narrative-driven series that tells the complicated story of AIDS and the Catholic Church in the 1980s and ’90s; Inside the Vatican, a weekly round-up of news and analysis from Rome; Jesurical, which offers a smart, young take on faith and culture; and Deliver Us, my podcast about the Church’s sexual abuse crisis, seeking hope in darkness by facing the issue head-on.

For more podcast ideas, check out the podcast networks Radiotopia, WNYC and Gimlet. If you find a show you like, chances are you’ll find podcasts of similar style and production value on the same network.
In the face of such a large-scale tragedy, it’s tempting to blame it all on the politicians and the plutocrats – and the homeless people themselves – and wash our hands of the matter. We need to resist this temptation, says Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York. “As a society we need to commit to policies that reduce homelessness; as Catholics we need to do our part to help individuals and families,” he says. "When we pass people on the street we can do at least a little – even a smile. We can also volunteer or donate to help organizations like Catholic Charities and the agencies it sponsors to alleviate the problem.”

Catholic Charities is a key component of a social justice coalition offering our homeless sisters and brothers secure housing, life skills training, and a pathway out of trauma and into new lives as functioning members of the community. At the heart of these transformational efforts is the Education Outreach Program, launched 30 years ago by Catholic Charities and the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing, and now replicated in similar programs offered by an array of religious and community groups throughout the region. In the following pages, we’ll introduce you to some people who turned their lives around with the help of the program. The first step: remembering to see Jesus in all our fellow humans.
T
ings really started to change for me one day when I went to see my father at his job to get some money to get high. I went with a scheme. But my father said, “Arthur, I have something to tell you. You’re going to be a grandfather.”

That knocked me off my feet. He was talking about Tara, my oldest daughter. I thought, “Oh, my God!” I just did something to me. I took the money from my father for drugs, but I was changed a little bit. I wanted to get my life together. I was saying to myself, “I’m 39 years old, I’m about to be a grandfather, I don’t know where my son is, I don’t know who my daughter is. Something has to give.”

This time, when I went back to Fort Washington Men’s Shelter, I did something different. There were two nuns, Sr. Dorothy [Gallant, SC] and Sr. Teresa [Shehan, RSM], who came to the shelter every Tuesday evening. Sr. Teresa was very short, with gray hair. We thought she was crazy at first. Here was this very little white lady in a shelter with a thousand men. We would look and say, “What’s wrong with her?” Both she and Sr. Dorothy would try to get us to go into these groups called Life Experience and Faith Sharing Associates (LEFSA, “Life Experience Faith Sharing Associates,” whose members have experienced homelessness, are uniquely able to reach out and help people who are on the street,” George Horton says.}

Once an individual has been placed in a Safe Harbor shelter - which offers security, dignity and access to services to address his or her underlying issues - they can work toward qualifying for an empowerment program like the EOP. For the first time in years, they are methodically working toward a goal.

“The trauma in the homeless person’s life freezes them,” Kel- sick says. “We try to help them to unfreeze themselves.”

Not that Kel sick is taking the cred- it. “It’s not us,” she says. “It’s them, their own gifts and their own hard work. Because they trusted us, they felt that they had somebody on their side. And that’s what it is. We are on their side.”

To be homeless is to experience a great trauma, and it often comes atop previous traumas in the homeless person’s life. Re- covering from it is a long process that requires much work on the part of the individual and sup- port from the community.

Each person’s path is unique, but in general the journey can be divided into three phases: stabilization, during which an individual gets into shelter and begins to address underlying issues like addiction or mental illness; empowerment, attained through training in life skills and self-knowledge; and finally, freedom and responsibility - the move to a residence of one’s own, usually with a job or vol- unteer role, and an appropriate level of support.

To start the first phase of recov- ery, the homeless individual has to believe that it’s worth the ef- fort. “People who need help feel that they have no hope. They are disconnected from society,” says Allison Kelsick, outreach program director for Catholic Charities of New York. “Trust is a big issue.” If you can instill trust, through the work that we do, people begin to get hope. That’s the beginning.”

