



Holy Rosary Parish Community

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A Message from our Pastor, Fr. Martin Vallely

Friday, June 12th, 2020

Dear friends,

I cannot tell you how many times this message has been written and re-written in my mind, as things have so rapidly changed over the last few tumultuous days. After almost three full months of the most peculiar and troubling experience most of us have ever lived, we are now poised to re-open our parish church for public worship again, as of next Tuesday, June 16th----very gingerly, at first, with lots of restrictions we will have to get ourselves used to.....but we are coming back together again, praise God!

This newsletter was originally conceived when our parish Pastoral Advisory Council had to cancel its scheduled May 28th Meeting. It is customary for Council members to present reports on the activities of organizations and ministries which they represent. I thought it would be a good thing to ask members to make reports even without a meeting, and then to organize them into a kind of newsletter for parishioners to read on our website. The idea was to help everyone keep connected, and to take note of many wonderful things which have continued to take place behind the scenes during these very challenging times. Anything which could serve to reduce the feeling of isolation would be welcomed. And we had no real idea how long the lockdown was going to continue!

Now that the light at the end of the tunnel is shining ever brighter (we hope!), maybe this newsletter can serve to some degree as Holy Rosary Parish's chronicle of its COVID-19 adventure, to hand on to future generations. I hope you will enjoy its contributions from many different hard-working parishioners.



I want to personally thank our parish staff for great faithfulness to duty during this tough time, going above and beyond to keep things running as smoothly as possible, even though officially our office has been closed for all these months, and will remain so at least until the end of June.

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I wish to thank Patrick O'Hara, Wrenen D'Cunha, Vic Lefebvre, and Mary Edmondstone, as well as Father Mike of course, for the tireless work of helping to keep our pre-recorded Sunday Masses going, right up to their conclusion on June 14th. This has brought so much comfort to so many. Special thanks go to Vic Lefebvre for working almost continuously on the parish website, to keep it current and useful.

I want to show my deepest appreciation to you, the parishioners and friends of Holy Rosary, for your great kindnesses and outreach to me and to Father Mike during this time. We have received so many personal greetings and best wishes, offers of meals and treats, promises of prayers and expressions of gratitude and support.

While all of these were gratefully received throughout this time, I was especially touched by the outpouring I received at the time of the 40th Anniversary of my Ordination to the Priesthood at the beginning of May. I cannot even fully comprehend, much less repay, the generosity and love shown to me at that time. And this extended well beyond Holy Rosary, I might add. Some of you know, though most probably do not, that at Noon on the very day of the Anniversary, Sunday, May 3rd, a “drive-through” took place right outside the rectory door, organized by old friends from Stoney Creek and by some of the priests. For more than a half-hour, cars kept coming and coming, with families bringing their greetings. Even Bishop Crosby came through! This, together with your own kind and loving greetings, made my Anniversary so memorable, and brought great comfort and reassurance in the midst of the difficult time.



May I thank you for your unflagging support of your parish community during these perilous months. Your financial contributions have helped so much, and we are keeping our head above water. The enclosed report from the Finance Council representative gives some more detail there.

You will also see, towards the end, a few words about the Capital Campaign follow-through action. Naturally, some things have had to grind to a halt for the moment, like the work on preparing to hire a Youth and Family Minister. But some of the other projects are slowly moving ahead. More on this as we open up further. Thank you again for your overwhelming generosity in our participation in the Campaign last Autumn----and thank the Lord we completed the fundraising campaign before the events of these last months unfolded. Many other parishes are still frozen in mid-flight with their Campaigns.

And I thank God for blessing me with such a wonderful family here at Holy Rosary, who have demonstrated such great and joyous care for one another. It is as though this tough time has seemed to draw us even closer together. I look forward to the renewed and exciting times ahead!!!

