Matthew 25 Grants Distribute $192,000 to Community-Based Organizations

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

The community-based efforts of local outreach organizations and ministries have come to the forefront during the past several months of the COVID-19 pandemic, meeting the rise in need for food, clothing and shelter.

With Pennsylvania’s unemployment rate nearing 8% last month, more people are finding themselves faced with the challenge of how to provide for their families’ basic needs.

That’s where the generosity of supporters of the Matthew 25 Grant Program fill in the gaps, providing much needed and, in some cases, life-saving support.

Through the Matthew 25 Collection taken up last fall, the program’s grant selection committee awarded $192,000 to community-based organizations serving people in need right here in our towns and neighborhoods.

Kim Roche, Director of the Diocesan Office of Stewardship

Boxes of food distributed from the Catholic Harvest Food Pantry in York help a woman meet her families’ nutritional needs, as seen in this file photo. The Food Pantry is one of 32 community-based programs that received grants as a result of the Diocese’s Matthew 25 Collection.
and Development, said the committee was able to continue its work of learning about the work of the organizations that applied for the grants, despite social distancing guidelines, and providing funding via grants.

“The committee was focused on providing funding to organizations who were on the front lines of providing food, clothing and shelter to those who were most impacted by the coronavirus,” she said. “The committee members were assigned organizations to interview over the phone or by e-mail to understand the work that they are doing as well as how their organization was able to pivot and respond quickly to a changing landscape. In some cases, the application was amended to reflect new needs that still fell under food, clothing or shelter.”

Committee members met via Zoom to discuss applications and the amount of grants.

Roche acknowledged the efforts of the Matthew 25 Grant Selection Committee, especially Sharon Turner, who served as chair for many years.

“She will be stepping down and will be sorely missed,” Roche remarked. “She brought a deep knowledge of the non-profit community to the group.”

Roche said new members are welcome, and those who are interested may contact her at kroche@hbgdiocese.org or 717-657-4804, ext. 245.

Through the generosity of those who donated to the Matthew 25 collection this past November, the committee has selected 32 organizations to receive funding. In a thank-you letter, Ann Carney, Finance Coordinator of Community CARES, which offers emergency shelter, wrote, “We have remained open 24 hours a day throughout the COVID-19 health crises so that those experiencing homelessness have access to food, showers and other resources, along with a location where they can shelter in place. Our continued efforts to provide these services while keeping...
Statement by the Diocesan Black Catholic Apostolate on George Floyd’s Death

The following statement on the death of George Floyd and on the sin of racism was given by Angele Mbassi, Coordinator of the Black Catholic Apostolate in the Diocese of Harrisburg. The apostolate works to address the social, economic and spiritual needs of all people of African ancestry. For information on the apostolate and its efforts and activities, visit https://www.hbgdiocese.org/multicultural-ministries/black-catholic-apostolate/.

On behalf of the Black Catholic Community in the Diocese of Harrisburg, as the coordinator I would like to address my condolences to Mr. George Floyd’s family. May you find comfort in the mighty God’s love.

Therefore, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, we have all seen the brutality and the barbaric death of a young black man in a video and in the media. This terrific tragedy hits me like a ton of bricks. A white police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, refused to listen to a fellow human being’s cries in distress.

Helplessness and hopelessness in each tear and in his trembling voice broke my heart. My heart aches for him and all black men who constantly live in an oppressive society. My heart aches for black children everywhere that must navigate and learn how to behave in the presence of law enforcement.

My heart aches for every black woman that not only has to deal with the pressure of the systematic and institutional racism, but also must continue to be strong for her family, and pray daily that her husband, father, son and brothers make it home safely. My heart aches because black people are hurt and targeted, angry and traumatized, responding with the accumulated rage from long-standing abuse and oppression.

I join the non-violent call and protest for complete and transparent investigation of the killing of Mr. Floyd. Along with a call for investigation and justice, I state that we pray for comfort of his grieving family and friends, peace for the hurting community and prudence while the investigation is underway. My hope and prayer are to eradicate racism and injustice here in this country and all over the world. Since racism is a sin, our black community in the Diocese rejects the sin of racism in all its forms. God does not have any color; we keep our eyes on the Creator to pour the spirit of love among us with no discrimination.

I firmly believe with the power of the prayer we can uproot the spirit of racism and injustice so black people can be treated with dignity and the respect they deserve as any other human being.
residents and staff as safe as possible remain a priority.”

