

Archways



a
TIME
to (re)
BUILD



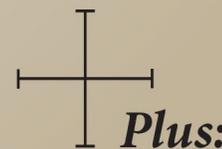
WHAT WE'VE LEARNED
FROM THE UPHEAVALS OF 2020
– AND THE PATH FORWARD

A Time to Gather

Pastors Speak on Weathering
the Pandemic and Returning to Normal

A Time to Serve, Heal, Learn...

Ministry Leaders on How We've Done
and What We Need to Do Next



Music Ministry During Social Distancing

From the Black Death to HIV/AIDS:
A History of Catholic Response to Pandemics

Black Catholic Leaders on Responding to Racial Injustice

What We'll Do When the All-Clear Sounds



Sanitizing between Masses at
St. Elizabeth's in Washington Heights.
Photo by Gerri Hernandez;
cover design by Ricardo Paiba

A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE

Every December, the editors of Merriam-Webster dictionaries announce the Word of the Year, which they feel captures something essential about the previous 11 months. For 2020 – no surprise – the word was *pandemic*.

Another word that we heard a lot last year was *unprecedented*. Again and again, it was used to describe the Covid-19 crisis. To a lot of us, the term seemed apt.

In a historic sense, though, the pandemic of 2020-21 is not so new. In medieval times, the Black Death killed millions. In 1918, influenza killed 675,000 in our country. And AIDS/HIV, though it spreads less swiftly, has killed more than 700,000 Americans since 1980 – and there's still no vaccine.

This doesn't make what we're going through now any less horrific or tragic. But it might help put it into perspective.

Perhaps the coronavirus crisis seems unprecedented because it came in an era when many were convinced humans had conquered the world. These days, we can travel the globe at amazing speeds – but it turns out we still can't outrun the virus. In our phones, we seemed to hold the world in our hands. It made us feel all-powerful – until suddenly the data reminded us how terrifyingly vulnerable we are.

We don't hold the world in the palm of our hand. God does. We do well to remember that, and to humbly pray for His help. There's certainly precedent for that.

Something else that's not new is God's mercy. Since the earliest days of Christianity, as Fr. Michael Bruno points out in this edition of *Archways*, dutiful Christians have made extraordinary sacrifices to carry out the mission of Jesus to care for the sick and the poor in times of pestilence. Priests, sisters, brothers and lay Catholics have risked their lives to bring physical and spiritual healing to the afflicted.

And they're still doing it. If you missed *"Heroes of New York"* in the previous *Archways*, it's worth going back to for its uplifting portraits of Christian service in the face of peril and hardship. That story continues in *"A Time to [Re]Build,"* the cover story of this Winter 2021 issue, in which archdiocesan pastors, educators and ministry leaders sum up what we learned in 2020 – and point the way forward into 2021 and beyond.

Elsewhere in this edition, *"Measures of Hope"* explores how the music ministries of the archdiocese are helping to raise us up during a challenging time. In *"Issue: Racial Justice,"* our regular interview column presents the views of three Black

Catholic leaders to guide us toward a path of social healing. And *"A Time to Embrace"* lets a few of our leaders sound off about how they'll mark that hoped-for day when the pandemic all-clear sounds. You'll also find a link to *prayer suggestions from some of our contemplative nuns* on the *Archways* blog.

As we prepare to publish this issue of *Archways*, we are facing wonderful news and terrible news. On the one hand, through the grace of God and the blessings of science and technology, coronavirus vaccines have been tested, approved and rolled out. On the other, the vaccines will take months to administer widely, during which time the virus is expected to sicken and kill many new victims.

So we stay safe and protect our loved ones; we pray for the sick, the grieving, the at-risk; and we look forward humbly and hopefully to the day when we no longer need to put on a mask to enter church or keep our distance in the pews, a day when we can sing together joyously – and mourn together, too, for all our lost sisters and brothers whom we may not have had the chance to send off properly.

May they rest in the peace of the Lord, and may we honor their memory by reflecting the light of Christ throughout the archdiocese and the world.

Faithfully in Christ,

+ *Tim. Card. Dolan*

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York



10 A TIME TO (RE)BUILD

New York Catholic leaders on what we've learned from the upheavals of 2020 – and the path forward

13 ... TO GATHER

The pastors of the archdiocese on the pandemic from their parishes' perspective

20 ... TO SERVE

Leaders from Catholic Charities, ArchCare, Sisters of Charity and other New York ministries share their experiences and insights

1 FROM THE CARDINAL

A time of grief and gratitude, hope and determination in the light of God's mercy

4 FORUM

More than a millennium of Catholic courage in the face of pestilence

6 NEWS AND NOTES

Music ministries around the archdiocese carry on, with precautions; Rev. Gregory Chisholm, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo in Harlem, on the role of the Church in responding to racial injustice

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ASK A PRIEST

How does the Church's response to the coronavirus crisis compare to its role in earlier pandemics?

In Matthew 10:8, Jesus enjoins the apostles, "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give." This has led the Church in every age to undertake the corporal works of mercy with great zeal, especially in times of widespread illness and pandemic. Catholic physicians, nurses and health-care workers, as well as family members, friends, religious and clergy have sought throughout history to care for the afflicted despite great personal risk.

One of the earliest recorded examples of the Church's work in such a crisis was during the plague that ravaged the Roman Empire in the middle of the third century. It has often been called the Plague of Cyprian, named for the bishop of Carthage who faced the pandemic's arrival in North Africa around 252 A.D. St. Cyprian mobilized workers and raised funds for the care of those who fell ill and the burial of those who died.

In the 14th century, during outbreaks of the plague known as the Black Death, many monasteries saw their infirmaries filled to capacity, and many monks and nuns fell victim themselves after caring for victims of the pestilence. Beyond the monasteries, mendicant friars with medical training were also called upon to assist the sick. In the Holy Land, Franciscan physicians cared for plague-stricken pilgrims and locals.

The First Session of the Council of Trent was interrupted in 1547 due to a plague outbreak in the city. Over several decades, the epidemic spread through-



The plague of Florence in 1348, as described in Boccaccio's Decameron.

out the Italian Peninsula. When it arrived in Milan in 1576, the 38-year-old archbishop, St. Charles Borromeo, refused various pleas for him to leave the city. Instead, he led the efforts of the city's remaining clergy and religious to minister to those afflicted, personally helped to fund St. Gregory's Hospital, ordered collections to be taken for the victims and made frequent visits to the sick and dying both in the hospital and around the city.

When plague and famine struck Rome in 1591, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, a Jesuit seminarian, left his studies to minister to the sick. Fr. Tom Rochford, SJ, has described how Gonzaga "threw himself into caring for the victims of the plague. He begged alms for the sick and physically carried those he found in the streets to a hospital where he washed and fed them and prepared them for the

sacraments." Although his superiors urged him to take precautions, Gonzaga contracted the infection and died that same year, at 23 years of age.

Century after century, Catholics have followed Christ's mission of serving the sick. In his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, St. John Henry Newman marveled at the priests who bravely ministered to those dying of typhus and cholera in Ireland and England in the 1850s. More than 30 priests fell victim to the outbreak after bringing the sacraments to the bedsides of the dying.

Such courage was also exemplified by the women religious and nurses who readily ministered to the sick in each of these crises. St. Frances Xavier Cabrini wrote of the role of her Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus during an outbreak of yellow fever in New Orleans in the 1890s: "When doctor and

priest were forbidden to enter the houses of our conationals for fear of contamination ... a sister was always welcome at the bedside of those dying from yellow fever; when assured that the victim's children would be cared for by the sisters, the victim expired peacefully."

In 1918, the Spanish Flu ripped through the country and the world. In Philadelphia, especially hard hit, nurses were in short supply due to the First World War. Responding to the need, 2,000 religious sisters, many with little previous training in nursing, worked tirelessly to aid victims of the pandemic. "Dressed in white gowns and gauze masks," as Kiley Bense described them in a recent *New York Times* tribute, "the sisters treated patients who represented a cross section of Philadelphia: immi-

grants from Italy, Ukraine, Poland and China; Black families, Jewish families, and the city's poorest, its orphans, its homeless and destitute, all in need of care." Twenty-three sisters would contract and succumb to the virus during their service as nurses.

On Christmas Eve 1985, working with Cardinal John O'Connor, Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity responded to the AIDS/HIV epidemic in New York City by opening a hospice at St. Veronica's Church in Greenwich Village. The missionary sisters subsequently opened HIV/AIDS hospices and care homes in Baltimore, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles and numerous international cities. In 1989, ArchCare opened the first long-term care facility for HIV/AIDS patients in New York City.

Today, many Catholic religious, clergy and lay missionaries are serving people around the world suffering from outbreaks of malaria, dengue fever and the effects of malnutrition, armed conflict and natural disasters. During this pandemic, we marvel once again at the tireless and selfless efforts of our brothers and sisters: medical professionals, first responders, chaplains, clergy, religious, pastoral ministers, family members and loved ones, who have come to the aid of the sick and suffering. They have truly heeded the call of Christ in this moment.

Rev. Michael J. S. Bruno, STD
Dean of Seminarians
Professor of Church History
St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers

Can a non-priest perform a baptism? If so, how is it done and when is it appropriate?