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A Report on Parish Support Activities during COVID-19 Lockdown Mary Edmondstone, Pastoral Minister

When the stay-at-home orders were issued, we began to reach out and contact our parishioners who are older, live alone, have chronic/serious health issues to ensure that they had the supports they needed to stay at home and stay safe. The Knights set up a phone tree to contact all of their members on a weekly basis by phone. The Catholic Women's League also set up a phone tree and have reached out to their members who are confined to their homes. Pam Cupido, Kerry Dionne and I have called parishioners who are not members of the Knights of Columbus or CWL. Through our combined efforts, we have spoken with over 150 households.

The purpose of our calls was to let people know that they are missed, to have a chat, to listen to their experience of social isolation, and to see if they had any concerns/needs. We had organized volunteers to be available to buy and deliver groceries to parishioners; it has been a delight and a surprise to discover that nearly all of the people we have contacted are well-supported by family, friends and neighbours.

We also make a point of letting them know about our website and how they can access daily Liturgy of the Word (during Lent) and weekly Sunday Mass on it. Almost all of the people that I chatted with told me what a blessing it was to be able to watch Mass on our website and/or on television. It is a powerful way for them to feel connected to their faith community. Many tell me that they often watch multiple Masses daily! They note that it is a joy to hear different homilies emphasizing different aspects of the readings.

We also wanted to reach out to our families to provide them with ways to celebrate together. We developed a Family Corner on our website with links to a weekly Sunday Children's Liturgy of the Word and weekly Sunday Reading Reflections for children 3 to 6, 6 to 9, and 9 to 12 as well as websites created for Catholic families with prayers, activities and crafts.

We have three long-term care homes and two retirement homes in our parish boundaries. Many of those in long-term care do not have access to phones, so we asked the children of our parish and Holy Rosary School to create a card or a drawing, which we could send to the Catholic residents living in these homes. Thanks to the generosity of our children, we have been able to send artwork to all 90 residents to brighten their day. We also included a poem Alone written by Tiana Arruda Newns, a parishioner, after a conversation about the degree of isolation experienced by seniors in institutional settings.

While many children and families submitted art, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of 3 artists – Jasmin age 9, Mateo age 5 and Belén age 3, who continued to produce many delightful creations throughout this time of social distancing. As a result of their efforts, we have been able to share their cards and pictures and Tiana's poem with over 50 parishioners who are confined to their homes.

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Most people that we have contacted are finding isolation in their homes confining and lonely, but they are grateful for family and friends, for their faith and for the ability to connect with others remotely through Mass.

Mary Edmondstone
Pastoral Minister

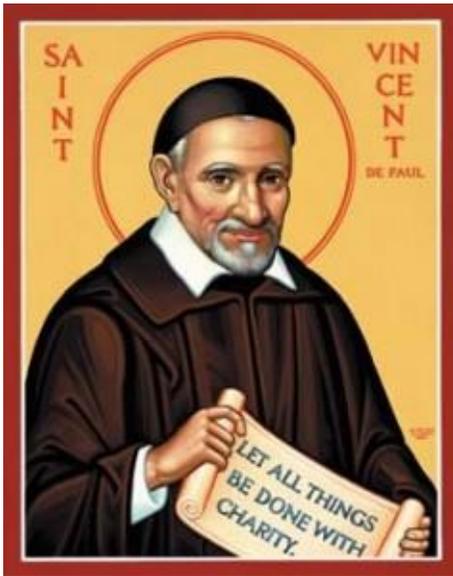
Some of the Cards Created By Our Young People



Residents of LaSalle Park Retirement Home Receiving Cards.



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St. Vincent de Paul Holy Rosary Conference: Report to the Parish

Except for the fact that we haven't held monthly meetings, and have had to modify how we meet with the people we serve, not much has changed as a result of the covid-19 virus.

It had always been our practice to work in pairs, visiting the less fortunate in our catchment area. We would listen to their stories and help in any way we could. But now, for the sake of safety, we obtain as much information as we can by phone, and then only one person meets with them outside of their living quarters, while maintaining a safe distance. It's less than perfect but it seems to work.

The only other significant change was the need to temporarily suspend the "fresh food box" programme that made produce available to approximately 25 families on a monthly basis.

