



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

#128 - October 20, 2020

## A Best Practice: Ministry to Maturing Adults at This Time (Part II)

During this time of COVID-19, necessarily so, our attention has turned to those in their maturing and eldering years. This issue (and our previous issue) explore some things that parishes and (arch)dioceses have been doing. (Many of the efforts, of course, are endeavors and practices that can be done all the time.)

Our previous issue looked at:

- **Communication with our older parishioners**
- **Ways of reaching out**

In this issue we will review some ideas about

- **Technology: Its Promise and Its Challenge**
- **Some Endeavors and Programs**

As you read what others are trying and planning:

- **Which have you been doing?**
- **What other ones have you been doing?**
- **Which of these could you tweak and use to reach out and provide opportunities and support for your people?**

You might also want to revisit some past issues of [GEMS](#): #64-66; #75-77; #83; #99 and #105.

## Technology: Its Promise and Its Challenge

As in most things, people – including, of course, eldering adults - respond to using technology in various ways, from one end of the spectrum to the other. Some older adults have chosen not to continue participating in Scripture study or a book club until they can resume in-person.

At the same time, many parishes have said they have the highest level of Zoom participation with their maturing and older adults. More broadly,

according to a new [Barna study](#), millennials have actually been more likely to stop engaging with church during COVID, compared to maturing and older adults.

Another challenge: Parishes are realizing now, more than ever, that many older adults have no technology or don't know how to effectively use the technology they have. Therefore, they are not able to watch liturgy online or receive bulletins, newsletters and information from the parish.

✿ Some parishes have considered a fund-raising and training effort to assist parishioners in keeping connected with the parish as well as their loved ones and friends.

✿ The *Ministry for Maturing Adults* at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, Indianapolis, IN are surveying their older adults:

- Do you have a smart phone, tablet or computer?
- Do you know how to use your information technology?
- If you have technology, do you need some tutoring to use the technology effectively?
- Would you use technology if the Ministry for Maturing Adults made it available to you?

✿ In some areas without internet access or for older parishioners who do not have internet access and/or devices, some parishes are loading tablets and iPads with downloaded content, such as the parish Sunday liturgy, prayer ideas, Scripture reflections, and delivering them to people for their use.

Simple instructions with visual pictures (e.g. where to turn on, etc.) are

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

included with the devices. A crew sanitizes the tablets and practices physical distancing when dropping off and picking up each week.

## Some Endeavors and Programs (that are happening or could be happening)

✿ Many parishes have senior groups that meet regularly. In several instances, these have not stopped because of COVID, but have continued online. “Senior Spirituality” at Transfiguration Parish in Atlanta, Georgia begin their gatherings with a discussion on the previous week’s Sunday Scripture readings and homily. They then move into a conversation on a book they have chosen to read and discuss. (<https://transfiguration.com/adult-faith-formation/senior-spirituality>)

✿ In addition to efforts similar to Transfiguration Parish, some parishes who didn’t have book studies prior to COVID have begun online opportunities to talk about books they have more time to read ... and to be together.

✿ Ana Olaso Stanham, Adult Faith Formation Director at St. Louis Parish, Pinecrest, FL, tells us about two efforts that are continuing at St. Louis during these times.


One group of senior adults who have been meeting since 2011 now continue to meet using Zoom. They pursue various questions and approaches to spirituality. They currently are using

- *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in Daily Life*
- *The New Spiritual Exercises: In the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

Another group of ten men in their 80s gather virtually every week to reflect on the Scripture readings for the following Sunday. Previously they used the Pastoral Center’s Question of the Week to guide them.

(<https://pastoral.center/questions-of-the-week>)

Questions of the Week are a free resource from The Pastoral Center. Just add it to your cart and check out, and we will email you a link.



**FREE: Receive the Questions of the Week every Monday via Email**

Subscribe to our Weekly Readings email to receive the Catholic lectionary readings in the contemporary *The Message* translation and related Questions of the Week (one for adults, one for children).