Amanda Barnes, Executive Director of Healthy Steps Diaper Bank, another grant recipient, also noted the impact of the Coronavirus on struggling families: “In 2020, we have already distributed over 240,000 diapers to 2,200 children, and these numbers are continuing to rise as COVID-19 is drastically increasing the number of families who are seeking support from our diaper bank.”

A total of $192,000 has been granted to the following organizations, thanks to the generosity of donors to the Matthew 25 Collection:

**Birthright of Sunbury, $1,000**

Birthright is a pro-life 501 (c) (3) organization dedicated to reducing abortions in the Sunbury area. They also provide clothing to poverty level families in need of baby items. The funds will allow the organization to purchase three newborn outfits for infants living in poverty-level households. Many of the infants don’t have proper clothing to wear home from the hospital. St. Monica Parish in Sunbury supported Birthright’s application.

**Brown Bag Lunch Ministry, $9,000**

The Brown Bag ministry at St. Anne Parish in Lancaster started approximately 40 years ago, giving vouchers for a lunch at a local store. This eventually grew to making sandwiches in-house, developing volunteer teams and standardizing a healthy lunch. In 2019, the organization served 20,067 lunches to people of all faiths and situations. Funds from the grant will be used to meet the demand for more lunches for the hungry in Lancaster County. Currently, they plan to distribute 150-200 lunches per day. St. Anne Parish in Lancaster supported the program’s application.

**Carlisle Area Family Life Center, $2,000**

CAFLC was founded in 1979 and is a crisis pregnancy and family resource center that helps women and families with their material and emotional needs. They provide free and
confidential services including pregnancy testing, limited obstetric ultrasounds, lay counseling, community referrals, and maternity/baby clothes and supplies. The grant money will fund the center’s “Baskets for Babies” program, which provides pregnant clients with a large basket filled with all the basic baby supplies needed to welcome their little one. The center has seen an increase in the number of baskets given, from 78 baskets in 2018 to 91 in 2019. St. Patrick Parish in Carlisle supported the center’s application.

Catholic Harvest Food Pantry, $7,500
The ministry, established by Brother Charles O’Connor in 1985 as a mission outreach of St. Joseph Parish, has evolved with three additional supporting parishes: St. Patrick, St. Rose of Lima, and Immaculate Heart of Mary. The organization distributes food, clothing and personal care items to an average of 700 York County families monthly. Providing low income families with the “choice” method, clients are paired with a volunteer to choose the items they will take home. Funding will allow the purchase of healthy meats and proteins which are limited choices in the state and federal food programs. St. Joseph Parish in York supported the pantry’s application.

Christian Churches United, $9,000
CCU’s roots were in area churches partnering together to provide emergency assistance to the general public in the wake of the 1972 flood from Hurricane Agnes. By the late 1970s, an emergency assistance office was formalized and is now the central location in Dauphin County for homeless women and families seeking intake to emergency shelters, as well as rental assistance, utility assistance and other emergency aid. Over the years, CCU has expanded to provide long-term housing and support to men who were chronically homeless, mentoring and support to ex-offenders and various other ecumenical and community impact efforts. The funds will help CCU assist households in crisis to avoid homelessness through a number of existing programs, help women and families with emergency shelter needs and provide assistance to achieve stable housing. St. Catherine Labouré Parish in Harrisburg supported CCU’s application.

Community CARES, $6,000
Community CARES is a 501 (c) (3) charity assisting the homeless population with emergency shelter, resources and supportive services since 2004. In 2009, CARES opened a Resource Center to meet the needs of residents during the day. The Resource Center is the only coordinated entry walk-in access site in Cumberland County. Cumberland Street Reach, an outreach program designed to engage, assess and assist housing those at-risk in Cumberland County, became fully operational in 2019. The grants will be used to continue the overall program expenses associated with operations. St. Patrick Parish in Carlisle supported their application.

Domestic Violence Services of Cumberland and Perry Counties, $10,000
DVSCP is a private, non-profit organization that was incorporated in May 1990 and is the sole provider of safe emergency housing and services for victims of domestic violence in Cumberland and Perry Counties. The agency is funded in part by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In addition to the Emergency Shelter, the agency has a 24 hour toll-free hotline, counseling and advocacy services, assistance with obtaining a Protection from Abuse Order, accompaniment to legal and/or medical proceedings, education and community outreach, and AMEND, a batterers’ intervention program. The funds will be used to continue the overall program expenses associated with their operations. St. Patrick Parish in Carlisle
Ephrata Area Social Services, $8,000
Ephrata Area Social Services was established in 1971 by a group of local pastors and community members to serve the needy in the community. In 2019, their food bank served 291 families, consisting of 242 kids, 420 adults and 82 seniors on average. The grant will provide funding for food to restock their food bank and for fuel for the vans used to bring those without transportation to the food bank. Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish in Ephrata supported the program’s application.