Often it is formerly homeless vol- unteers or staff members who are able to create trust in others and show them that there is indeed cause for hope. “Groups like the Life Experience Faith Sharing Association, whose members
A bright student and exceptional athlete, Michelle Riddle (EOP graduate 2003) became pregnant, and by age 14 when her alcoholic parents separated after a house fire. Eventually, her mother found an apartment – with a boyfriend who actually abused Michelle. By the age of 16 she left school. In her mid-20s, addicted to crack, she found stable homes with relatives for her three children as her own life spiraled into homelessness. At 36, HIV-positive, she went to prison for selling drugs.

When I went to prison in 1998, I was considered the world’s smallest drug dealer. I weighed all of 88 pounds. My hair was so matted that they had to cut it all off, because we couldn’t even comb it. They told me that if I did the prison’s substance abuse treatment programs, I would get work release and then I could parole. The prison treatment programs were good. Narcotics Anonymous helped me realize that I had a disease, that the driving force to get the next hit was my disease. When I came home from prison, I had been clean for four years. Today I have been clean for 16 years. After 12 weeks, participants take possession of their destiny. In writing down and sharing their life stories, the participants recognize their own strength and suffering that go on when somebody suffering that goes on when somebody doesn’t have a place to lay their head. It’s suffering on top of suffering. At some point a person becomes disconnected, they become unstable, even to avail themselves of the services that are available.

Before a homeless individual can enroll in the EOP, she or he must achieve stabilization. Usually this means residence in a “safe harbor” shelter such as one of the Beacon homes operated and sheltered by Catholic Charities. The EOP candidate also must be in consistent treatment to address any mental health issues, and those with substance abuse issues must have remained “clean” for 60 days. They have to be ready to become serious collaborators in the process of their own recovery.

When my mother died, I was afraid of idle time. In the past, I always dealt with death by getting high. I got in touch with Ms. K. at New York Catholic Charities, who told me, “Come on in and help with the EOP’s 15-year anniversary.” That was 10 years ago and I’m still volunteering at Catholic Charities. On any given Tuesday, you can find me there; after that I go to my NA home group. It’s like tea before the cake. You can bank on it.

In addition, the participants are assigned mentors to walk with them past milestones large – filling out forms to apply for housing assistance, filling tax forms, preparing for a court appearance and eventually perhaps getting probation cut. Unfortunately, the only way out of homelessness is to kowtow to a system that goes on when somebody doesn’t have a place to lay their head. It’s suffering on top of suffering. At some point a person becomes disconnected, they become unstable, even to avail themselves of the services that are available.

GH: What can we do as Catholics to help our homeless neighbors?

AW: We have to read the sermon on the mount again and understand the compassion of Christ as our starting point. We need to think of the scriptures, the gospel, and see Jesus reaching out to people who are in need of healing, who are suffering, who are on the margins. When we receive the Eucharist, are we thinking about how we can love people who are left out? Recently, when Cardinal Dolan dedicated new housing units built by Catholic Charities up at St. Augustine’s in the Bronx, he thanked the audience of builders, contractors, and state and city officials for applauding, but then said of the project: “It’s our duty. What we are required to do.” To me, that’s a core message. This is not just a “nice thing to do.” We can be altruistic and we can be nice to each other, but we are required
AMAZING GRACE

In 2002, at the age of 47, Deborah Canty (EOP graduate, 2005) checked herself into a rehab center. After an upbringing marked by sexual and emotional abuse, followed by years of alcoholism and horrific nightmares of a suppressed 20 21

Deborah Canty (EOP graduate, 2005)

In there, I met some friends that I still have today. “God loves you and we love you too.” From then on, I started hanging out with the LEFSA women. In there, I met some friends that I still have today.