Click [here](#) to subscribe!

Currently they are using the [Magnificat](#) and the [Lectio Divina format](#) from USCCB.

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

ABOUT USCCB PRAYER & WORSHIP BIBLE ISSUES & ACTION

## What is *lectio divina*?

Spiritual reading of Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels, is an important form of meditation. This spiritual reading is traditionally called *lectio divina* or divine reading. *Lectio divina* is prayer over the Scriptures.

1. The first element of this type of prayer is reading (*lectio*): you take a short passage from the Bible, preferably a Gospel passage and read it carefully, perhaps three or more times. Let it really soak-in.
2. The second element is meditation (*meditatio*). By using your imagination enter into the Biblical scene in order to “see” the setting, the people, and the unfolding action. It is through this meditation that you encounter the text and discover its meaning for your life.
3. The next element is prayer (*oratio*) or your personal response to the text: asking for graces, offering praise or thanksgiving, seeking healing or forgiveness. In this prayerful engagement with the text, you open yourself up to the possibility of contemplation.
4. Contemplation (*contemplatio*) is a gaze turned toward Christ and the things of God. By God’s

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

Many parishes are doing various things to help people navigate these times.

“When people come together again,” commented Fr. Bob Fambrini, SJ of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Phoenix, “I want them to debrief in small groups, reflecting not only on their recent experience but how it could lead to a new way of being together, a new way of being Church.”

That would be important to do; how are we also helping people to talk about their feelings and experiences right now? These two parishes provided online times to gather – with many parishioners responding to each opportunity.



**Digital Small Group: Stress, Anxiety and Faith in a Coronavirus World**  
Sharing hope during uncertain times  
Mondays, 7:30-8:30pm

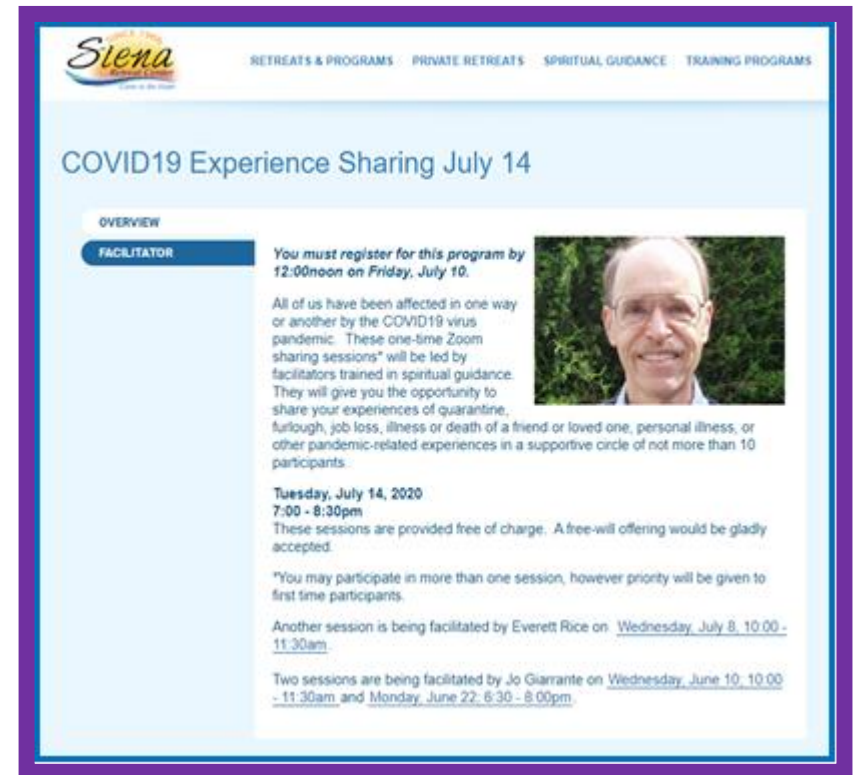
Consider that on the other side of this time of uncertainty, a better world could be waiting for us. Einstein said, “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.” The scale of this crisis invites us to tap into a new level of consciousness and to engage it. We will be different on the other side. We are developing a new way of knowing the world, one rooted in deeper wisdom that questions what matters most in life. The goal of our conversation is to share anxieties, concerns and stories of hope.