Guardian Angels Outreach, $5,000
Guardian Angels outreach began in 2014 serving a hot meal to 36 guests. Over the past five years, they have grown to serve more than 140 meals each week, distribute food pantry items and holiday food baskets and provide winter coats to needy families from the parish and community. Funds will be used to purchase food items to supplement the donations that create hot meals, to restock pantry items, and to provide warm winter coats and accessories to children and adults from the community who do not have one. Holy Angels Parish in Kulpmont supported the outreach’s application.

Healthy Steps Diaper Bank, $7,000
Born of a need in 2013, this ministry serves babies and toddlers. This program assists where WIC or Food Stamps do not, as government programs do not allow funds for diapers. Volunteers collect, store and distribute a supplemental amount of diapers each day to families in need to enable them to meet the Department of Health’s diapering guidelines. Funds will be used to purchase diapers and cover other administrative and operational needs for the program. St. Margaret Mary Parish in Harrisburg supported the diaper bank’s application.

Lancaster County Project for the Needy, $5,000
LCPN has been distributing food boxes to families in need over the Christmas season for the past 32 years. The organization expects to see an increase in the number of food boxes delivered during the holiday season this year as they expand to other communities in Lancaster County. Their application was supported by Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Lancaster.

Lebanon County Christian Ministries, $6,000
LCCM started as a food pantry in 1982. It now serves the entire county of Lebanon in providing food, shelter, clothing and other emergency services. FRESH Start Emergency Shelter and Resource Center opened in 2012 in partnership between LCCM and Jubilee Ministries. As of 2017, LCCM is the sole operator of the program. They serve any family facing crisis or emergency. The funds will support the Book Buddies program for children.
provide kitchen supplies for guests to cook meals, office supplies necessary for job searches, obtain housing, child care, transportation and other services, and purchase drug testing kits. The organizations’ application was supported by St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Annville.

Manna for the Many, $10,000
Manna for the Many was established through the Shamokin Area Ministerium to combine resources and assist the needy. The pantry is open three days a week and its population is mostly elderly, at or below poverty levels. The organization reached 613 families last year. The funds will purchase food items distributed to those who visit the food bank. Their application was supported by Mother Cabrini Parish in Shamokin.

Manos Unidas Hispanic American Center, $10,000
Manos Unidas was founded by the Lantino Services task force and St. Francis Xavier Parish in Gettysburg. Their mission is integration of the community through services, programs and events that facilitate understanding and multicultural appreciation. Funds will support food purchases from the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank for the after-school program, and food for community celebrations such as Kids Day, Cinco de Mayo and Quinceanaras. St. Francis Xavier Parish in Gettysburg supported the organization’s application.

Mary’s Helpers Food and Clothing Pantry, $10,000
Established in 2008 by Sister Sue Ann Steves, this organization serves families in the 17113 zip code with food and clothing need. Mary’s Helpers will use the funds to continue to purchase food supply items for distribution to needy families. Prince of Peace Parish in Steelton supported their application.

Morning Star Pregnancy Services, $2,000
Morning Star Pregnancy Services was founded as Birthright of Central PA in 1972. They are a non-denominational, Christian pregnancy resource center offering life-affirming alternatives to abortion. More than 30 volunteers, many from parishes within the Diocese of Harrisburg, help provide counseling, material aid, health services and referrals to other community organizations. The funds will be used to provide formula, infant clothing and diapers to clients. Each client in need will receive a layette which includes diapers, onesies, baby clothings and other necessities before the birth of the child, as well as continuing material support for the mother and child. St. Joseph Parish in Mechanicsburg supported their application.

Mother Maria Kaupas Center, $1,000
The center works with local school districts and parishes to assist families facing economic challenges and people who can’t cook for themselves. They also assist local families with food bags for the weekend and provide clothing as needed. Funds will support the Buddy Bags program, which provides food for the weekend for local families and appropriate clothing for school-age children from economically disadvantaged families. Divine Redeemer Parish in Mount Carmel supported the center’s application.