“I used to put down homeless people. ‘Oh, they homeless because they don’t want to work,'” I said. “They lazy.” So God said, “Let me put you in a shelter so you see people on the street just like you.”

Living in a shelter was hard. For the first three months at New Providence, I didn’t want to know any of the women because I saw a lot of arguing and fist fighting. The residents called you the “B word and never used your real name. I signed myself out for the day as much as I could. I went to my AA meetings or to my doctors’ appointments. I visited my daughter. Then one day I was signing out and I heard some people singing “Amazing Grace.” My mother and grandmother used to sing it when they were in some of their harder times. Pen in hand, I looked at the security guard. She said, “Go back there, Miss Canty, you’ll like them.” So I went back, and this lady came up to me.

“Hi, I’m Sister Dorothy. Would you like to join our Life Experience and Faith Sharing (LEFSA) group? We’re not church. It’s about your lived experience and your faith, whatever that is.” Sister Dorothy’s presence made me feel so

Sister Dorothy suggested I attend the life skills empowerment program at New York Catholic Charities. So I met George Horton and Ms. K. Ms. K was tough and no nonsense. I respected her for that. George says, “Everybody has a story worth hearing.” I wrote about how I had been sexually abused. I told my story at graduation, and I told it at other places after that. Sometimes when I finished, I heard people say, “I can identify with that.” or “Something like that happened to me,” or “Thank you for bringing the monster out of the closet.” Maybe my words were setting them free to tell their stories. What they thought was their shame was not their burden to hold onto. We think the sexual abuse was our fault, and that’s what keeps us quiet. But what does a child have to say about a grown person taking advantage of him or her sexually or mentally? Get the guilt back to where it belongs.

I also started seeing a therapist once a week. That was because Ms. K told me I should. My therapist allowed me to express myself, to let the anger come out. I had to get it out, whatever it took, screaming and crying or hitting things. I had to do that until I was too exhausted to be angry anymore. It took a long time.

In the past, I was a nasty, mean drunk. I couldn’t even look at my reflection in the mirror because I didn’t like what I saw. I would fight at the drop of a hat. If you said two or three words I didn’t like, I was going to swing on you. During recovery I started asking, “Why am I so bitter? Why am I hurting so bad?” I put myself in other people’s shoes, and I became the first to apologize. People who knew me before were shocked.

For a long time, I had been trying to get housing. Some of the places were so scary and run down, I didn’t allow my dog to live there. Finally, an organization called SUS – Services for the Underserved – offered me a room in an SRO called New Life Homes, only six blocks from my daughter’s apartment. When I first went to see it, I wasn’t sure. It was a little studio, and it had a stove but no oven. At the shelter that night, I got on my knees. “God, let your will be done. Cause you know what’s best for me.” The next day I looked in the paper, and Macy’s was having a sale on toaster ovens. So I went and bought one, and I also bought three nonstick frying pans – small, medium and large. I gave the large frying pan to my daughter. And I said, “I’m claiming that apartment in the name of Jesus.” That’s where I’ve lived ever since.

After I got my apartment, Sister Dorothy called me. “Debbie, we have been talking, and we want to give you a job on our LEFSA team.” I said, “I can’t do what you’re doing.” Sister Dorothy was feisty. “Weren’t you homeless? Of course, you can do it.” That was nine years ago and I’m still working for LEFSA today. Two days a week, I go to the shelters to sponsor hope. I let people know that what God did for me, he can do for them.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

We’re not asking everyone to become social workers. But in our mind we should say, Let me see this person. Maybe that’s the starting point. You don’t pass a homeless person on the street without seeing. You don’t just look the other way. You engage, you look, you encounter. That may be the starting point. It could be a smile, it could be a wave.

Once you see that human being, once you hear the stories, you will be changed. You will see the world differently. Jesus calls you to see that person. By the activity of trying to know them, you will change.