**Join us on Saturdays at 4 pm EST via Zoom**

We invite you to bring your fears, your hopes, your gratitude, your restlessness, or whatever you've got while we process together in a group setting. We'll spend an hour reflecting, praying, and holding each other. This session is free and open to all.

As always, each individual parish doesn't have to create everything. One of the roles of the staff and adult faith formation committee is to be aware of the offerings in the surrounding area (when we can gather) as well as online and keep our parishioners up-to-date about the many possibilities.

Siena Retreat Center (next column) in Racine, WI (<https://www.sienaretreatcenter.org/>) has offered several online sharing sessions each month.



**Siena** RETREATS & PROGRAMS PRIVATE RETREATS SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE TRAINING PROGRAMS

## COVID19 Experience Sharing July 14

**OVERVIEW**

**FACILITATOR** You must register for this program by 12:00noon on Friday, July 10.

All of us have been affected in one way or another by the COVID19 virus pandemic. These one-time Zoom sharing sessions will be led by facilitators trained in spiritual guidance. They will give you the opportunity to share your experiences of quarantine, furlough, job loss, illness or death of a friend or loved one, personal illness, or other pandemic-related experiences in a supportive circle of not more than 10 participants.

**Tuesday, July 14, 2020**  
7:00 - 8:30pm  
These sessions are provided free of charge. A free-will offering would be gladly accepted.

\*You may participate in more than one session, however priority will be given to first time participants.

Another session is being facilitated by Everett Rice on Wednesday, July 8, 10:00 - 11:30am.

Two sessions are being facilitated by Jo Giarrante on Wednesday, June 10, 10:00 - 11:30am and Monday, June 22, 6:30 - 8:00pm.

Before COVID, the *Ministry for Maturing Adults* at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, IN had offered a Spiritual Autobiography Journey – a series of eight week sessions where participants came together to discuss their writing and their ah-hah moments.

In these days, the two coordinators of this project have written two “stay-at-home” spiritual journaling opportunities. One is based on Dr. Richard Johnson’s book *All My Days*. (They received permission from Dr. Johnson to print copies of this no-longer-in-print book.)

The second opportunity is a simpler journaling experience based on responding to a series of questions.

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

MMA volunteers deliver the requested packets to the older parishioners. Even though these two are designed for people to do on their own, the two coordinators are glad to have phone conversations with anyone on their writings and experiences.

✎ The Vatican Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life has launched a new campaign encouraging young people to reach out to older people with “inventiveness of love” by “sending a hug” in creative ways. Likewise, older people have much love and wisdom to share and are encouraged to offer their many gifts with younger generations.

The archdiocese of Atlanta is highlighting this endeavor and giving many suggestions on their website:  
<https://www.evangelizationatl.com/acrossgenerations>

✎ Flowing from the Vatican’s campaign of connecting the generations, parishes might consider an “Adopt a Grandparent/Grandchild” program. There are many ways to do this; all of them being beneficial for older adults as well as for children/youth and their families.