New Hope Ministries, $1,000
New Hope Ministries was founded in 1982 as a Christian social service agency. The organization serves low-income families in the greater Harrisburg area. They also operate nine mobile pantry sites in the area and provide basic needs to families, including rent/mortgage assistance and utility payments. The funds will support the organization’s Housing Assistance Program, providing rent/mortgage assistance funds, utility assistance and program services to connect clients to resources to help achieve stability in housing. St. Joseph Parish in Mechanicsburg supported their application.
Off the Streets, $10,000
Off the Streets Lancaster has helped more than 2,700 people get off the streets, out of shelters and into stable housing since 2013. The organization uses a warehouse to store furniture and a van to facilitate moves of at least two families a week. The grant will enable them to house at least 16 families or an estimated average of at least 46 persons. All funds will be used to fund security deposits. The organization estimates a 25% increase in referrals and need for security deposits for housing this year. St. John Neumann Parish in Lancaster supported their application.

OMPH Benevolent Society, $3,000
Founded in the 1980s, the society provides food and emergency financial assistance to families in need in the Ephrata and Denver areas. The primary objective of the Benevolent Society is the management of its community food bank, which is open every Wednesday evening. A secondary mission is to provide financial assistance to families in emergency situations. The funds will be used to continue their mission of providing food and/or financial assistance to those in need. Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish in Ephrata supported their application.

Our Daily Bread Soup Kitchen, $6,000
Our Daily Bread was established in York County’s nine Catholic parishes in 1983, in conjunction with the local Catholic Charities. Today, more than 60 church and civic groups participate in supplying and serving a hot entree during the week. More than 2 million meals have been served. St. John Neumann Parish in York supported their application.

A volunteer at Our Daily Bread Soup Kitchen in York serves a meal in this file photo.

MATTHEW 25
continued from 7

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MATTHEW 25
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been served since their first day, a daily average in excess of 275 meals. The funds will be used to pay off the balance on what is owed on the new walk-in refrigerator/freezers that needed to be replaced last year.

Our Lady’s Food Pantry, $2,500
This is a ministry outreach program of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Harrisburg. They rely on donations from food drives from schools around the holidays and the parish for both financial support and food donations. The pantry has seen an increase in the demand for food since other food banks in the neighborhood have closed. Funds will be used to purchase meats and non-perishable goods from the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Harrisburg supported the application.

Race Track Chaplaincy of America, $3,000
The Race Track Chaplaincy serving at Penn National was established in 1984. They seek to meet the spiritual, emotional, physical, social and educational needs of the horse racing work force so they can experience God’s love firsthand. The funds will aid workers who have lost wages due to injury, illness or other situations unique to the racing world, such as weather cancellations or spousal abandonment. Since the cafeteria at the track closed 18 months ago, the chaplaincy has provided a hot meal to the workers. St. Katharine Drexel Parish in Mechanicsburg supported the chaplaincy’s application.

San Juan Bautista Social Outreach Program, $10,000
This ministry, which serves less-fortunate Hispanics throughout Lancaster County, was born in 2001. It supplies monthly community meals, distributes food weekly through their food pantry, provides holiday food baskets and provides lunch and dinner to more than 500 children on a weekly basis. This program also assists people with other critical needs, such as medicine, transportation and rental assistance. Additionally, this past year they assisted displaced families relocating from Puerto Rico to Lancaster County. The funds will allow the parish to continue their outreach programs in the community. San Juan Bautista Parish in Lancaster supported the application.

Shalom House, $1,000
Shalom House has provided emergency housing for women and children since 1986. To interrupt homelessness and root out issues surrounding poverty, they believe a multi-generational approach is necessary: a holistic model of wrap-around services and phases of housing appropriateness. The funds will help provide emergency shelter services to approximately 180 women and children experiencing homelessness in the coming year. In the last two years, approximately 35% of their residents have been children. St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Harrisburg supported the program’s application.

Silence of Mary, $6,000
This organization serves as a resource to those in need in Harrisburg’s Allison Hill section. They provide food, clothing, blankets and personal hygiene kits to the mentally ill, terminally ill, expectant mothers, children, homeless, refugees and immigrants. The funds will provide resources for the “assistance to others” program, which operates in needy sections of Dauphin, York, Cumberland and Perry Counties. They are also assisting local school districts with back pack food supplies tailored to the recipients’ grade level and cooking ability. Holy Infant Parish in Manchester supported the organization’s application.

Southern York County Pantry, $10,000
The pantry started in the St. John the Baptist’s historic church in New Freedom, providing emergency food for the needy. It has been known as the Southern York Pantry since 2007. The

More MATTHEW 25, page 10
pantry serves an average of 150 families each month. During the holidays in 2019, they served 375 families. The funds will ensure that the pantry can continue to offer a reasonable amount of fresh produce and protein in the form of fresh and frozen meats, chicken and fish. St. John the Baptist Parish in New Freedom supported the pantry’s application.