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us, "Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament" (1257). Our Lord himself told Nicodemus that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Because baptism is the one sacrament necessary for salvation, it is the easiest to receive. We see this ease in the matter of the sacrament – water, the basic sustenance of life – as well as in the minister. Ordinarily, a bishop or priest (or, in the Western church, a deacon) administers the sacrament; but, if necessary, anyone can validly do so.

People are sometimes surprised to learn that a non-Christian or even an atheist can perform a baptism. As long as he or she says the correct words ("I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit") and puts "living water" (that is, water that flows in some manner) in contact with the body of the person being baptized, then the baptism is real.

The person administering the sacrament simply has to intend to do what the Church does in baptism. He or she does not have to know anything about baptism or sacramental theology. Rather he must wish, if only implicitly, to baptize, even if he has no idea what that entails. In other words, he just cannot explicitly not want a baptism to take place while administering it. That's a pretty minimal criterion.

It used to be quite common for hospital nurses to know how to baptize. In fact, every Catholic should know how to administer the sacrament in case the need ever arises. The fact that we can do something, however, doesn't necessarily mean we should. A layperson should baptize only in an emergency such as a sudden illness, accident or natural disaster in which the unbaptized person is in imminent



danger of death and a priest or deacon is not readily available.

If the newly baptized person survives, he or she (or in the case of a child, his or her parents) should contact their parish so that the baptism can be properly recorded and a ceremony arranged for other baptismal rites, such as the anointing with chrism and the presentation of a lighted candle. After that, a celebration is definitely in order!

Fr. Brian A. Graebe, STD
Pastor, Basilica of St. Patrick's
Old Cathedral

MUSIC MINISTRIES

MEASURES OF HOPE

Back in mid-March, when in-person Masses were suspended in New York, parishioners around the archdiocese felt bereft. Among the spiritual “food” most sorely missed, alongside the Eucharist and the simple joy of gathering, was music. We learned that we could not take for granted the uplift provided by the organ (or piano or guitar), the singing of a choir, the congregation joining in. How would we replace these spiritual comforts during a time of social distancing?

At St. Patrick’s Cathedral, home to one of the most magnificent music ministries in America, it was as if someone had hit the mute button. “Since March 15,” music director Dr. Jennifer Pascual says, “every liturgy with music has consisted only of one cantor and one organist. Hymnals and missalettes have been removed from the pews.... The number of

Masses has been reduced, and the cathedral choir has not been in session since March 12.”

There is still music at St. Patrick’s, of course, as anyone who tunes in the livestreamed liturgy can attest. It’s reduced in scale, but it is beautiful, professional and often moving. Unfortunately, the majority of those who hear it are listening through small speakers on their computer or TV.

Throughout the archdiocese, music directors consulted with their pastors to determine the best musical solution based on architecture, ventilation and community. In all parishes, the first concern was the safety of parishioners, clergy and choir members. “When the lockdown began after March 14,” says Mark Pacoe, music director at St. John Nepomucene on Manhattan’s East Side, “we continued to livestream the Mass with music. This new reality

of how we gather, whether virtually or in person – after June 22 – had to take into account safety measures. As an organist, I’ve continued to provide appropriate music for processions like the offertory, communion or postlude. We have only been singing the necessary or most important responses.”

Other parishes were able to transition to a reduced-size choir soon after in-person Masses returned. In Brewster, “St. Lawrence O’Toole parish did an excellent job of administering to parishioners during the shutdown,” says music director Peter Ryan, “and as such I gratefully received everyone back who wanted to be there and felt safe doing so. We moved our rehearsals to a larger, more secluded space and it worked out well, allowing us to space out. Our choir is smaller now, and that has made it more difficult to learn more difficult repertoire, but other than that we have been able to maintain all of our usual activities.”

At Old St. Patrick’s Cathedral in SoHo, “It was a steep learning curve,” recalls organist and music director Jared Lamenzo. “In the first few months, our choirs and parishioners could not meet in person at all. For Mass, the only ones present in the Basilica were [pastor] Father Graebe, a maintenance person, occasionally an assisting priest, and a cantor in the loft along with me on the Erben organ. With no congregation present, we decided to include more Gregorian chant – for instance, singing the gorgeous Graduals rather than the Responsorial Psalm. We also had processions outdoors with masked singing of the Litany in Time of Pestilence and Plague.”

As restrictions eased, Old St. Patrick’s was able to take advantage of its unique space to bring back choir



A strumming cantor at St. Elizabeth’s in Washington Heights.
Photo by Gerri Hernandez.

singing. “In September,” Lamenzo says, “our Schola returned, rehearsing in a large, well-ventilated space, masked and distanced. The loft where we sing is 40 feet above the congregation and very capacious, so it is not a problem to distance ourselves. There have been musical, physical and budgetary challenges, but it has been a joy to sing together again at Mass.”

During a “normal” year, the vibrant music ministry of St. Charles Borromeo in Harlem has four choirs in rotation, including the 40-member Gospel Lites, the Mighty Men Ensemble of St. Charles, the Youth Ensemble and the young-adult Praise & Worship Ensemble. “It has taken some adjusting during this year’s pandemic,” music director Dr. Br’Von Neal says. Formerly, “the Gospel Lites choir would sing on their designated Sunday at full capacity, but since our return into the church it has been reduced to a trio rotation – one soprano, one alto, one tenor – to render music for a particular Sunday. We elected to do this for all of the ensembles, so that our congregation could still feel a sense of normalcy during such un-normal times.”

At Christmas, most music directors tried to make cautious enhancements in a nod to the accustomed pageantry. At St. Patrick’s, two trumpeters and a timpanist added majesty to

the midnight Mass, along with mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard from the Metropolitan Opera, who sang “O Holy Night.” St. John Nepomucene added a vocal quartet at the Christmas Eve Mass and a trumpeter on Christmas morning. The Schola at the Basilica of Old St. Patrick’s Cathedral moved its annual Concert of Carols from the altar to the loft for Christmas Eve, and during advent recorded a Christmas concert on the Rendevar virtual reality platform that created an immersive experience



A socially distanced choral trio at St. Charles Borromeo in Harlem.
Photo by Chris Sheridan.

for thousands of seniors in North America and Australia.

As we begin 2021, there is hope that newly approved vaccines will enable music ministries to return to pre-pandemic practices by year’s end. At press time, however, a surging rate of infections and deaths suggests that precautions will be necessary well into the year, quite possibly past Easter. St. John Nepomucene’s Marc Pacoe takes a cautious approach. “I believe the full return to ‘normal’ ministry will be a gradual evolution,” he says. “Returning to singing special anthems and simply having people in the loft again will be a growing and fitting musical celebration over time.”

Reflecting on the experience of 2020, Peter Ryan of St. Lawrence O’Toole says, “We’ve all become much more grateful for what we do have. My choir has taken increasingly greater amounts of time to pray together and for one another at the end of every rehearsal. While this is less musical in nature, I think it’s equally important.”

Thinking ahead to how the parish might celebrate the lifting of restrictions, he says, “Maybe we will celebrate heavily, or maybe we will simply return to normal and hold the attitude that the church never left our parishioners – and never will – because that is a promise St. Lawrence O’Toole intends to keep.” ✨



Music director Kathey Lewis (left) with Christine Humen and Nicolas Vandenberg at St. Patrick’s, Yorktown Heights.
Photo by Maria Bastone.

ISSUE

A SOCIAL PLAGUE

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, a dramatic movement for racial justice coalesced this past spring in the wake of the killing of George Floyd and other Black Americans at the hands of police. We asked **Rev. Gregory Chisholm, SJ, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo in Harlem**, how Catholics can respond to the tragic injustice and the divisions in our culture.

Archways: *What do the life and teachings of Christ tell us about how Catholics should respond to horrific events like the death of George Floyd?*

Rev. Chisholm: Racism is a plague on America. It infects us not unlike the coronavirus, except that racism has been around longer. The disease has worked its way into every corner of our country, affecting individuals, institutions and cultures.

In Mark's Gospel (9:14–29), Jesus encounters a boy who is possessed by a “mute and deaf [unclean] spirit.” The spirit convulses its victim, causing him to roll around on the ground, foam at the mouth and even harm himself. These are horrible and fearsome effects that threaten to destroy those infected.

Racism is a communicable disease that works to destroy its victims. The victims of this disease include those who exercise power in society and communicate the harm, as well as those who suffer the full effect of the harm. That “mute and deaf” spirit threatens to destroy the life of a policeman who would place his knee for a critical length of time on the neck of a man who could not breathe, as much as it destroyed the life of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

When asked by his disciples how we could rid ourselves of this evil spirit, Jesus answers, “This kind can only come out through prayer and fasting.” Thus He indicates that a focused and demanding effort is needed to exorcise the evil spirit.

Archways: *During the summer of 2020, demonstrations around this issue frequently spawned clashes and even acts of violence between people of opposed beliefs. How can Catholics stand up for justice while also promoting peace?*

Rev. Chisholm: Throughout the history of our country, the evidence of injustice has never been accepted by all citizens. Our history has included the burning of convents, churches and synagogues, the exclusion of immigrant cultures, the lynching of American Blacks and the near-complete disenfranchisement of segments of the American



Rev. Gregory Chisholm delivering a homily at St. Charles Borromeo in Harlem. Photo by Chris Sheridan.

public. For every advocate in the cause of justice there have been others who are blind to injustice.