The following is a brief outline of our current SSVP conference activity:

Visits

There was an average of 11 visits per month up until the end of April this year as compared with an average of 13 visits per month for the same period in 2019. Utilization of the food pantry continues to increase: 56 bags of groceries given out from January to April of this year, compared with 48 bags in 2019.

Interestingly, the number of calls for our service has declined since the beginning of the pandemic, we think primarily due to the government subsidies and the excellent work by the food banks to address the increase in demand. Our conference has been able to provide some assistance to St. Matthew's Anglican Church, in accepting and distributing donations of food and other necessities to the Burlington Food Bank, and the Compassion Society.

Programmes

- a) Ozanam Fund – This is a \$2,000 grant to support the cost of post-secondary school education for children from low income families. This year, our conference has received approval for 1 of these grants and there is 1 proposal pending approval.
- b) Laptop Computers – There is a not-for-profit company that provides refurbished laptop computers for only \$150 to children from low income families. Through an initiative of the Halton Particular Council, this programme has been made accessible to all of the SSVP conferences in the Halton region. Our conference has now purchased 4 of these computers but there will be many more to come.

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- c) Canada Learning Programme – We continue to promote the Canada Learning Bond programme which is a Federal Government initiative providing up to \$2,000 into a Registered Educational Savings Plan (RESP) to assist children from low-income families with the cost of their post-secondary education. Our goal is to have all eligible children signed on to this programme.
- d) Communication – Since the start of the pandemic we have updated our database to include the email addresses of most of our clients, so as to more effectively relay information to them. Our first group message concerned available free assistance with preparing income tax returns.



Young Vincentians

The Young Vincentians are really making their mark. They have now created their own website which can be accessed through the parish webpage. <https://youngvincentians.wordpress.com/>. You are encouraged to check it out as it reminds us of many of their initiatives to raise awareness of important issues, as well as their charitable fund-raising activities.

Something very special they did was a video of personal congratulations to Father Martin to celebrate his 40th anniversary of ordination.

They are presently holding meetings via video conferencing (“Zoom”) to plan the next season’s activities. {This raises an interesting question: Should we older folks follow their example, and do the same?}

Conclusion

Our St. Vincent de Paul conference is committed to continuing to serve individuals and families in our catchment area who are in need of help and are looking for a better quality of life. Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners, our funds are adequate, at least in the short term, to carry on our activities. However, one never knows what the future holds in these trying times. Please pray with us that we carry out God’s will in serving others.

Paul Wendling
President

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Update from your Finance Council



Good day everyone, hoping that this report finds you and your family all well, safe and coping with life changes in 2020.

The presentation of the Financial Report of the parish for the very successful fiscal year 2019 was made by Chairman Christopher Young to very sparse congregations, on the weekend just at the point when everything was shutting down in mid-March. From then on, of course, no one was coming to Mass at all.

Things looked rather tense for the first few weeks. But they then picked up considerably on account of the great generosity of the parishioners, responding to the Easter Appeals of both Father Martin and Bishop Crosby; and thereafter, with so many getting into regular patterns of keeping up with their Sunday and Special Collection offerings, whether by mailing them, delivering them to the rectory door, or going online to contribute in various ways.

The Finance Council meeting of May 21, 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19. However, Father Martin emailed all Council members a very comprehensive financial report and analysis, with detailed explanations of revenue and expenses. Any questionable variations on a year-over-year basis up to and including May 20, 2020 were explained. No significant follow-up questions or concerns were raised by any Council members.

Points of Interest:

Total Income year-over-year is down approximately 15%, due in large part to the effects of COVID-19 (which is understandable); this is not wonderful, obviously, but it is manageable. We are assisted by government subsidy programs which are helping to pay the salaries of our in-house employees.

Total Expenses are also down year-over-year approximately 19%, again due in large part to COVID-19. Certain typical Diocesan assessments have been suspended for the time being, which also helps.

Consequently Net Income is actually a little better so far in 2020 than in a comparable 2019.

In conclusion, the Church under Father Martin's management is being handled in a fiscally responsible manner.

We continue to be very relieved and grateful for your unflinching support of your parish, morally and financially, especially across this difficult time.