**St. Francis Soup Kitchen, $10,000**

St. Francis Soup Kitchen serves the Allison Hill neighborhood of Harrisburg as the only place for the homeless and others to get a hot meal. They have been providing this service since 1980. The funds will purchase food, kitchen supplies and equipment necessary to provide food for the hungry that come through their doors. St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Harrisburg supported the soup kitchen’s application.

**The Caring Cupboard, $3,000**

The Caring Cupboard serves individuals, families and households with demonstrated food needs and income no greater than 225% of the poverty guideline. Relying on volunteers and donations, the organization served 540 families in 2019. They also distributed more than 17,000 meals during the summer and more than 300 turkeys at the holidays. Funds will be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables to supplement the food resources that are given to families in need. Holy Spirit Parish in Palmyra supported the organization’s application.

**The Lord’s Lunch, $10,000**

This program initially started as a Girl Scout Award project to provide a meal to the lonely, homeless, unemployed, working poor, mentally and physically challenged, senior citizens and children. Since its inception, they have added distributions of food twice a month and a summer feeding program for school-aged children. In 2019, they added distribution of fresh foods and dry goods two days a week. Volunteers sit, eat, talk with and help the people attending lunch. The funds will support food purchases for their four main programs: Saturday lunches where they served 2,355 meals in 2019; Good Food boxes where clients “shop” for their food items; Kids Feeding Kids Summer program for students who qualify for free lunch programs during the school year to select healthy snacks and meals for the week; and their weekly food distribution efforts where clients select fresh and non-perishable food from their stock. St. John the Baptist Parish in New Freedom supported the program’s application.

**Transitional Housing and Care Center (Formally Gatehouse), $5,000**

The Transitional Housing and Care Center provides shelter and services as a gateway to independence for homeless families and individuals. This organization is able to keep families together while they face housing crisis. They serve families in Montour, Columbia, Union, Synder and Northumberland Counties. Funds will sustain the Gate House in providing emergency shelter and transitional housing to homeless residents. Residents receive safe shelter, life skills workshops and career counseling. The staff facilitates connections to training and employment opportunities, permanent housing options, necessary health services such as drug, alcohol and mental health programs. St. Joseph Parish in Danville supported the center’s application.

**Women’s Care Center of York, $3,000**

This organization was started by Msgr. Brenner and others serving York City as a pro-life organization. They became part of the Women’s Care Center network in 2017. They provide free pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, confidential counseling and continuing care for families. Funds will be used to purchase travel systems (car seat/stroller combinations) and infant and baby supplies such as diaper bags, diapers and baby items. St. Rose of Lima Parish in York supported the center’s application.

This year, the Matthew 25 Collection will take place the weekend prior to Thanksgiving. Gifts to the collection are welcome at any time during the year. To learn more, visit [www.hbgdiocese.org/m25](http://www.hbgdiocese.org/m25).
Something Happened on Pentecost

By Father Michael Reid
Special to The Witness

The following event occurred at the 9:30 a.m. Mass on May 31, 2020, Pentecost Sunday, in St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, Hanover, PA. This is my first-hand account of the event:

After the Scripture readings were proclaimed, I spoke with the assembly on the Scripture message of Pentecost, and encouraged everyone to include in their daily prayers a simple prayer to the Holy Spirit – “Veni, Sancte Spiritus. Come, Holy Spirit.” – and be refreshed with the gifts of the Spirit. After the homily, we professed our faith and lifted up our intercessory prayers.

After the Offertory blessing of gifts and prayers, I prayed the Preface of Pentecost, led everyone in praying the Sanctus, and, with Father Joseph Gotwalt, prayed Eucharistic Prayer I. As we began praying the Concluding Doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer, I lifted up the Blessed Sacrament.

Looking up at Jesus, I saw a bird fly swiftly through the open wooden doors at the back of the church, through the small vestibule where stairs lead to the choir loft, and into the church. The bird flew up the side aisle toward our Mother Mary shrine, banked across the pews into the upper middle of the church, where it abruptly slowed itself, and paused facing the altar with its wings fully spread.

Images of the Holy Spirit portrayed in art came to mind: a painting of the Baptism of the Lord; and the stained glass window behind the Chair of Peter in St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City. The bird then swiftly flew up to the ceiling and perched on a rafter beam – the third beam closest to the altar. I then recognized that the bird was a pigeon.