Violence against the cause of justice is an unfortunate consequence of almost every American effort to achieve freedom. In the context of the fight against racism I am reminded of St. Paul's warning about the battle against evil in Ephesians (6:10–15). He urges us to “draw strength from the Lord and from his mighty power. ... Stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace.”

Archways: *In addition to working to protect people from racist violence and injustice, what can Catholics do to support opportunities for Black Americans and other people of color to fulfill their dreams and receive full respect for their contributions to society?*

Rev. Chisholm: We must face the fact that centuries of American racism have left us with structures and institutions

that perpetuate inequality. Our systems of education, health care, housing, finance and even churches are American institutions whose histories include the exclusion of Americans based on race, color and ethnicity. In our current generation, many American Catholics who have in the last century emerged from suffering the harm caused by these institutions and systems now reside in the very center of what ensures their continuance.

In his recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, our Holy Father offers a pathway toward a more just future based on the Gospels and our Catholic traditions. He writes with the conviction of St. Francis of Assisi about the concept of *fraternity*. He offers fraternity as the image of anti-racism and justice for Catholics.

Archways: *What can we do to ensure that Catholics of various races and ethnicities are able to fully celebrate their specific traditions while also coming together in a unified community with their diverse brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ? Can we achieve a loving unity while also embracing our differences?*

Rev. Chisholm: Our common belief, our common acceptance and our common baptism in Jesus is what creates the Body of Christ. The accidents of race, color, culture, gender and circumstance, while significant to human beings, do not affect it. However, their significance among humanity means that we must foster respect for these differences without ever allowing the distinctions to divide the community of the Church.

The story of Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman in Matthew (15:21–28) speaks volumes about the triumph of faith and the distinctions that exist among us. Jesus at first refuses to acknowledge a woman in need because she does not share his Jewish identity. She asks him for help, yet He demeans her request by indicating that she has no more right to His help than a dog has a right to food set aside for the children of the family. Nevertheless, the persistence of her faith convinces Jesus to acknowledge and respect her need. She remains distinct from Jesus, but her faith is unassailable. ✧

RAISING RACIAL AWARENESS

Called to Intervene

In addition to our conversation with Rev. Chisholm for our Forum on Racial Justice, *Archways* interviewed notable Black Catholic thinkers **Fr. Bryan Massingale**, professor of theology and ethics at Fordham University, and writer and New York City educator **Monica A. White, EdD.** (The full text of their interviews will be published this month on the *Archways* blog.)



Fr. Bryan Massingale How can the Catholic Church in New York contribute to a racially just society? One way is for priests and catechists to teach the powerful truth proclaimed by Pope Francis in June. Speaking about the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, he offered his prayers for the family and our country, and then declared, “We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form

and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.” Racism is a life issue. Anti-Black violence is a life issue...

Catholics need to become attentive to the grief, the anger and the lament from people of color that too often goes unheard and unheeded. They need to imagine what it would be like to be told, in ways both subtle and blatant, “You don't belong. You don't count. You don't matter.” That's the kind of empathy that leads to love of one's dark-skinned neighbors.

That love is the key to salvation and right relationship with God. Because as Scripture reminds us, if we do not love the neighbor that we can see, how can we love the God we cannot see?



Monica A. White, EdD. Those who don't worship like us, who don't look like us, who don't love the same as us, are all deserving of Christ's love, and we are called to give it. Those who are at the “edges of society” matter...

When the woman was about to be stoned to death for the sin of adultery, Christ intervened. When His father's temple was disrespected, he intervened. When the sick were ostracized, he intervened. When the hungry cried out, he intervened; when there was not enough food or drink, he intervened. And when He was on the cross, he gave his ultimate intervention that saved us all...

So when Black lives such as George Floyd's are aborted and broadcast on a continual loop into our living rooms, we are called to intervene. Through Catholic social justice teachings, we know how we should respond to the horrific events that plague our society today. We know. Christ demonstrated the response clearly. The question is, do we find Black lives like that of Floyd, Taylor, Arbery, Garner, Rice, Martin, Bland, Jefferson, Till and countless others worthy of our intervening?



a TIME to (re) BUILD

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED
FROM THE UPHEAVALS OF 2020
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A prayer of thanks at
St. Patrick's Cathedral.
Photo by Chris Sheridan.

Deep in winter, when the world turns cold, the days are short and night falls early, it's our natural instinct to seek shelter and wait for the warm sunlight to return. This year especially, with humanity under siege from a microscopic pathogen surging around the globe, there's good reason for each of us to stay home, put on a comfortable sweater and wait for better days. With new vaccines promising to bring the coronavirus under control over the next several months, can't we just ride out the dark days till spring?

It's a time of great hope, when Catholics can anticipate returning to Mass with fewer precautions, without masks, with handshakes and hugs and hymnals.

As any farmer will tell you, however, it's the plans and preparations of wintertime that lead to a good harvest in the year ahead. And after a year of devastation, it takes a lot of work and ingenuity to return to "normal."

Emerging from the winter of the coronavirus, we will face a blighted economy, with millions more unemployed than a year ago. Poverty, hunger and homelessness will be rampant. Secondary epidemics of domestic violence, addiction and depression will not yield to vaccination. Many will still be in crisis.

Meanwhile, amid the aftereffects of the pandemic, the social and political upheavals of 2020 have left our communities to come to terms with deep divisions and a legacy of injustice, anger and distrust between neighbors.

At this moment of cautious hope, *Archways* asked key actors from around the archdiocese to reflect on what we all experienced in 2020 and share their thoughts and plans for their ministries in 2021 and beyond. In the following pages, we will let the voices of dedicated pastors, sisters and ministry leaders give us some perspective on what we've been through and a look at where we may be going.

THE CARDINAL'S-EYE VIEW

For the view from 10,000 feet – and yet typically down to earth – we begin our survey with the voice of Archbishop Timothy Cardinal Dolan.

Archways: *What have you learned from Covid-19?*

Cardinal Dolan: One thing I learned during this pandemic is that we should never again take for granted simply being able to interact with others. There was a tremendous sense of loneliness and isolation, especially in the early days, when we could not have public celebrations of Mass and the sacraments. Schools moved to remote learning. Restaurants, businesses, and theaters were all closed. Sporting events played without fans. I have barely been able to see my mom over these past nearly nine months, and when I have, it's been at a distance. I'm unable to even give her a hug! We are a people who need community! We can't take personal contact for granted!

Archways: *How do you think New York's Catholics have done – the leaders, the clergy, the faithful – in response to Covid-19?*

Cardinal Dolan: I have been overwhelmed by the goodness of our people throughout this pandemic, beginning with our priests who found new and creative ways to continue to minister to their people. Something as simple as livestreaming their parish Mass enabled parishioners to continue to pray as part of a community – a virtual community, perhaps, but one where they knew the priest and felt at home. Pastors recruited volunteers from the parish to call and keep in contact with neighbors, particularly the elderly and homebound who might not otherwise have someone to check on them.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the outstanding work done by our Catholic Charities, Catholic schools, and Arch-Care, our health-care ministry, who each responded heroically in creatively adapting to meet the new challenges posed by Covid-19.

Archways: *When the crisis is finally over, do you foresee any change in direction for the archdiocese? Any new initiatives? What will your focus be when "normal life" resumes?*

Cardinal Dolan: Our first post-pandemic initiative will be the one Jesus left us: to go and make disciples of all people. It's what we call "evangelization." I've heard from many people that this period of "doing without" has led them to realize how much they cherish the Mass, value the sacraments, long to again be part of a community of faith. So, I hope that we will be able to approach evangelization with a new vigor, and



that people will be more receptive to our invitation to "come and see." Many of our priests are worried, "Will our people come back?"

Archways: *The pandemic has dominated our consciousness during 2020, but there were other upheavals. How will the Church respond to the new movement for racial justice? Is there a role for the Church in healing the intense, angry divisions that are poisoning our culture?*

Cardinal Dolan: The Church has long been at the forefront on the fight for racial justice. During this period of seemingly endless rancor, the Church can remind people of the need to treat each other with the respect and dignity that we all deserve as children of God, and that we can have legitimate disagreements without attacking each other's motives. Far too often, we are quick to assume the worst about another person. That's a dangerous mindset. The Church can help by being a mediating agency that helps to bring people together and find common ground.

Archways: *What will you do to celebrate when the pandemic all-clear sounds?*

Cardinal Dolan: First, I hope to be able to visit with my mom, and my brothers and sisters, nieces, nephews, and grandnieces and -nephews. That's the most important thing. Then, maybe a nice meal out with some good friends that I haven't been able to spend time with. Finally, perhaps, I will delete my Zoom account!

THE PASTORS

On the spiritual front lines of the pandemic, the pastors of the Archdiocese of New York have been working since March 2020 to keep parishioners connected to the faith and the community, first during the weeks-long shutdown of in-person worship and then through the ongoing time of social distancing and other precautions. Eight pastors, from parishes in six different counties, share their reflections below.