WE NEED TO DISCARD ALL OUR PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS AND REALLY LISTEN TO THE STORIES OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN THROUGH THE WRINGER.

GEORGE HORTON

For a list of Catholic Charities homeless services, see page 27

For the Homeless, Freedom
It’s that quiet moment late in the Mass, after the Communion hymn has ended and the faithful are seated or kneeling to receive God’s blessings. With a whisper of flowing gowns, eight dancers – members of the liturgical dance ministry of St. Charles Borromeo, Harlem – glide up the aisle to the altar, where they stand facing the cross as the piano comes quietly to life.

The voices of the choir well up into a hymn of praise, and the dancers join the song in steps and gestures sweeping and subtle. In time, they move back into the aisle and, surrounded by the congregation, make visible the spiritual experience – receiving thankfully the grace of God and lifting the heart in thanks and joy. As the hymn comes to a close, the dancers recess back down the aisle and the priest rises for the closing of the liturgy. “Let us pray,” he says.
There are many ways to pray. When we are young, we are taught to “say our prayers,” and there are many powerful prayers in the Catholic tradition that we speak in church and in everyday life. But not all prayers are made up of words.

“For me,” wrote St. Therese of Lisieux, “prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.” Prayer can take the form of silent meditation or wordless music. It can be contemplative, sorrowful, joyful. A painting or sculpture can be a prayer by the artist, and its contemplation a prayer for the one who sees it. Liturgical dance, too, is a form of prayer, engaging the mind, ears and eyes, but also the whole body.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2562) tells us, “Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays.” Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays.

There are many ways to pray. When we are young, we are taught to “say our prayers,” and there are many powerful prayers in the Catholic tradition that we speak in church and in everyday life. But not all prayers are made up of words. There are many ways to pray. When we are young, we are taught to “say our prayers,” and there are many powerful prayers in the Catholic tradition that we speak in church and in everyday life. But not all prayers are made up of words.

The Prayer movement. "Let them praise His name with dancing and make music to Him with timbrel and harp." Psalm 149:3

There are several other liturgical dance ministries in the Archdiocese of New York, including Mater Dei, headquartered at the Hispanic Catholic Charismatic Center at St. Anthony of Padua in the Bronx, and The Moving Prayer, which has collaborated with youth ministries, performed at Masses and other events and given workshops introducing the art of liturgical dance. “I teach how movement can be used as prayer – how creating a relationship with God can be creative, fun and something more than we could have thought.”

Denise Peralta founded Mater Dei in 2015. “Dancing is the most amazing way to praise God,” she says. “When words are not enough your body just wants to express praise to God.” She notes that some Catholics view dance ministry with skepticism. “At New York Catholic Youth Day in 2018, I was approached by a nun who was upset that they would bring dance ministry to the event,” Peralta recalls. “After that, she came back to me and thanked me.”

“We are not just dancers, we are praising Jesus,” she says. “We hope in every instance that the congregation is led to want to worship Christ with us. We try to end our dance in a way that will not lead to applause. The praise is not for us.”

This in no way means that the experience does not bring rewards to the dancer. “Performing arts ministry is where art meets the soul,” says Klyvert-Lawson, director of the ministry at St. Charles Borromeo. “It revives the soul of the person who is ministering and also the person who is receiving. The opportunity to create and offer movement that reflects the word of God through song or scripture is a blessed experience.”

The liturgical dance ministry of St. Charles Borromeo at the Harlem Central Deanery Revival, 2019.

The liturgical dance ministry of St. Charles Borromeo at the Harlem Central Deanery Revival, 2019.
People will say, “It’s over. Why don’t we just go back to normal?” Well, we don’t go back to normal—in this one particular—because of the impact of jobs. It’s going to take four or five years.

-Mgr. Kevin Sullivan

Archways: What have your days been like during this crisis? What’s it like for Catholic Charities staff and volunteers out in the field?