Concluding the Doxology and hearing the Great Amen from the people, I placed the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, informed the congregation of our guest, and pointed to the beam. Together everyone prayed The Lord’s Prayer. The bird remained on the rafter. Together we prayed the Agnus Dei. The bird remained on the rafter.

Once again, I lifted up the Blessed Sacrament and prayed aloud: “Behold the Lamb of God....” At that very moment, the pigeon alighted from its perch and swooped through the church – back to front, back to front, back to front – and flew up into the ceiling, this time perching on the rafter beam above the entrance to the Sanctuary, the beam closest to the altar. The bird remained there through the conclusion of the Mass.

After praying the final Blessing and pronouncing the dismissal with its double Alleluia, I invited the congregation to pray the St. Michael Prayer. Returning to the Tabernacle, I removed the ciborium containing the Sacred Hosts. Once again, I stood at the altar and proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God....” The pigeon was still and remained on its perch throughout the distribution of Holy Communion.

After Father Gotwalt and I distributed Holy Communion inside the church, we processed outside to our church courtyard to distribute Holy Communion to the faithful who were present and had been listening to the Mass. We returned to the Sanctuary and reposed the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle. I looked for our guest, but did not see it perched anywhere in the church. An usher later informed me that the pigeon flew out through the same open doorway we used, as if it was following us.

More probably, it was following Jesus.

(Father Michael Reid is the pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Hanover.)
Courage and Masking

By Sister Geralyn Schmidt
Special to The Witness

Recently, as I prepared to “go out into the world,” I had a unique experience. I gathered my hand sanitizer, car keys, purse and mask. I make the masks that I wear. I have several of them because my work responsibilities have called me into the Diocesan Office. After several hours of work there, the mask needs to be washed. These masks have different design qualities and have changed over the course of these weeks. I have found that the ones that tie behind my head and under my veil at my neck are usually the most comfortable. This time, as I put my mask on and headed out to my car, I could not help thinking, “Masks are our new normal? Really? Don’t we wear masks from time to time?”

The masks that I refer to are the ones that we hide behind. I pondered as I felt the cotton cloth against my nose and mouth, “Why am I so afraid of allowing others to see my true self or pretend that something is ‘ok’ when it’s not? Heck, I have hidden behind a mask in the past to hide pain and hurt! Somehow, for some reason, hiding behind it lessens the pain, at least for a while!”

I came across a blog that describes the psychological masks that we wear. This blog lists 10 of them. They are: the cool guy, the humorist, the overachiever, the martyr, the bully, the control freak, the self-basher, the people-pleaser, the introvert, the social butterfly.

The blog and the ones related to it really made me think about the psychological aspect of hiding and pretending.

But the mask that chaffed against my face, stifling the fresh air around me, is not a psychological wound. It is tangible, made of cotton, and as important as the keys and fob that live in my pocket.

At the end of the day, as I sat at the supper table, I put these ponderings to words. One of the Sisters who works in the COVID-testing tents at the hospital, testing individuals who might have the virus, chimed in: “I wear two of them and a plastic face shield every minute of the day as I greet the lines of cars entering our testing area. I have come to deeply appreciate even the air that I breathe! For me, this time has been a call to appreciate the little things in life. My focus is on the One who is greater than all the craziness! He is the one that I serve! He is the one that I point to as I work side by side with other health-care workers. The inconvenience of wearing all the PPE has turned into a personal sacrifice that I offer up for the ones who have no clue what sacrifice is all about. I saw a sign of an unmasked protestors in front of our capitol that said, ‘Selfish and proud of it!’ Really? That person is putting my life in danger.”

Quite honestly, as I listened to her righteous anger, my eyes filled up with tears and I said, “You and all your colleagues are truly heroes!” She quipped back, “I am no hero. I do what I do because I love stupid and broken people in the same way that God loves me!”

This made me cry even harder. Jokingly, we changed the topic of conversation.

The next day, I dropped some food at someone’s house. He came to the car. I opened the trunk and told him that the food was in there. He noticed I was wearing my mask. He said from a far distance away from the car, “Oh, you are one of those individuals who wears masks even inside the car.” In a firm tone, I informed him, “I live in a hospital community. I may be infected with COVID without even knowing I am sick with it. I wear the mask to protect you from me. I wear a mask because I love you.” He shook his head and thanked me for the food.

Why are so many individuals not wearing masks in public? According to CNN Health,

More SISTER GERALYN, page 13
June 11, 2020 • The Catholic WITNESS- 13

PARISH OBITUARIES

The names of the following deceased persons have been submitted by their parishes.