LESSONS

Fr. Edward Bader | St. Peter's, Liberty We learned that the pandemic is real and can bring society to its knees. What surprised me was that, as many people took this seriously, so many didn't and still call it a hoax.

Fr. Donald C. Baker | St. Monica – St. Elizabeth of Hungary – St. Stephen of Hungary, Manhattan What I learned from Covid-19 is how fragile the bonds of trust are that

make living together in the city possible. Almost overnight we went from sitting cheek by jowl in buses and subways to seeing each other as biohazards and threats. ... It surprised me how quickly it all came unraveled.

Fr. George Hafemann | St. John, Goshen Ordinarily, in addition to all the sacramental activity in the parish, we have two schools, five nursing facilities and the county jail, so there's rarely a dull day. It was a pretty jarring experience to go, in the course of two or three days, from having a very full calendar to nothing.

Msgr. Donald Dwyer | Resurrection, Rye A lot of us thought it was going to be over in a few weeks, and it's been months. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that it would last this long and be so devastating.

Fr. Baker | Manhattan The sad thing was that, right at the moment people's fear was deepest, we had to shut our doors, stop celebrating the Eucharist and isolate ourselves.



All necessary! But even as government inaction compromised the supply chain when it came to masks and other needed supplies, our “spiritual supply chain” was also deeply compromised.

Fr. Hafemann | Goshen The most profound lesson was that, despite what the prognosticators said, there was – and still is – a very real hunger among the faithful for the Eucharist. ... When we reopened, I’ll admit that it was slow going for a few weeks, but then things really started picking up. Even now, I get emails and calls from parishioners who haven’t yet been back, but desperately want to come.

Fr. Vladimir Chripko | St. Paul, Congers It was inspiring how much our parishioners longed for a return to Mass and how many, in the interim, watched our streaming Masses. It is surprising how long this has gone on and how adaptable we have become.



Fr. George Hafemann, pastor at St. John, Goshen, lecturing at Organfest, St. Joseph’s Seminary, Yonkers, December 2019. Photo by Chris Sheridan.

Msgr. Joseph Giandurco | St. Patrick’s, Yorktown Heights I learned how quickly things can change, and that pastors, priests, parishes and the whole Church have to be ready to adapt to new situations. What pleasantly surprised me was how quickly most people got used to the new normal, even if reluctantly.

ACTIONS

Fr. Ambiorix Rodriguez | St. Elizabeth, Washington Heights We took action immediately! The same day the Arch announced the cancellation of Masses, we released a video to let the community know about the decision and how to remain in touch online. We began livestreaming the Mass and some short daily reflections and prayer – and we are still offering these today. During the hardest months of the pandemic here in New York, the livestreaming services were – and are still – vital in order to offer support, prayer and connection to the many people suffering, who asked for prayers and reassurance every day.

Fr. Hafemann | Goshen Given the restrictions, we went with the tried-and-true. We kept the church open 12 hours a day for private prayer, and it was most gratifying to see a regular stream of visitors. We set up an expanded schedule of confessions, which until late fall we were doing outdoors. I also took the “mercy mobile” (my car) on the road for curbside confessions. At the high-water mark, we had about 30 parishioners who were Covid-positive – some asymptomatic, others deathly ill – so a lot of time was spent on the phone with them and their families. We also ramped up our use of Facebook and Flocknote.

Fr. Baker | Manhattan My deepest point of pride is our people. Within two days after the lockdown the parish staff met and began plans to put Masses up online. We did not have livestreaming capabilities, so we posted videos of daily and Sunday Masses via YouTube. Our pastoral associates and the director of music worked together for months planning and executing Masses for empty churches so that our parishioners, scattered all over the country, would have some point of contact with their parish and their faith. We still post a Sunday Mass for those who have not returned. After Covid-19, an online presence will be essential. We need to redouble our efforts there.

Msgr. Giandurco | Yorktown Heights Our priests began to livestream Mass on Facebook after a few days. Many people were extremely grateful. We also began to offer outdoor confessions after a week or so. Significantly, we began to expose the Blessed Sacrament from a window in a building facing the parking lot so that people could attend Adoration while staying in their cars. Many parishioners commented



Checking temperatures at the door of St. Elizabeth’s, Washington Heights. Photo by Gerri Hernandez.

that these steps helped the people know that our parish is still here for them. Even after we were able to reopen in June, we have continued these efforts.

Msgr. Dwyer | Rye We took it very seriously from day one. ... We purchased thousands of dollars’ worth of hand sanitizer and temperature scanners for school children. We hired extra cleaners to clean the church and clean the school. And we had to allay the fear of a lot of parishioners who were anxious about coming back to church and coming back to school. Mass attendance now is about 40% of normal.

Fr. Bader | Liberty We immediately went to livestreaming Sunday Mass, and right after Easter, we added a livestream of morning prayer and evening prayer Monday through Friday. I know it has been a source of comfort for many in the parish

and beyond. In the spring, May through June, Deacon Prendergast livestreamed what we called Campfire Prayers on Wednesday evenings. That became our forum to inform parishioners about the guidelines we were going to put in place to reopen safely. When we did, there were no surprises, no annoyances and, more importantly, people felt safe. We also called on a few people, not in the vulnerable demographic, to staff our food pantry so that we could remain open and continue to serve the hungry in our community.

Fr. Michael McLoughlin | St. Columba, Hopewell Junction When public Mass resumed, we erected a tent over the front entrance of the church and had most Masses outdoors throughout the summer and fall. We reorganized our ushers and greeters to help and they did a fantastic job. We moved Adoration out of the small chapel and had it in the big church



Fr. Ambiorix Rodriguez, pastor, at St. Elizabeth, Washington Heights. Photo by Gerri Hernandez.

for safety. We overhauled our baptism prep, making it all virtual, including videos and Zoom meetings with families.

Fr. Chripko | Congers We take pride in the fact that we all did what we were supposed to do and as a result our staff remains healthy. We have signs in the office and the church reminding everyone to wear a mask and socially distance and use the hand-sanitizing stations, and we test our staff frequently.

Fr. Rodriguez | Washington Heights Because of the closure of businesses and people being out of work, we began to offer prepared hot meals six days a week with the assistance of SOMOS Community Care. Our volunteers distributed meals

both at the rectory and through home deliveries for the most vulnerable. Since May, again through the help of SOMOS and in conjunction with the Archdiocese of New York, our school gym became a testing site for Covid-19 and antibodies. We continue to offer this service today. Thanks to Catholic Charities and other resources, we were also able to offer modest financial assistance to a number of families who were financially strained in the early months of the pandemic.

None of this would be possible without the help of the amazing people of our community, most especially our lay volunteers, who have been in the front line of the pandemic offering their time and service. All our priests have been in the front line as well, offering the sacraments and the Mass once the churches were opened.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Msgr. Dwyer | Rye I think we have to have a renewed sense of the importance of spirituality. A lot of people have gotten out of the habit of coming to Sunday Mass. For months, people didn't have holy Communion, and that was very tough on them. We need to redouble our efforts to provide a beautiful liturgy with a timely homily, inspiring music and a welcoming atmosphere.

One thing I am worried about is kids and young adults and the higher degree of depression that has to be addressed. Every parish has had a number of Covid-related deaths, and sometimes they went without funeral Masses. You couldn't get together with family and friends and celebrate someone's life. It made people very uncomfortable.

Fr. Baker | Manhattan The greatest challenge will remain what it always has been: reaching people whose lives are pulled in so many different directions. After the pandemic is over, people will still be working, going to school, caring for their families and themselves. On top of this there will be lingering anxiety about social situations, physical contact and crowds. Since we live for social interactions, physical contact, and would love Masses to be crowded, it will be an uphill battle to win back the confidence of the faithful. Some who have "gotten out of the habit" of public worship may be hard to reach.

Fr. Bader | Liberty A concern during this time is our religious education program. Not having in-person classes has been a challenge. A good number of families have not registered this year as a result. Trying to connect to the students through online instruction has been daunting. Materials are being distributed but we are not sure if they're being utilized. Reengaging the families for next year will be a priority.

We hope that our connections to our parishioners through livestreamed services will help bring them back when the time comes. Certainly we will do whatever we can to make that happen.

Fr. Hafemann | Goshen The biggest challenge here will continue to be what it was pre-pandemic: convincing people that their need for Christ is real, and that no amount of money, no traveling sports team, no exclusive club membership can satisfy that longing. Our two major focuses since I arrived here have been liturgy and catechesis. We've done well with the former, but shifting the catechetical mindset here from *knowing about Jesus* to *knowing Jesus* is a lengthy process. The pandemic has set my plan back by about a year, but – all in God's time.

Fr. McLoughlin | Hopewell Junction Yes, we will need to reconnect parishioners to Mass as attendance is about one-third of our typical numbers. We will need to address our finances as we are down about \$1,000 per week. I do not think that any of this can happen until everyone feels relatively safe.

Fr. Chripko | Congers We are blessed with a very generous and cohesive group of parishioners. Of course there are financial challenges as some of our parishioners have lost jobs and businesses. It has also been very difficult for those parishioners who lost loved ones during the strict lockdown. Since reopening, we have offered memorial Masses for those families and the feedback has been extremely positive.