Mgr. Sullivan: First, I want to say a word of incredible gratitude and appreciation—can’t say enough—for our health care workers. They are doing heroic work to treat people who have been made sick by coronavirus. But in addition to the thousands of sick people, there are so many others who are also in need. Even many of the sick, when and if they recover, are going to have other needs. Catholic Charities workers are working to meet some of those nonmedical needs.

My days have been busier, our staff has been busier—because the ordinary stuff that we do need to go on, and we have to figure out how to make adjustments to the way we do it. Making adjustments often requires a lot more energy than just going on as you usually have.

And the other issue is: How do we meet the needs that weren’t there two months ago, the new needs that the pandemic has brought on? People who may not historically have been Catholic Charities clients may now find themselves in need of assistance. Making sure people have emergency financial assistance takes on more importance during disasters—like a major disaster: 9/11, the 2008 recession, Superstorm Sandy.

New needs that we are thinking about how best to address. From eviction to utility assistance. For example, we are providing the same type of assistance. But we’re providing the same type of assistance remotely. Making sure people have emergency financial assistance takes on more importance during disasters—like a major disaster: 9/11, the 2008 recession, Superstorm Sandy.

New needs that we are thinking about how best to address. From eviction to utility assistance. For example, we are providing the same type of assistance remotely. But we’re providing the same type of assistance.

The other thing which our experience teaches us from past disasters is: The recovery period is probably four or five years. People will say, “It’s over. Why don’t we just go back to normal?” We don’t go back to normal. In this one, particularly—because of the economic impact, the loss of jobs. It’s going to take four or five years for us to get back to any semblance of what “normal” means.

Archways: Is there anything you would like to say in closing?

Mgr. Sullivan: It is in times of crisis like this that all of the ministries of the Church come to the fore. The see the importance of our parishes—which still exist, even though there are no services. Many churches are still open, people are coming in to pray. Some parishes are doing remote services. Our schools—which provide the most independent form of housing. Case managers are working closely with residents to help negotiate the tasks of daily living, cope with psychiatric and medical crises, seek employment and recovery from addiction. Serves 4500 annually. Phone: 646-794-3608

 Holy Rosary Bed Stabilization Project
In collaboration with the Bowery Residents Committee (BRC), Holy Rosary provides case management services to chronically homeless individuals who are being transitioned from street homelessness to shelter. Serves 350 individuals. Phone: 646-794-3608

Catholic Charities of Orange, Sullivan and Ulster Counties Case management and emergency relief funds assist those facing eviction. Our emergency financial assistance may also be available to individuals that have emergency basic needs, such as utility bills, furniture, funeral assistance, prescriptions, etc. Emergency relief funds are limited and availability.
Phone: 845-568-5150 | Website: Click here
Catholic Charities of Putnam County Phone: 845-279-5276 | Website: Click here

Catholic Charities of Dutchess County Phone: 845-452-1400 | Website: Click here
Catholic Charities of Rockland County Phone: 845-942-5791 | Website: Click here
Catholic Charities of Westchester County Phone: 914-476-2700 | Website: Click here

Catholic Charities of Westchester County Phone: 914-476-2700 | Website: Click here

Nizaret Housing, Inc.
Providing transitional shelter, homelessness prevention services, self-sufficiency education and supportive housing to persons in need. 212-777-1000 | nizarethousingagency.org

Part of the Solution (POTS)
An award winning multi-service agency in the Bronx designed to meet guests needs to stability and self-sufficiency. Services include community dining room, a homeless prevention and transitional residence program, food pantry, clothing program, haircuts, health care, mail service, family club, case management services and a legal clinic. 718-220-4892 | potbs.org

Xavier Mission
Offering shelter, soup kitchen and clothing pantry as well as six community outreach programs that provide a continuum of services to those facing difficult times. Its LEAP life skills program, modeled on the EOP, has been empowering homeless people to transform their lives for 23 years. xaviermission.org

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For the full interview with Mgr. Sullivan, click here.