



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#143 - June 1, 2021

Best Practices: Some Things These Pandemic Times Have Taught Us (Part V)

Our previous four issues have explored some new things we have learned; new methods we have used; this issue continues that exploration. In the midst of many challenges, we have discovered new insights, new practices. These realities are not only true for these times but for the days, months, and years ahead.

19- Often what we do (did) face-to-face can also be done virtually.

We've certainly discovered through these last several months the importance of being physically present with others. We've also realized the possibilities that virtual opportunities can present.

- St. Monica Parish in Santa Monica, CA had a Parish Mission scheduled – just as COVID-19 and the stay-at-home orders happened. Rather than cancelling it, they moved it online.

st. monica catholic community

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Parish Mission Retreat 2020

UPDATE (3/16/20): In accordance with recent guidelines for gatherings, our Parish Mission Retreat will take place ONLINE ONLY. No attendees will be permitted in the church.
Tune in at: livestream.com/StMonica90403

EVENTS

- CALENDAR
- LATEST ANNOUNCEMENTS
- WEEKLY BULLETIN
- PARISH MISSION RETREAT
- GRAPE & GRAIN: APR 19
- LENT SMALL GROUPS 2020
- PARISH MISSION RETREAT 2020
- FILM CLUB 2019-20

MASS SCHEDULE
Click here for directions

Mass

Mon - Fri:	6:30a, 8:00a, 12:10p
Saturday:	8:00a, 5:30p
Sunday:	7:30a, 9:30a, 11:30a, 1:15p, 5:30p, 7:30p

- Ana Olosa Stanham at St Louis Parish, Pinecrest, FL relates about their Post-Emmaus Retreat Weekly Meetings where women and men share their faith walk and pray for each other. What used to be a physical weekly meeting of fifteen-twenty people now has turned into seventy people from different parts of the world, all of whom who, at some point, participated in the Emmaus retreat. (This retreat was originally written at St. Louis and has now turned into a worldwide evangelizing encounter movement. [Walk to Emmaus retreat program turns 40](#))
- Ana also explains that their Spanish “Talleres de Oracion y Vida” choose to adapt their physical prayer workshop using WhatsApp chat. This is a prayer workshop designed to teach people to pray. Very popular in Latin America and Spain, the movement has a center to train facilitators in Miami. The physical groups meet weekly for about three months and practice prayer through a given framework. During the week they practice prayer; during the meeting they share their prayer experiences. The Miami TOV Movement always restricted their presentation to face-to-face presentations. Ana relates, “The pandemic situation challenged them and forced them to review their way of proceeding. They were forced to act in the spirit of the founder, Fr. Ignacio Larranaga and move with the times to use WhatsApp.
- Stephanie Holden from St. Ann Parish, Atlanta, GA recounts that they tried online catechist certification classes with a video and discussion board (similar to VLCFF) but people didn't understand the concept. After the first session they changed it so people watched the video at home and discussed questions on Zoom; they liked that model better. The third class had triple the numbers from last year's in-person meeting.
- Roberta Balsewicz from Holy Spirit Catholic Community, Naperville, IL relates their experience: “The shelter in place came during the midst of Lent when many people are traditionally interested in participating in Lenten activities. People had begun new bible studies and small groups and were hit hard with the thought of stopping.

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Having embraced electronic programming with on-site small groups previously, the switch was fairly easy. Yet there was the reality that the discussion portions of the studies on-line had not been tried. Several years ago, we had attempted it but only 2 of 50 participated that way. Everyone wanted to be physically together. Now there was no choice.

This situation called for me to figure out a new mode and method. I had heard of ZOOM and the experiment began. The fifty people from morning bible study embraced it along with forty from the evening group. We were able to finish our Lenten Bible study quite successfully.

I realized that the groups were not ready to stop. It was two weeks past Easter and they were on fire with faith and the need for connection with community.

We quickly morphed into a Lectio Divina group for both the morning and the evening: Zooming with the Gospels. I create a modified *Lectio* prayer complete with faith sharing questions. We are still going strong in the beginning of July. There seems to be no rush to end. The evening group traditionally meets every other week, now they meet in their zoom rooms every week! The RCIA participants were blended into these groups; which created a wonderful sense of being in community. This challenge has shown people that church continues to operate year round!”



➤ Roberta also shares: “Baptism Sessions have also gone the way of Zoom. It has been informative to see couples in their homes and for them to meet and see each other that way. A two-part session with nine families was a great way for the young couples to get connected to each other and their church.