Of course our main goal is always to have everyone return to Mass. We will also look forward to our ministries meeting again and offering our parish programs in person. We get phone calls weekly in anticipation of our parish family once again being able to worship together in our beautiful new church once this pandemic is over.

Fr. Rodriguez | Washington Heights We want to continue to offer financial and food assistance because many people will remain without jobs and will have financial strains. The fact that our priests and a great number of volunteers have been present throughout the pandemic, serving our community, should make it easier for people to get back to church. At the same time, we know that for some people it will take a long time to feel comfortable enough.

HEALING DIVISIONS

Fr. Bader | Liberty To heal our society's divisions and address racial injustice, we must start by preaching, reinforcing the gospel and challenging all of us to make the teachings of Christ primary in our way of living – that all may be one.

Msgr. Dwyer | Rye We have to work on being civil, and standing with our neighbors, especially those who are of different political persuasions. In Rye, there are approximately 16,000 people, I would say 50% Republican and 50% Democrat. They are all children of God.

Fr. McLoughlin | Hopewell Junction We must be about building the Kingdom of God, and that is something that can unite all of us. Blessed Father Michael McGivney always stressed fraternity – that we are all connected. Providing many opportunities for parishioners to come together will be especially important.

Fr. Chripko | Congers Our homilies will be geared toward Corinthians 13. It is time to re-create a feeling of brotherhood and compassionate patience. We will resume monthly coffee gatherings after the Wednesday weekday Mass. It has created a wonderful bond among 80 people who attend daily. Parish organizations will be invited to help in this effort to create an environment of respect and compassion.

Fr. Baker | Manhattan In our parish since this past summer we have been having online forums and movie discussions dealing with the themes of racism. We will continue with this in 2021, and our annual book study will also focus on this topic. I have long been of the opinion that the Eucharist,

A TIME TO GATHER: THE PASTORS

properly celebrated, is the greatest weapon against all forms of division, bigotry and prejudice. So we will redouble our efforts to welcome as many people as possible back to sing, pray and serve.

Fr. Rodriguez | Washington Heights The best thing is to leave politics aside, for in many ways and forms they have contributed in bringing discord, division and anger. Emotions have been very high throughout these long months and we need to tap into what unites us instead of what divides us. We need to focus on healing our communities and our nation, and even our Church.

Msgr. Giandurco | Yorktown Heights We have to preach the Gospel in its fullness to overcome anger, hatred and divisions. So far it has taken 2000 years to get to where we are, and I don't think things will change all that quickly. Human nature is still in need of God's grace.

Fr. Hafemann | Goshen If all of us tried to live the gospel as well as we can wherever we are, the world would be an entirely different place. To the degree that a parish encourages the faithful to live the lay apostolate in a clear and unambiguous way, that will do more to transform the culture than anything a president or Congress could ever do.

“We need to tap into what unites us instead of what divides us.... to focus on healing our communities and our nation, and even our Church.”

– Fr. Ambiorix Rodriguez



Worth the wait: In summer 2020, a catechumen receives first Communion - originally scheduled to take place at the Easter Vigil - from Fr. Donald Baker at St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Manhattan.



*St. Elizabeth's in Washington Heights, Manhattan.
Photo by Gerri Hernandez.*

A TIME TO SERVE: CATHOLIC CHARITIES



Richard Espinal (in blue mask) distributing food at St. Rose of Lima food pantry, Washington Heights.

THE LIFELINE

In the best of times, many thousands of New Yorkers find themselves in need on any given day. For the hungry, homeless and hurting, **Catholic Charities of New York** and its many affiliated organizations form a crucial lifeline. In times of crisis, the needs intensify and multiply.

In early 2020, when Covid-19 first appeared in the region, Catholic Charities immediately pivoted, not just to safely meet the increased needs brought on by the immediate outbreak but also to anticipate the long-term economic and social damage that would follow.

For this edition, *Archways* asked three of the organization's leaders for an inside glance at how Catholic Charities has responded to the crisis of 2020 and a look at the challenges ahead. **Kelvin Gentles, the director of development**, leads efforts to secure the donations that make

the ministry possible; **Richard Espinal, associate director for parish and community engagement**, coordinates direct on-the-ground services; and **Shannon Kelly, deputy CEO of Catholic Charities of Orange, Sullivan and Ulster**, oversees operations in the northernmost counties of the archdiocese.

LESSONS

Richard Espinal This pandemic affirmed what we knew about the disparities that exist in our society. It also shifted the thinking about “essential workers” as not just being police, EMTs and those in the hospitals, but also grocery cashiers, restaurant deliverymen and all of the people whose

jobs are critically important but who never get recognition as such, and certainly never receive the wages to reflect it. Unfortunately, that also means those among us who are scraping just to survive are also the ones at greater risk, not only of getting infected but of losing everything.

Kelvin Gentles We've learned how to pivot to an online platform for our development needs. The more typical approach to fundraising is usually person to person. We have learned to accomplish the same goals with virtual events.

The biggest surprise has been the outpouring of generosity from our existing donors and those new to Catholic Charities. Many have really been keen on food relief. People who usually give \$100 annually have given \$1,000.

Shannon Kelly I think there are lessons learned about resilience and what it means to be a hero. For me, the front-line staff in our residential treatment services – nurses, counselors, aides, custodians, cooks, etc. – have been true heroes. Their commitment in showing up every day to work with those in our care has been tremendously impressive.

ACTIONS

Shannon Kelly We collaborated with parishes early on to make sure that folks ineligible for unemployment or stimulus funding had access to financial resources. At a time when parishes may have been restricted in terms of gatherings, pastors and lay leaders from around our counties made it a priority to ensure Catholic Charities representatives could meet with folks in need on parish grounds.

Kelvin Gentles New York Catholics have rallied to help their local church food pantries. Without their support, we could not have expanded our food operation, we could not have extended cash assistance to those on the verge of eviction. Many parishioners have given generously to ensure that their churches remain open, and have pivoted readily from giving in the pews to online offering systems.

Richard Espinal We have seen parishes do everything from serving as COVID-19 testing sites to hosting food distributions and even parish-based sewing groups making masks. As happened in the aftermath of 9/11 or Hurricane Sandy, New Yorkers will come together to lift each other up.

Unfortunately, even with all the efforts currently in place, more and more people are struggling to hang on and too many are slipping through the cracks. Just checking in on a neighbor is important, so that at the very least, more of us will get to see “normal” again.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Richard Espinal When the health crisis is resolved, we will have to deal with three major issues: housing, unemployment and mental health. With so many people having fallen behind on rent, we anticipate a very serious housing crisis, and we know government eviction protections will not last forever. Stable housing is essential to any kind of recovery, and we will be working hard to keep our clients in their homes.

Concerning jobs, the economic downturn brought on by the pandemic is going to take time to turn around and many of our usual clients are the first to be laid off and the last to be rehired.

Lastly, the “silent” pandemic that we cannot ignore is the lingering mental health effects on adults and children. For the past year, we have had to deal with heightened levels of stress and anxiety. Many of us have been isolated, and those of us who have lost someone have not been able to grieve as we might have done in the past. Mental health is something that people tend to sweep under the rug but we will need to make sure that we keep it in the spotlight.

Collectively, it will be crucial for all New Yorkers to stay committed for the long haul. We still have a long way to go and we cannot allow “Covid fatigue” to stop us from supporting each other.

Kelvin Gentles Looking at the challenges ahead, I hope that those who have given during the crisis continue to give.

“As happened after 9/11 or Hurricane Sandy, New Yorkers will come together to lift each other up.”

– Richard Espinal

In the past few months, a balance of government and private funding has allowed us to achieve incredible things. Eventually, though, state help to prevent New Yorkers from being kicked out of their residences will end, and then we will have to be there to provide stipends and help with legal issues. For those who are at the margins, it typically takes years to rebuild after a disaster.

Shannon Kelly Our focus will be on the increase in substance use as folks deal with anxiety, isolation and grief, as well as the basic human needs of those affected by prolonged loss of income. In terms of substance use, we will need all New Yorkers to let go of the stigma that prevents them from seeking help or from encouraging their loved ones to seek help. To continue to respond to basic human needs we are looking for tangible support – donations of both funding and goods, volunteers at our sites and pop-up pantries, et cetera. There is no shortage of ways to help.

HEALING DIVISIONS

Richard Espinal Racism is antithetical to our core belief at Catholic Charities in the dignity of every human being, made in the image and likeness of God. We will continue to provide services to people of all backgrounds, but we

recognize that we have an obligation to those on the margins and to support efforts that place an emphasis on justice and reconciliation. We have already collaborated with interfaith partners to speak out against the evils of racism and have provided funding through the Catholic Charities Campaign for Charity and Justice to parishes working to address this evil from within. We have also looked to our own operations and policies and to places like our Lt. Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Memorial Center in Harlem to become beacons for racial justice, dialogue and reconciliation.

Shannon Kelly Most of our Catholic Charities agency programs are an incredibly rich, diverse intersection of clients, staff, volunteers, donors, board members and other partners from all backgrounds. It is our responsibility to ensure that all voices are heard, particularly those that have been marginalized by systemic racism.