On behalf of the Finance Council
Lou Poloniato
Council member

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Refugee Resettlement Committee Update

Our formal period of support for our refugee family of Ziba Rahmati, and her sons Mesbah and Mosab, has now drawn to a close. It was extended for an additional six months beyond the one-year mark reached at the end of November, 2019. This extension proved to be a good thing, because the friendship and support of Committee members was very helpful to the family during this frightening time.

Carol Gallimore, who spearheaded a lot of the efforts to ensure good educational opportunities for the family, reports to the Pastoral Advisory Council as follows:

“Mosab and Mesbah continue to succeed despite the challenge of online learning.

Mr. Weir, Mosab’s Math teacher, reports, “He is a great kid learning lots and his English acquisition is super.” Mosab struggles with Math. Ms. Widdup reports, “He is an amazing young man with so much potential. With his desire to succeed, I know he will go far.”

Mesbah has done very well in his studies at Westdale. He does experience challenges with Math.

Ziba continues her study at Circle of Friends.

I continue to inquire re ESL summer school for the family.”

Meanwhile, some of the remaining monies were spent, just in the last week, on new bikes for the boys, which they are already making good use of.

Our first refugee, Ibrahim, is very successful in his new life, has been able at last to bring his wife here to Canada, and they are expecting a baby! Life is good.

All in all, the whole 5-year project of refugee resettlement sponsorship here at Holy Rosary, now wrapping up, has been challenging, exhilarating, and fulfilling. The parish community is to be thanked for its ongoing support; and we are so grateful to the Committee, under Vic Lefebvre’s Chairmanship, for its extremely hard work on so many fronts during these years.



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Notes on Sanctuary Decoration

As with all regular duties at Holy Rosary, the pandemic has severely curtailed routine Sacristan tasks. Under normal circumstances, the Easter season with the intense requirements of the Paschal Triduum, creates by far the most complex preparations of the year. But not this year.

The cancellation of Holy Week services, while at the time surprising in some ways and a little disturbing, proved to become a huge Sacristan bonus. Usually the floral order, determined near the beginning of Lent, is a treat for tired winter eyes, but this year there were no florists and few flowers anywhere. Even at present time the variety and even more so the quality remains quite limited.



Several years ago, a lovely Paschal Lamb hanging was purchased for the front of the altar. Unfortunately, it proved too narrow for the expanse of the altar and has been stored for several years. This year, with the assistance of Mary Edmondstone, it was decided to convert the hanging to a wall hanging in the Narthex. Just as the tailor completed the alterations, all business ceased, and so the hanging spent Easter on a hanger in the tailor's locked facility. Good news, it will be ready for next year.



Floral arrangements along with the other weekly Sacristan duties have continued to be completed in preparation for the filming---and now the opening up once more--- of Sunday Mass.

Janet James
Sacristan

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Holy Rosary Catholic Women's League



Like so many other organizations, the restrictions put in place to help stop the spread of COVID19 have severely curtailed the plans and operations of the Catholic Women's League. However, you cannot keep a great bunch of women down!!

In times like these, effective and regular communication becomes even more essential. Our chair of communications, Chris McNamara, has done a stellar job in maintaining a line of information for our membership. She has sent out emails to share information that has come to us from the Diocesan executive, to encourage food donations to St. Matthew's Church (the storage and collating centre for the Burlington Food Bank), to ask members to join in prayer (for example, in special Marian prayers during the month of May), to share news of both loss and joy, and to invite members to get in touch if any help is needed (i.e. grocery shopping etc.).

Membership of Holy Rosary Council now stands at 144. We suffered the loss of three long-term members: Agnes Hayhurst, Barbara Blake and Pauline Lepinskie. Their names have been added to the League's Book of Life. Plus we sorrow at the loss of our dear Hilda Thomas's husband Joe, and relatives of other members as well---all of the above deprived of proper funerals at this time due to the pandemic restrictions.

March 6, 2020 was World Day of Prayer, hosted this year by Burlington East Presbyterian Church. Some of our membership took part in this annual inter-faith event, the theme of which was "Rise! Take up your mat and walk!" We are asked to rise to Jesus' challenge to help others.