On evening one, the couples were signing in and introducing themselves. One of the last couples to sign in, were in separate environments. It was a little odd but I have had other adult formation participants say they were sitting in a park or at the grocery store. As the dad introduced himself, I noticed he was wearing a seat belt, then I began to notice that the scenery was moving. He was driving home from work! So I said that the session was going to be great, but he should turn off Zoom and come back in when he reached his driveway. We all had a good laugh and he was able to join us only a couple of minutes later. It was a great reminder that many people are very skilled at technology and comfortable using it everywhere.

The first evening we did some broad brushstrokes of community building, catechesis on sacraments, baptism, the Rite, and how to raise Catholic children. They were invited to complete a parenting inventory on their own and the results were sent to me for session 2. I began the second session (after prayer) with asking each parent to share a question or two that they wanted to talk about from the inventory. I was able to pick out some common areas for discussion; in case it was needed. But there was no time for my suggestions as the parents really raised open and honest questions and shared their concerns. I have to say that the two-part baptism session was one of the best things we have done on Zoom.”

➤ **GEMS #106** looked at a sample adult faith formation website which John Roberto created as an example of what a parish might do. (<http://www.seasonsofadultfaith.com/>)



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It is designed as a network of faith formation with:

- a diversity of content (programs, activities, resources)
- a variety of media (print, audio, video, apps, etc.)
- multiple environments for engagement (independent, mentored, family, small group, large group, parish-wide, community-wide)

You might find it helpful to revisit that issue again, noticing all the opportunities that are offered for online participation.

Opportunities for New Things

1. Is it the time to get to know your children, youth and families better? Or time to write notes, make phone calls, create new projects and opportunities?
2. Is it the freedom to let go of what wasn't really working like you had hoped and try to build something that will touch hearts and bring people closer to Jesus?
3. Is it the possibility that parents as primary catechists is coming true and we need to find all sorts of creative ways to support, encourage, affirm and equip them?
4. Is it time for prayer - just for you and your team to really focus on the needs of your community and pray intentionally for renewal and grace?
5. Is it time to assess everything in your ministry from the spaces to the volunteers, the curriculum to the methods used?
6. Is this the opportunity to include and invite more people in to meet the needs of your children, youth, young adults and families?
7. Is it time to really put accompaniment, mentorship and relationship building into full speed?

- Jane Angha
Ministry Blueprints

20- We are realizing that some (many) things that we did during pandemic times we need to continue.

- Many parish leaders have commented that various adult faith formation groups have usually taken a break during the summer, but not this year. Judy Cooney from Blessed Trinity Parish in Missoula, MT comments: "Usually bible study takes a summer hiatus around Pentecost, but we haven't this year."
- Stephanie Holden from St Ann Parish in Atlanta, GA shares, "We did a Zoom session of Fr. Dave Pvonka's *Wild Goose is Loose* series on the Holy Spirit between Easter and Pentecost and people really liked it. I'm going to do that each year during that time."

Stephanie also commented, "My bottom line is that people still want to connect with each other and the virtual world is letting us do that. I will be incorporating more of it into my regular programming from now on. I'm still thinking of starting some small group "house churches" but offer them virtually where people can start to build relationships and then meet in person when we can."

21- These times have called out the faith and creativity of many people; many are planning and doing things themselves, not only relying on their parishes.

- This effort is a ministry of the parish, but depends upon the faith-filled reflections of the parishioners. Even before COVID-19, St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, IN has sent subscribers an email that contains a link to the daily scripture readings accompanied by a brief personal reflection. (<https://www.stmonicaindy.org/reflections>)

They have thousands of subscribers across the U.S., in Australia, Europe and South Africa. A priest in Sri Lanka uses them in his daily Mass homilies. An East Coast reader uses them in faith formation sessions. Small Church Communities use them in faith-sharing.

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- At Holy Spirit Parish in Naperville, IL, women began Walking with Mary. A group of women meet on Thursday mornings in front of the church. They bring their rosaries and socially distant walk through a forest preserve across the street, praying the Rosary out loud. This two mile round trip provides time for the whole rosary to be prayed.



- Watch for a future **GEMS** issue which will highlight some more fascinating endeavors.

22- Throughout these times, we have realized the power and healing of music.

- Many of the musicians at St. Cecilia Parish in Boston take a turn each evening sharing a few musical compositions, inviting people to end their day in beauty and peace.

		Saint Cecilia ONLINE THIS WEEK				
		MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
Morn				9:00 Gospel Fellowship on Zoom <small>Join for a reading of the day's Gospel with conversation & fellowship. Register smacdonald@stceciliaboston.org</small>		
Midday	Midday <small>Robert Duff</small>	Reflection on Social Media <small>Maggie Rogers</small>				
Eve	Music by Twilight 7:00 on Facebook <small>Tune in to hear from some of our talented music ministers</small>			Evening Prayer 6:30 <small>Facebook Live or Zoom</small>		

Find us on Facebook & Instagram @SaintCeciliaBoston



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at 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 and <http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>