

Parish Pastoral Council Report
July 2020

It was a challenging year for the parish. The COVID-19 epidemic effectively cut the year in half with restrictions tightening very quickly in March. These restrictions effectively called a halt to Holy Mass. Meetings as well as catechism classes and confirmation, first communion and first reconciliation celebrations were cancelled.

Our parishioners, who come from seventy-two different nations and who work for international organizations and multi-national companies, faced adversity with border crossings getting caught away from home as flights between countries dwindled. Loved ones affected by the COVID-19 virus were separated from each other and unable to give comfort. People have lost their jobs. Many have been stuck alone for weeks with no social outlet. We have lost parents, loved ones and friends. It seems like so small a gesture but our sympathies and prayers go out to all those who are grieving in this difficult time.

However, in the midst of this great tragedy our faith claims that there is hope. Witnesses spoke of finally finding extended time for their children and families for what felt like the first time in their busy hectic lives. Slowing down allowed us to pray on what we should put forward as priorities in our lives. Many people have decided to change course in their lives and horizons have opened up which were not there before.

In the past, we have talked about the Church's call to all of its faithful disciples of Christ to go out and spread the good news of our faith. To walk in our faith means to learn and serve and then to inspire others also to learn and to serve. In this epidemic, we saw some of those fruits in our parishioners.

The teaching of our faith starts in our children's catechism courses which meet every Sunday. With the virus, those classes stopped and continued within the heart of the families. Through the different mediums of platforms such as *Formed* our families were enabled to complete the education of our children for the year. In the Fall 2020, we have rescheduled Confirmation, First Holy Communion and Reconciliation for the children.

Faith formation does not stop at Confirmation. It continues throughout our lives. Our latest group started now almost two years ago: Growth in Prayer and Reflective Living follows the exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola and is a two years course that cumulated in the Easter and Pentecostal retreats which started at Ash Wednesday and continued through Pentecost. They were continued virtually online through various platforms with participants (located throughout the world) waking up

sometimes in the middle of the night so as not to miss their meeting and to call witness to the events unfolding around them.

Our ladies in the Walking with Purpose group also had a similar experience having had their meetings at the parish at three different times on Thursdays moved to a virtual environment once the social distancing restrictions made it impossible to meet at the parish house. Many thanks to all of the group leaders and organizers as well as the Ignatian Spirituality Centre Glasgow for the love and kindness they showed by making the retreat happen. You have responded to Jesus' call to *feed his flock*. Both of these groups will continue in the autumn with the Growth in Prayer and Reflective Living starting its two year course.

Scripture tells us to give in charity quietly (Matthew 6:1-4). I have a favorite story that I share with my children that every silent good deed is like adding a brick to our homes we are building in heaven. Only God needs to see what we do. However, sometimes we need the master organizers to make things happen when the need is great and they must not be quiet. These organizers have made it possible to feed the needy in Geneva at the Jardin Montbrillant soup kitchen. For this ministry, we have often had more volunteers from our parish than places available and we hope to expand this ministry in the years to come. A grateful thanks is also in order towards our Global Outreach Committee that helps to sift through the many requests for aid around the world to help us channel our weekly contributions to wonderful organizations supporting education around the world such as the Philippines and Turkana. These organizers light the way outside our parish and into the world beyond the doors.

The heart of our faith is the thanksgiving at mass. When we were required to close our doors for mass it caused a great gap in many of our lives having something so precious taken away for the first time in our lives. Through the vision of several of our parishioners, we were able to get the mass online connecting for the first time all of our parishioners and family members from around the world. Many thanks for the technical experience, the readers, the musicians and all those who tuned in to connect us all in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Thank you also to those who helped to open up mass as the restrictions lifted. All of you who manned the sanitation station and ushered members and guests to their seats —our masses could not have run so smoothly without you. Thank you to all of you who served setting up and cleaning down the pews after mass. Without the faithfulness and patience of this small army of volunteers and the visiting priests, it would not have been possible to hold six masses every weekend! Thank you also to all of the parishioners who exerted restraint following the guidelines set up by the parish to keep attendance at mass as safe as possible. Without your patience and support this community endeavor would not have been possible.

We do not know what is coming over the next year, but we pray that the Holy Spirit shows us the good that also comes out of dark times. We pray that joy and peace will reign in your hearts as you show your faith to the world and hold steadfast in Christ. Peace be upon all of you.