Please remember in your prayers the happy repose of these recently departed souls and the consolation of their loved ones.

Camp Hill
Good Shepherd:
Helen Dienno
Thomas Dienno

Conewago
Sacred Heart of Jesus:
Rose M. Murren
Francis R. McDannell

Kulpmont
Holy Angels:
Anthony J. Varano

Lewisburg
Sacred Heart of Jesus:
Eileen Benfer
Evelyn Petery
Elaine Schrader
John Rolinc
Agnes Lewis
Rik Paulsen

Littlestown
St. Aloysius:
Robert P. Panek

Marysville
Our Lady of Good Counsel:
Paul N. Smith, Jr.

Middletown
Seven Sorrows BVM:
Marie Buckman
Constance McNamara
Mary Casper

New Holland
Our Lady of Lourdes:
Helen Pekofsky
Elizabeth Irons

Sunbury
St. Monica:
Michael F. Gilroy
Rachel M. Kurtz

Deceased Clergy

Please pray for the following clergy who died in June during the past 25 years:

Msgr. Francis Taylor, 1997
Father Augustine Zan, 1999
Father Joseph Kelly, 2000
Father Robert Burns, Jr., 2001
Father Thomas J. Gralinski, 2005
Father William Geiger, CSSR, 2007
Father T. Ronald Haney, 2012
Father Andre J. Meluskey, 2013
Father Francis T. Menei, 2019.

SISTER GERALYN

continued from 12

some think it infringes on their civil liberties, some think it makes them look weak, some find the guidance from the CDC confusing, and finally some it uncomfortable. I respond, “Yes, yes and yes!” In that same article, Dr. David Aronoff, director of Vanderbilt University Medical Center’s Division of Infectious Diseases and professor of medicine, urges Americans to think of the mask guidance not as forced conformity, but as a necessary act of solidarity: “Wearing a cloth mask could stop seemingly healthy people from infecting others with coronavirus if they’re asymptomatic. “We’re all hopeful that this pandemic disappears,” he said. “Then we can stop doing as much risk mitigation. But for now, we really depend on the trust and kindness of others to protect our wellbeing. And that’s part of being an American.”

I bold-faced the last sentence on purpose. Think about it. The trust and kindness of others. When we truly own the trust and kindness of others we gladly let down the masks that we do not see and readily don the masks that have become common place in our world today.

1https://psychcentral.com/blog/the-10-masks-we-wear/
Tell me about your childhood and your upbringing in the faith.

I was raised in a very traditional Catholic family. Both my parents were very religious. I have seven siblings; three of them passed away. We went to Mass every Sunday, helped in the church.

I remember the first time I was asked to do the readings in church. I was 13 years old. The priest had forgotten that something had happened to the ambo, so when I put the book on the ambo, it immediately fell down. But I picked up the book and started to read while somebody was trying to fix the ambo. I knew it wasn’t my fault, but it was my first experience.

My mother was devoted to St. Jude the Apostle. We prayed the Rosary at home together. We sat down to dinner, all of us as a family. I have lots of good memories with my family.

When did you first consider the call to be a priest?

The first moment I knew God was calling me to be a priest, I was eight years old. My father got a vacation home for all of us. My father and I went to the rectory to ask a priest to bless the home. The priest also blessed me, and he said, “You’re going to be a priest.” It was the first time I saw that God was calling me to be a priest.

After I finished my studies in high school, I went off to the capital of Colombia. It’s like living in Manhattan. I was 19 years old and was walking downtown. Out of nowhere, somebody stopped me, put their hands on my shoulder and asked, “Are you a priest?” I said, “No.” And then the person just disappeared. It got me thinking.

You were a medical doctor first, though.

Yes. When I was living in the capital, my father called and said, “If you come back, I will help you study medicine.” I agreed, but I had to take a test first to get accepted. There were 5,000 people taking the test, and only 100 would be chosen to study medicine. I thought, “I’ll be among the 4,900 who won’t get in.” I returned to the city, and three days later my father called. He said, “You have to come back home. You are third on the list to study medicine.”

Even as I was studying medicine, I felt some spiritual callings. You hear an internal voice constantly calling. I spent some time in prayer, but when you study medicine, you study for hours and hours.

When I was in my eighth semester, I decided to visit a bishop in my country. I thought, “Whatever he says, I will do. God is calling me, and this uncertainty is something I can’t continue.” The bishop said, “Continue to study medicine, practice three years, and then come back to me.”