Kelvin Gentles By the nature of our work, we have and will continue to do a lot when it comes to social justice and the unfair treatment of low-income communities and the undocumented. When it comes to racial justice, Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, executive director of Catholic Charities of New York, has worked with his senior staff to ensure we are at the forefront of these issues as an organization. Catholic Charities' makeup and approach matches the communities that we serve.



Clients lined up (distanced) for food distribution at Good Shepherd, Inwood.



ArchCare at Mary Manning Walsh Home, Manhattan. Photo by Gerri Hernandez.

THE CAREGIVERS

In the past 40 years, ArchCare has faced some daunting challenges. In the late 1980s, when the Willowbrook State School abruptly closed, the health- and elder-care ministry created a home and treatment center for dozens of severely disabled children; when fear led mainstream providers to shun a growing population of HIV/AIDS patients, ArchCare built a long-term care center to welcome them. The ministry developed a first-of-its-kind treatment program for sufferers of Huntington's disease and other severe neurodegenerative illnesses and rewrote the book on elder care, allowing many seniors to receive state-of-the-art care while continuing to live at home.

When Covid-19 came to New York, the leaders of ArchCare took quick action against a relentless and deadly foe. Almost all of the agency's clients are at high risk for the coronavirus. In a chaotic marketplace where fear was high and availability of personal protective equipment was low, management and caregivers made extraordinary efforts to protect patients and staff. We asked four leaders of the

ministry to reflect on what they have been through and what their goals and strategies will be in the pandemic's wake.

LESSONS

Hugo Pizarro | Chief Experience Officer During the COVID-19 pandemic, we learned to pivot at a fast pace, as guidance and information were constantly evolving. We tracked information in real time in order to inform rapid decision-making. As a result, for example, we shut down visitation days earlier than the government mandate, which was a critical move in keeping our staff and residents as safe as possible.

Dr. Walid Michelen | Chief Medical Officer ArchCare relied on data to make decisions during COVID-19. Yet while data is crucial, we learned that it took more than statistics to reassure residents, family members of our residents, and staff, who were justifiably frightened as the pandemic ramped up.

We learned to present the facts to families in a way that was transparent and clear but made them feel safe emotionally.

Scott LaRue | CEO I was overwhelmed by our care team’s willingness to do whatever was necessary under very difficult circumstances in order to protect our residents and patients. At a time when we didn’t yet understand the virus, and we didn’t have all of the protective equipment that we do now, still our staff went in and treated our patients with exceptional care and love.

Fr. John Anderson | Vice President, Mission Integration One of the biggest takeaways from this season of pandemic has been the realization that, as caregivers, we are both wounded healers and bearers of hope. We have all been touched by the pandemic and we have all been wounded in some way. At the same time, I have been deeply encouraged by the hope we offer to one another. We have seen ordinary people doing extraordinary things, caring for their neighbors, and coming alongside one another to grieve and encourage as a community.

The pandemic has forced a degree of emotional integrity that we haven’t experienced before. I’ve found people to be more patient, more thoughtful, more kind.

ACTIONS

Scott LaRue The Covid-19 pandemic has integrated us into the archdiocese in a way we haven’t been before. Because of ArchCare’s health-care expertise, we were able to provide information, guidance and services across the archdiocese. We were so pleased to be able to support our colleagues and friends, from training for reopening schools to in-home testing. When a community of nuns were struggling to manage the virus, we transferred some into our facilities and helped others isolate in their home.

Hugo Pizarro This challenging time has highlighted the strength of everyone in our organization and has bolstered our communication. In the spring, we aligned on daily calls to discuss management of PPE, cases, staffing issues and more. Having implemented these integrated communication methods, we were strongly positioned to tackle the challenges together.

Dr. Michelen As a system, we fared well by relying on the science. I am proud of the webinars that we developed to keep families and staff up to speed on the latest facts, figures and precautions throughout the pandemic. We have been open about any issues so that families and staff feel “in the know” and reassured that we will address any points of concern.

Fr. Anderson ArchCare staff – clinical and non-clinical – have been an inspiration to behold. During the pandemic,

caregivers have been called upon to serve those entrusted to our care and their loved ones in often new and profound ways. They were facilitating communication between family members and their loved one, including, at times, just before their loved one died. Many stepped into a role and level of accompaniment that they never anticipated and that wasn’t included in their training. Now in addition to sharing life’s celebrations, they are sharing tears.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Hugo Pizarro It can be a challenge for all to remain vigilant for this extended period of time, but we encourage New Yorkers to continue taking precautions seriously. ArchCare has taken every precaution in order to make our nursing homes a safe place. Our PROTECT program is designed to enhance infection prevention through state-of-the-art technology, a team of infection prevention professionals and a central command structure that will ensure the highest level of safety across our residences and programs.

Dr. Michelen The financial burdens that the pandemic has brought to our communities will last long after the virus is contained. Another challenge will be managing the treatment of chronic illnesses that may have been less of a focus during the pandemic. We have invested in technology that allows us to treat patients at home more than ever before. We will need the trust and patience of New Yorkers in order to implement these new technologies and services to their fullest capacity.

Scott LaRue The pandemic has highlighted the fact that a lot of senior care is moving toward in-home and community-based services in lieu of institutionally based care. We should soon see a transformation in the delivery of these care services. Our Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) and Home Care services will lead the way.

Fr. Anderson With everything we have already been through, there will be more challenges ahead. Grief often takes time to surface. The profound loss and suffering as a result of this pandemic may not be fully realized until months or even years from now. Knowing that, we must be sure we are supporting people’s emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being as well as their physical safety.

It’s also crucial that we help the elder community and those who love them feel comfortable in nursing homes again. I believe there will always be a need for long-term care, and I’ve seen firsthand how people can thrive when they live in a community like ArchCare’s. We have to build that comfort and trust again, not just through investing in infection control and safety measures, as we have, but by investing the time it takes for meaningful communication and personal interactions.

REVEALING GOD’S LOVE

Since its founding by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in 1809, Sisters of Charity has been prodigious in its mission to reveal the love of Christ by helping people in need. Throughout the New York region, you’ll find schools, hospitals, housing projects, shelters, soup kitchens – and even an organic community farm – founded or sponsored by the order. The Covid-19 pandemic is not the first major public crisis the sisters have responded to in the past two centuries.

“When Covid-19 appeared at our doorstep in mid-March, life as we knew it immediately changed,” says Sr. Donna Dodge, president of Sisters of Charity of New York. “We continued to respond to needs but in a new way. St. Joseph Medical Center in Yonkers stands out because of their untiring efforts to directly care for those with Covid-19. The dedicated and skilled front-line workers were amazing.”

The pandemic affected many programs. For example, Casa de Esperanza, the Sisters of Charity multi-service center, had to continue addressing the



A relief of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, founder of Sisters of Charity, adorns a door at St. Patrick’s Cathedral.

“Since all of our ministries focus on working with those on the margins, we will continue to address the many needs that emerge.”

– Sr. Donna Dodge

needs of its many immigrant families for food, rent, medical assistance and ESL classes, despite the closure of the schools where its services are ordinarily provided. Communication with families by phone became essential.

Life Experience and Faith Sharing Associates (LEFSA) carried on its services to those living on the streets by safely distributing food, delivering prayer booklets to shelters, and reaching out to community members in apartments to ensure that they have food and other necessities. At Sisters Hill Farm, a community of volunteers stepped up to help pack farm shares and deliver them to families in need.

For the sisters, perhaps the most difficult part of the crisis has been the physical isolation from one another, especially those who are in nursing homes. “Like so many families living through this pandemic,” Sr. Dodge says, “I feel powerless in not being able

to provide comfort to those with dementia or to be and pray with those sisters succumbing to the virus or dying of natural causes. We were unable to give them the send-off they so genuinely deserve after their years of dedicated service.”

Anticipating a continuing economic crisis, the Sisters of Charity are ready for the work still to come. “Since all of our ministries focus on working with those on the margins, we will continue to address the many needs that emerge,” Sr. Dodge says.

Typically, she looks for grace amid the tragedy and rancor of recent times. “I think, or at least I hope, that our world may be coming closer together and, perhaps, heading toward becoming more empathetic and understanding.” Beyond the apostolic work of the order, she says, “There is little else to do at this time except to speak out for what we believe and to continue to pray.”

GOING THE DISTANCE

The Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of New York, like most other educational institutions in the region, shut down in-person services in spring 2020. Quickly adapting to the needs of the moment, they went to a distance learning model for the remainder of the 2019–2020 academic year. Over the summer they offered virtual “extended learning” opportunities to students, and in the fall they came roaring back (with all due precautions) with full-time in-person instruction. Superintendent Michael Deegan is determined to keep schools open as long as students, staff and community can be kept safe.

We asked Mr. Deegan and some other Catholic Schools leaders to tell us what we’ve learned and what’s in store.

LESSONS

Michael Deegan | Superintendent We learned how resilient our school community can be. We were able to transition an entire system to successful distance learning and then return safely to in-person learning in the fall, even though the pandemic was still ongoing. Zoom teaching, classrooms that mix remote with in-person students, effective instruction and socialization while maintaining six feet between all parties – these things became second nature.

ACTIONS

Michael Deegan Everyone stepped up. Pastors, principals, staff, parents and students worked tirelessly to safely reopen

schools – and keep them open by promoting and regulating responsible behaviors both in and outside of the buildings. As a result, Catholic schools reopened and had only a .003% Covid-positivity rate as of late November.