In the early days of the "shutdown", a telephone committee was organized with the help of Mary Edmondstone, with the task of contacting by telephone our senior members to say "hello", to chat, to find out how they were coping, if any assistance was needed. We have also encouraged our membership to be in touch with each other and with the executive. Some of our membership have given specific help to individual members so that they can access the parish website and take part in the online Sunday celebration of Mass.

Plans are in place to send by post "Hello" letters to our membership as a way of keeping in touch.

A donation of \$300 was given to Partnership West and \$200 worth of non-perishables was donated to the Compassion Society from our Catholic Women's League.

On the occasion of Father Martin Vallely's 40th anniversary of ordination, the Council arranged for a special dinner (created by Chris McNamara of "Dinner is Served") to be delivered to the rectory and enjoyed by Father Martin and Father Mike. The feast was accompanied by flowers, a spiritual bouquet, special prayer composed by our Spiritual Development Chair Sheila Lynott, a nice wine, and a congratulatory song! All social distancing protocols in effect!

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Father made a special reference to our Council at the Mother's Day Mass on Sunday, May 10. Mary Edmondstone represented our membership in the honouring of our Blessed Mother with the placing of the floral crown on her statue.



Aeneas and Barbara MacIsaac have been collecting unsold bread from Cobs Bakery each Sunday evening for delivery to non-profit organizations. This bread had been going to the Good Shepherd, but since the onset of the pandemic, the Good Shepherd was not accepting bread. CWL members have assisted Aeneas and Barb in packaging and delivering bread to Wellington Square meal program, to Neighbour to Neighbour Community Centre, and to group homes in Oakville.

As we enter the month of June, we realize that graduations will be very different for our students this year. We were delighted to be contacted by representatives of Assumption Catholic High School and of Holy Rosary Elementary School, who informed us of their plans for graduations this year. We were happy to be able to continue our Catholic Women's League Council's policy of giving graduation bursaries to worthy students. The Assumption gift will be going to Sofia Ilagan, and our award for Holy Rosary will be given to Ella Dell'Unto. Many congratulations to both of these young women!



The members of the Holy Rosary Craft Club have not been able to meet for their usual Thursday gatherings, but they have not been idle! They have been in contact with each other and spent the winter working on their own, creating wreaths, angel decorations, repurposing wool from older sweaters into mitts and hats, crocheting dishcloths etc. etc.! Some crafters put talents to work in sewing masks!

They recently were able to price items and to store them in hopes of carrying on with our annual Bazaar. They are also planning a fund-raising garage sale for when restrictions are loosened to allow this. Thank you to these members!

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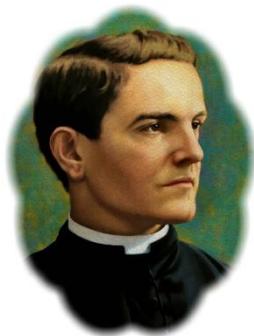
Knights of Columbus Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Council 15920

Like everyone else we have lived in two significantly different worlds since mid-winter. The Knights did their usual things in late February, including arranging for the Burlington Special Olympics to attend their 1st regional finals of the K of C Basketball Free Throw. We made plans for other activities during Lent including attending the Stations of the Cross services in the church...and then the world changed.

At our March General meeting we finalized our 2020 budget just before the Government imposed closure on all of our activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Fortunately, we were able to welcome a new member into our ranks – Richard Cupido, grandson of our beloved former member Guido, who received the honours of the Third Degree in April in the online exemplification of the Charity, Unity and Fraternity ceremonial.

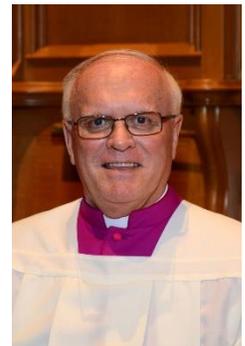
With instructions from our State Council and Bishop Crosby, we ceased all current and planned Council activities. I communicated this to our Membership. However, to stress the importance of keeping in touch with our members and their families, Financial Secretary Vic Lefebvre created a “Call Tree” process. Once a week, six members are calling the membership to determine how they are coping and if they need any assistance.