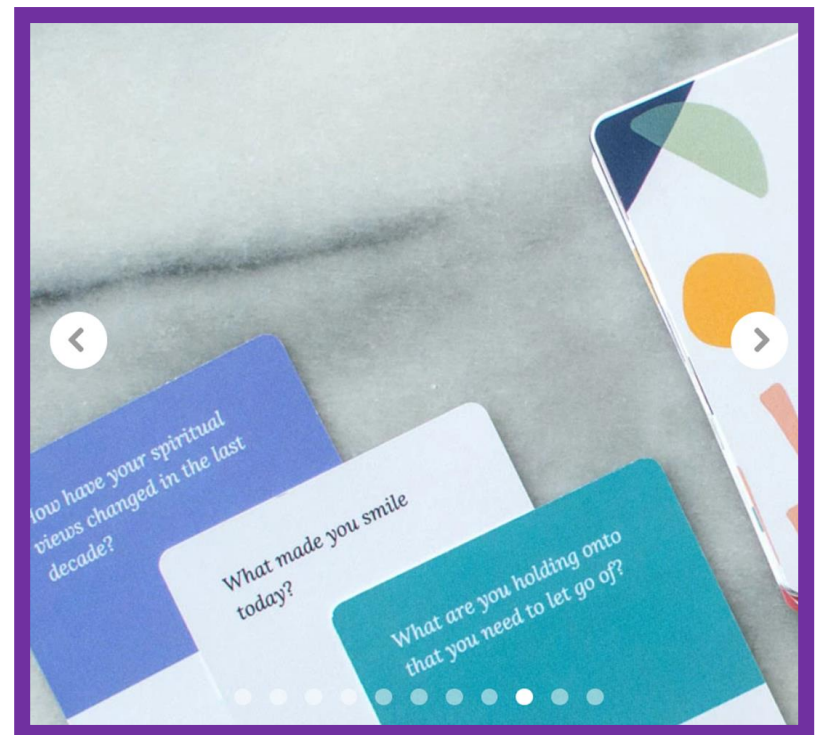
Some resources/ideas about “Adopt a Grandparent/Grandchild” in various contexts:

- [Adopt a Grandparent Program](#)
- [Nursing Home Lets You 'Adopt' A Lonely Grandparent In Isolation](#)
- [CHD Living Wants You to Virtually “Adopt a Grandparent” to Help Residents Combat Loneliness](#)
- [Adopt a Grandparent at Blue Harbor](#)
- [Adopt-A-Grandparent](#) at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Parish

Although many of these articles tell about adopting a grandparent in a nursing home, a parish program could also be designed for active older parishioners who might not have grandchildren living near them (or might not have grandchildren).

✎ Prior to COVID, one of the offerings at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, Alpharetta, GA was an exercise group, led by a parishioner who is a certified instructor. They have now resumed – outside, 6-feet apart, and with masks. In addition to fresh air, being in creation, and exercises for healthy bodies, these gatherings provide people a chance for connection ... all of these things helpful for living with the loneliness and depression that can be a part of these times.

✎ When I saw these conversation cards advertised, it occurred to me: what a perfect help/suggestions for dinner conversations at a retirement village: <https://www.holstee.com/collections/all/products/reflection-cards-conversation-questions?utm>





# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

## Reflections About and During COVID-19

- [Tips for Elders and Caregivers](#)
- [How to Help Isolated Older People During a Coronavirus Outbreak](#)
- [Encouraging older adults to stay active and safe during the coronavirus pandemic](#)
- [How to Cope With Loneliness During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
- [12 Tips To Mentally Cope With The Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
- [A Guide For Seniors On Coping In The Age Of Coronavirus](#)
- [Coronavirus: 10 ways to cope with six more months of Covid rules](#)
- [Coronavirus confinement: Thirteen tips to make self-isolating easier](#)
- [Reflections During COVID-19](#)

## GEMS Wonderings

As you read what others are trying and planning:

- Which have you been doing?
- What other endeavors have you been doing?
- Which of these could you tweak and use to reach out and provide opportunities and support for your people?

## Next issues

Soon there will be a **GEMS** series of issues on “Some Things These Pandemic Times Have Taught Us.” Many of the realities and the practices reflected on there will be pertinent and helpful for our ministry with older adults.



Janet Schaeffler, OP  
[www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com)  
[jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org](mailto:jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org)

Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at [www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com)

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*  
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*  
[http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The\\_Seasons\\_of\\_Adult\\_Faith\\_Formation.html](http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html) and <http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>