Patrick Sitzer | Curriculum and Assessment Associate Preparing archdiocesan students for success in the 2020–21 school year began in the summer, when more than 3,000 students participated in the virtual Extended Learning Year program. For the fall semester, we carried the model over into an after-school and weekend program, offering students three extra hours of small-group instruction to build and strengthen mathematics, literacy and STEM skills.

Maria Cardone | Curriculum Analyst We have established a number of new virtual communication and training tools. Our regional conferences focus on topics such as efficient use of digital platforms, best practices in the realm of hybrid teaching and learning, and strengthening feedback between teachers and students.

We also continue to invest in teachers through professional development sessions with coaching specialists to support teacher innovation. And we are offering parent workshops revolving around technology, social-emotional learning, English language arts and mathematics.

Michael Deegan The pandemic has created many challenges, but it hasn’t kept our students from serving their extended communities. For example, the boys of St. Raymond’s High School are still cleaning local parks across the Bronx

“The pandemic has created many challenges, but hasn’t kept students from serving their communities.”

– Michael Deegan



Art class in the era of social distance: plenty of room for creativity at Immaculate Conception School, Gun Hill Rd., Bronx.

as well as offering virtual tutoring sessions to Catholic elementary school students. The Ursuline School’s Serviam Food Drive marches on, with a few new precautions. It’s an important acknowledgment that we are a part of something larger than ourselves.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Michael Coppotelli | Senior Associate Superintendent The Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of New York are determined to maintain the gains of recent years in student performance. We have consistently been outperforming the public schools in test scores, and we plan to keep it up.

One of the secrets of our success – aside from great teachers and principals and, of course, brilliant students – has been the adoption of data-driven instruction programs such as the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), which gathers information on each student’s progress, both in-person and remote, so we can ensure they don’t fall behind

academically. This fall, nearly 2,000 students across our system successfully participated in MAP.

One area of concern as we move forward is the social and emotional fallout from the pandemic and the economic problems that will remain after the virus eventually subsides. The Archdiocese of New York Drug Abuse Prevention Program (ADAPP) is ever-present in our Catholic schools – now more than ever – offering counseling to students and faculty as well as providing materials to help the Catholic schools community through this difficult time.

Sr. June Clare Tracey, OP, EdD | Executive Director, Office of Catholic Identity We’re also doing our part to keep people connected to their faith. We will continue to engage students through in-school virtual Masses as well as socially distanced Masses in the actual church, when possible. The pastors of the archdiocese also remain committed to the students in the Catholic schools. In combination with our strong religious curriculum, they will see to it that students continue their spiritual growth.

A TIME TO UNITE: HISPANIC MINISTRY



Masked worshippers at the Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Patrick's Cathedral, December 2020.

HIJOS E HIJAS DE DIOS

There are more than a million Hispanic Catholics in the Archdiocese of New York, hailing from diverse national cultures unified by a shared language and a deep Christian faith. **The Office of Hispanic Ministry** serves them with special Spanish-language Masses at St. Patrick's Cathedral and culturally savvy programs aimed at evangelization, faith formation and community building. Director Wanda Vasquez and outreach coordinator Luis Peña gave us a report on how the office – and the community – have fared during the pandemic.

LESSONS

Wanda Vasquez | Director Covid-19 surprised everyone because we did not know how difficult it would be to live in normalcy or how long before a vaccine would be developed. The biggest surprise from our Hispanic/Latino/Latina Catholics is that their faith in our Holy Mother Church never diminished but increased. Some who have not gone to church in a few years are returning, receiving the Sacraments, believing once again in the power of the Eucharist. Nonetheless, the

virus has surged and we keep praying. Families were lost but we remain hopeful.

Luis Peña | Outreach Coordinator Times like these have not been seen in over 100 years in this country, and our Hispanic community has been disproportionately affected. It has been amazing to see the resilience and faith of these Catholic men and women across the archdiocese. Many have lost their jobs, while others have not stopped working since the pandemic began. Both groups have been hit hard, and the stress from the pandemic can be felt in every household. Faith has been the glue that has kept many families functioning.

ACTIONS

Wanda Vasquez I am very proud of how our Hispanic Catholics stand against the storm during social distancing. Many serve as volunteers although they know it is a risk, never failing to help their pastors in their parishes and their brothers and sisters in their places of employment. Many serve as front-line workers and meet the needs of the people. For this we are grateful.

One of the most memorable experiences we have had during the pandemic was assisting our Latin American consuls with corporal works of mercy. In a recent Mass for our Mexican brothers and sisters, Cardinal Dolan blessed more than 250 remains of people who had passed away due to Covid-19 – honoring their service as front-line workers and now returning them to their loved ones in Mexico. Similar works were done throughout the archdiocese to assist our faithful who could not receive the last rites or funeral Masses.

Luis Peña Many parishes have increased their online presence, streaming Masses in Spanish. The office of Hispanic Ministry has held Zoom events and retreats to keep the community engaged. People have been very receptive to these endeavors and many are grateful that these opportunities for faith enrichment are available to them.

Since the churches reopened in late spring, we have resumed our cultural Hispanic Masses at St. Patrick's Cathedral, following all new protocols, and also streaming live on the Cathedral's social media accounts. We look forward to continuing to have more options available for our community during this pandemic – and afterward.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Luis Peña Our greatest challenge in the coming year will be working with pastors across the diocese to engage many Hispanics to come back to church once things stabilize and it is safe again for in-person meetings. The office will be readily available to meet with deaneries and pastors to tailor an outreach strategy for every parish that contacts us. With the low cost of outreach through Internet and social media, we can definitely create even more online events to keep the community engaged.

HEALING DIVISIONS

Wanda Vasquez At the time of the uprising against systemic racism, our office began having Zoom meetings on the subject. In our listening sessions, we provided information about "Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love," a pastoral letter released by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB] in 2018. Many did not know the document existed, and were surprised that it includes injustices against Hispanics.

Unfortunately, this is nothing new: Many Catholics define racism in dualistic terms of black and white, and do not consider the various ways in which it affects everyone. Our ultimate advice for our faith communities and our parish leaders is to study the pastoral letter and share it with clergy, church groups and schools, and at home with their families. Our faith groups must be aware of racism and begin discussions on actions to combat its ugliness in society.

Luis Peña Starting this past summer, Hispanic young adults have been taking part in national and regional conversations hosted by USCCB as part of a yearlong intercultural process called *Journeying Together*. Among other things, in these conversations, young adults from all cultures discuss racism and racial justice. This dialogue has been very helpful and has brought together young adults from various communities in ways that can lead to healing.

“Our faith groups must be aware of racism and begin discussions on actions to combat its ugliness in society.”

– Wanda Vasquez

A TIME TO UNITE: BLACK MINISTRY

THE COLOR OF FAITH

During a year of hardships for Black New Yorkers, with a pandemic on top of resurgent awareness of racial injustices, the archdiocesan Office of Black Ministry occupies a pivotal spot at the intersection of communities of color and the wider Church in New York. We asked Director Br. Tyrone Davis and Associate Director Leah Dixon how the ministry has fared during the health crisis – and what they’re planning for the future.

LESSONS

Br. Tyrone Davis, CFC | Director, Black Ministry We’ve learned how we can get anything done with a little thought, creativity and good will (or good contacts). What may have

surprised us most is how successfully the unimaginable could be accomplished. The challenges of this time unveiled untapped creativity ... and allowed us to call upon folks we otherwise might not have.

ACTIONS

Br. Tyrone Davis We were able to move forward with all of our events and programs as scheduled, albeit virtually, and add some new programs to the ministry – all with the objective of doing what we do well and as *church!* Our two biggest programs, the Pierre Toussaint Scholars Annual Retreat Weekend and the Venerable Pierre Toussaint Scholarship Fund Virtual Awards Gala both went remarkably well.



Special pandemic seating at St. Francis de Sales, Manhattan.

“We’re proud of and abundantly grateful to our college student leaders. They stepped up and generously offered themselves in acts of ministry and service.”

–Br. Tyrone Davis

Leah Dixon | Associate Director, Black Ministry A big change this year is simply not being able to see our Pierre Toussaint scholars in person and bring them together for bonding and networking. Our new class of scholars were interviewed virtually, and their interaction with the program and each other has been all virtual. We have provided opportunities for them to meet and bond digitally, but nothing is as effective as being physically together. Instead of our usual lunch/dinner meetings with scholars, I’ve met with them via Zoom and/or FaceTime.

Br. Tyrone Davis For all our programs, we enlisted the support of various professionals and worked with some of our PTS alumni (talented young adults). Some virtual programs were prerecorded, so a lot of time was put into planning and production. We’re proud of and abundantly grateful to the dedicated team that worked with us, especially our college student leaders. They stepped up and generously offered themselves in acts of ministry and service – and professionalism.

During this time, in addition to our twice-weekly morning prayer line, we began reciting the rosary three times a week. Our prayer group has grown substantially, and we are joined by people from our archdiocese and beyond, as far away as California. Some of our new prayer leaders are people who normally served in secondary roles in our churches and faith communities, who are now leading the community in prayer and healing!