Since mid-March our main focus has been to create a virtual meeting world for the Knights at the same time as the parish was significantly enhancing the parish website and creating amazing virtual services for the parishioners. We had our first virtual meeting on ZOOM in late March and have had several since including a social gathering every two weeks, set up by Vic Lefebvre. Special thanks to Vic for all of the hard work he has done not only with the Knights but for the parish website and the parish on-line services.



On Sunday, March 29th, members of our Council (practicing social distancing) joined Chaplain Father Martin at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery for a Knights of Columbus Founder's Day celebration at the grave site of Charter Chaplain Monsignor Edward House.

Because of the Pandemic, the Annual Knights of Columbus Lottery Draw which was to take place in May has been changed to October 30th.



Delegates to the virtual Ontario Knights of Columbus Convention held on May 2nd were Joe Milton and Ken Fleming. The current State Executive was re-elected for another year. Our Council was again the recipient of several awards including the much coveted “Best Overall Council” in Ontario, the second time in four years

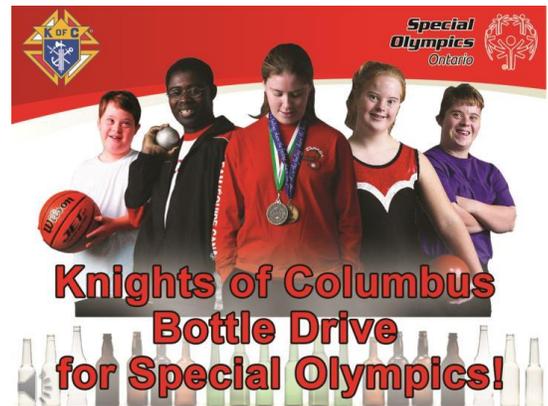
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The \$1,500 we didn't spend on the convention was donated to the Burlington Food Bank. The bread we have been collecting from Cobs Bakery on Sunday evenings is now going to other places, because the Good Shepherd could no longer accept it due to Covid-19 restrictions.



Despite the inability of our Knights to do their usual charitable work we are still undertaking a couple of safe events to try to carry on our work. Several of the Knights did individual "Walks for Life" in support of Halton Alive to help raise money for this cause. Our goal to exceed the \$2,300 we raised last year was achieved, raising \$2,625.

We are continuing our Bottle Drive collections in support of the Special Olympics. Although we are not able to run the usual open collection days in the parking lot, we have devised a cautious method of gathering, storing and gradually returning the bottles over a longer period of time. A special thanks goes to Aeneas MacIsaac for allowing us to use his trailer to pick up bottles from some households and store them in the church parking lot. There followed several days where Knights made individual trips to the beer store to return "cart-size" loads.



Diocesan Capital Campaign



On a slightly different topic, as the parish has tried in these rough times to nevertheless take the first steps flowing from Pastoral Advisory Council prioritizing of projects envisioned by our parish's immensely successful participation in the 2019 Diocesan Capital Campaign:

---Ken Fleming followed up with Jones Signs of Burlington to get a status report on the new digital sign for the front of the church. The sign was supposed to be delivered and installed in the first couple of weeks of June but that will not happen quite then. The installation will be delayed for several weeks as the components of the sign are stuck in transit awaiting customs clearance and just general congestion brought on the pandemic restrictions. We should have a firmer date soon but prior to that we will have to get the electrician to help us locate the electrical connection so we can run the wires out to the new sign....that is a work in progress right now, in mid-June.

---Sam Cervoni has been working on tightening up the front row of pews in the church; and we are starting to look at the various projects on the altar including railings to lead up into the sanctuary, and the re-sanding of the sanctuary floor. We hope to get some quotes soon, so that maybe we can get some of that work done during the summer months.

Respectfully submitted:

Joe Milton, Grand Knight
Ken Fleming, Past Grand Knight