THE ROAD AHEAD

Leah Dixon For the Pierre Toussaint Scholarship Program, our biggest challenge is to continue with the same level of additional educational, spiritual and professional programming

that we have afforded to our scholars in previous years. It’s hard to arrange travel or educational conference opportunities at this point in time. There is also the matter of funding during the time of Covid, as the program continues to grow. Needs increase for our scholarship program and our broader ministry, yet resources decrease. One major area of focus will be keeping our social media outlets active and up to date.

Br. Tyrone Davis Our annual Black History Month Mass celebration will take place at 1:00 P.M. on Sunday, February 7, at St. Patrick’s Cathedral. In-person attendance will be limited (and somewhat discouraged); however, we will livestream the event on the cathedral website for the full community. The theme is “We remember; we celebrate; we believe!” A memorial program, a day of service and an educational/social justice program are also being planned.

HEALING DIVISIONS

Br. Tyrone Davis If we’re going to address the issue of racial healing, there needs to be an acknowledgment of the existence of injustice in our society, and in our Church, as well. Part of that acknowledgment needs to come from the pulpit, which is why the Archdiocesan Priests Council’s Ad Hoc Committee on Racism sponsored a workshop entitled “Preaching Against Racism” for New York priests and seminarians last October. Once there is sufficient local leadership, we need to create an environment and opportunity for conversation among the faithful. The parish communities need to figure some things out among themselves and with one another in ongoing prayer and dialogue. Then the entire community (Black and especially non-Black) needs to take action to eradicate racism in our midst.



COMING OF AGE IN A PANDEMIC

The next generation of Catholics is enduring a year of distance learning and social isolation, growing up amid a shortage of hugs. The dedicated leaders of the Archdiocese of New York's Office of Youth Ministry (OYM) are determined to help them through the pandemic with values, faith and social skills intact. We asked director Cynthia Psencik and a few OYM leaders how it's gone so far.

LESSONS

Nicole Rios | Youth Minister, St. Anthony, Yonkers Personally, I learned a great deal from Covid-19. My husband, children and I were all infected with the virus. Thankfully, the kids and I recovered quickly. My husband fell seriously ill. While he was in the hospital, I prayed more than I slept for days on end. I started to see things more clearly at this time because everything was on pause. I am thankful for the

time spent at home, even the stressful time, because I have strengthened my relationship with God and we have grown closer as a family.

In the ministry, I learned that our youth are resilient and can adapt to new situations, often better than adults can. I learned that isolation from others worked for some of the teens in the group, but was a struggle for others.

Pat Byrne | Coordinator of Youth Ministry, St. Aedan's, Pearl River This virus can only be defeated when it's defeated everywhere. It shows how dependent we are on God and family, not only our immediate family but everyone. Our definition of family needs to be expanded to include our first responders, nurses and doctors, the mail carrier, the grocery delivery person, the garbage collector. Pretty soon it becomes all of our neighbors and then expands beyond our borders. While we knew much of this in the past, the pandemic reemphasized its importance for many of us.

ACTIONS

Nicole Rios We were so afraid we would lose our teens without seeing them or giving them a space in which to pray during this crisis. OYM showed us how to use Zoom and helped us meet with our teens. OYM sponsored weekly meetings for leaders and offered hands-on tutorials and ideas to make online meetings engaging and fun for our youth.

While it was not always easy to get the teens to express themselves over Zoom, the virtual setting allowed them to vent, see those from other schools and be reminded that they were not alone, not the only ones challenged during this time.

Christopher Rivera | Southern Regional Coordinator To keep our youth engaged, we created sample youth ministry nights using Zoom and provided access to large events using platforms such as YouTube and organizations such as Project YM and Life Teen. As our young people quickly adapted to this new reality, within weeks we witnessed them also getting screen fatigue – so our youth ministers started providing ministry outdoors where their youth could engage and encounter Jesus in person through community and communion with the Church. Today many parishes have provided hybrid models of ministry utilizing both in-person and online platforms, and hundreds of youth are being served.

Brandon Fernandez | Coordinator of Youth Ministry, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Bronx Our efforts have been to meet our youth where they are at, which is why we transitioned to the virtual world. As a young adult I've been very proud of our Church and how we have responded. My parish phoned every parishioner in the month of April, just to check in and see how they were doing. I've never been more encouraged to be a part of such a community.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Daniel Genn | Associate Director, OYMNY In the coming months, youth ministry will continue dealing with restrictions on gathering sizes and the constant shifting of what is permitted. Planning for ministry can be challenging because you don't know when your limitation will drop from 50 down to 10, for example. You don't want to just "drop" 40 teens because you can't gather them in person.

So we will have two major areas of focus. First, equipping our youth ministry teams with the tools and strategies to meet with all the teens, even if it is through a sort of hybrid online/in-person meeting. This is something we have already been working on with many of our ministries, and we are seeing a lot of success. Second, we want to train our parishes in small group ministries, where you establish groups of five to 10 young people with two adults to meet regularly. These small groups and the regular meetings foster community and strengthen our youth on the journey.

Philip Waldrop | Coordinator of Youth Ministry, St. Francis Xavier Parish, NYC The greatest challenge over the next

year is to stay connected to the youth, to keep the flame of community alive. Youth leaders in our parish suggested attending Sunday Mass together (masked and socially distanced, of course), so that we could at least see one another and share refreshments (safely!) and discussion afterward. I hope we do not need to go back to deep lockdown, so that this successful activity can continue.

Fr. Michael Connolly | Parochial Vicar, St. Columba, Hopewell Junction Our young men and women crave personal interaction and prayer. At St. Columba, they told me that they simply can't bear another Zoom call. They had been trapped at their computers all day, every day, in a remote-learning school system.

What a beautiful opportunity this affords the parish to return to a grassroots, apostolic model of ministry! Just about every other facet of our lives has been rethought and formatted to embrace a technological approach. It's exciting to think that the most technologically advanced of our flocks, our teens, are encouraging us to get back to basics. The challenge will be to bear in mind all of the necessary precautions to keep everyone happy and healthy.

At St. Columba we have offered opportunities for prayer, fellowship and service to our young people that all allow for the necessary protocols to be followed. For example, we have gone apple picking and used the apples to bake pies for distribution by a local charitable organization. Our youth's prayerfulness, enthusiasm, faith, and love for and support of each other has been absolutely edifying to me.

HEALING DIVISIONS

Brandon Fernandez Youth ministry has played a tremendous role during this time in responding to racism and racial injustice with truth. Our young people were looking for guidance on how to respond and an outlet for their impressions on the situation. Allowing them to process this situation in a safe and truthful environment is very healthy.

Cynthia Psencik | Director, OYMNY Youth Ministry has a very special role in helping to heal the intense divisions that continue to permeate our society. Young people have the energy for change and are no longer just asking for it, but demanding it.

Inspired by a program from the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, we organized an evening to engage in dialogue with our youth ministers and learn how teens were responding to racism. What the teens wanted, we learned, was a space to speak and be heard, and to listen.

It has been both enlightening and inspiring to witness the depth of commitment in our teens and young adults to make a change. The current generation of young people is very ethnically and racially diverse, and they can help us lean into encounters that foster true dialogue and healing. Their insights are very important. As adult leaders, we can channel their energy and zeal for change in the light of faith and our Catholic social teaching. ✨

AFTER THE ALL-CLEAR SOUNDS

“It is my hope that, when we have finally moved forward with a vaccine and all of these dark times are behind us, the community will recognize how blessed we are to be here journeying together, building our faith communities in the light of things to come.”

– Wanda Vasquez | Director, Office of Hispanic Ministry

“We are planning a parish picnic/barbecue with a Covid mask wall – where we can sign and hang up our masks and hope and pray we’ll never have to use them again!”

– Fr. Edward Bader | Pastor, St. Peter’s, Liberty



“When this virus is finally and truly contained, allowing for church as we know it and knew it to take place, I will leave whichever instrument I’m on, whether it’s the organ or piano, and dance just like David danced before the Lord! ... Only I won’t dance out of my clothes! ... But God will be praised and exalted!”

– Dr. Br’Von Neal
Music Director
St. Charles Borromeo



“When it is safe to do so, I can’t wait to celebrate Mass where we don’t need to be physically distanced. Whether it’s for worship or simply time with family and friends, I can’t wait to be with others, to laugh and cry as a community again.”

– Fr. John Anderson | Vice President, Mission Integration, ArchCare

“I would love to celebrate by gathering at my local parish for Mass, mask free and hug ready. Receiving the body and blood of Christ and embracing each other at the sign of peace would be amazing. To be able to be in close contact with my faith family would mean everything to me.”

– Giselle Roldan
Administrator
Office of Youth Ministry

“I pray that the effects of the pandemic, as well as the unrest, political turmoil, unemployment, fear, confusion and violence we have known, will be overcome by forces of hope and growth, equality and solidarity, respect and acceptance of all.”

– Sr. Marjorie Robinson, OCD

For prayer suggestions from Sr. Marjorie Robinson, OCD, of the Discalced Carmelites monastery in Beacon – the first in our online series “Prayer Prompts” – [click here](#). Then find yourself a quiet place and have a conversation with God. Thanks for reading Archways!



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