I finished my studies, but things continued to happen. The day we were receiving our diplomas after seven years of studies, my father said, “I was expecting that one day you’d be a priest, not a doctor.”
I worked in the hospital, and was assigned a rural town. Every day, I had to take the bus. I was waiting for the bus one day when a woman from the town came and was talking about medicine she had been prescribed. I was telling her about the medicine, and she said, “Why are you telling me this? You’re not a doctor. You’re a priest.” The same happened when I was visiting a friend. Other friends and guests came, who I didn’t know. One guest there asked me if I was a priest. He insisted that I was. I wondered where all this was coming from!

One time, I was treating a young girl with gastroenteritis. She had severe vomiting and diarrhea. I prescribed medicine for her, and told her mother, “If she gets worse, bring her back and we will hospitalize her.” The next day, they came back. But she didn’t want to take her to the hospital. She said, “I am a poor person. I have no money.” She started to cry, so I put my hands on the girl and said, “Lord, will you please heal her?” We gave the girl Pedialyte over time, and before long, she was healed. I knew that prayer worked!

A few years later, I heard the Lord again. He said, “I have allowed you to do whatever you wanted in your life, until now. Beginning today, you are going to do what I want: become a priest.” I opened up the doors to my heart and followed.

How did you wind up coming to the United States?

I studied at the Pontifical University Javeriana and got two degrees in theology, and then a priest came to meet with me. He took my résumé, and came back three days later. He said, “I opened the doors for you to go to the Diocese of Harrisburg in the United States.” I abandoned everything. I left behind medicine, money, good stature, my country, and went to a new country without even knowing the language. I went only by faith, like Abraham.

I came here in 1998. I cried the whole time on the plane. I thought, “What have I done? I’m in a different environment, I don’t know the place I’m going, I don’t know anyone.” For three years, things were difficult. I couldn’t understand the language, I couldn’t understand people. My first Christmas, I was alone. But, little by little, you overcome your barriers. On June 2, 2001, Bishop Dattilo ordained me as a priest for the Diocese of Harrisburg.

Where have you served in the Diocese?

In the beginning, I was placed at Corpus Christi in Chambersburg as a seminarian. After a while, I was sent to Brooklyn to study English for six weeks. I went then to Mount St. Mary’s Seminary before ordination as a deacon. I was assigned to St. Joseph in Hanover for a year before I was ordained. I went back then to Corpus Christi in Chambersburg. I was there from 2001-2009. Then Bishop Rhoades called me to have lunch with him and he said he wanted to transfer me to Cornwall, to build a church. I said, “To build a church? I don’t know construction. I don’t have any knowledge about that happens.”

The two priests before me at Sacred Heart tried to build this church. The people here, their grandparents built the first church, and when they moved it to where we are now, they carried it stone by stone. When we built the new church, I told the people, “It will resemble exactly what you have right now, but three times bigger.”

I placed everything under the mantle of the Blessed Mother, and the people worked hard. We had many meetings and raised money. We met with people and asked for donations. We raised $1.6 million to build the new church. On Feb. 7, 2016, we had the dedication of our new church. On June 19, I will be at Sacred Heart for 11 years. It’s a nice community. The people are very close, very tight. They are very dedicated to the Church.

When you were a doctor, you were hearing the call. But what attracted you to the priesthood, to give up your life?

It was the Lord, just being inside of me. I had a girlfriend and we were dating for a couple
of months while I was a doctor. One day I was praying, and the Lord said, “Your heart belongs to me.” I felt the love of God, and it attracted me. For me, the Lord means everything. I feel his presence constantly in my life. I pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament that I have here in the rectory. My life is constantly centered in Christ. I wouldn’t change it for anything.

What parallels have you experienced between being a doctor and being a priest?

I used to be a doctor of bodies. Now I am a doctor of souls. I think I can understand people’s lives because I was a doctor for 12 years. For me, it’s natural to see people in both ways, from my knowledge in medicine and my knowledge in theology. There are many moments that I use my skill in medicine with my skill as a priest, giving advice to people and also understanding them.

One of people’s biggest concerns when they are elderly or ill is that they’re tired and anxious. Of course they are, they’re human. This is normal. But how can they feel better? Take a vacation. Get rest. Pray. Take time out. Our job is to live our lives as the Lord asks us to fulfill them.

That’s it.

What do you enjoy in your own free time?

In Cornwall, we have a trail here, so I ride my bicycle. I study French. I like to read.

I’m also an adventurous person. I like to go to places I haven’t gone to, or that people don’t know about. I like to be outside. If people invite me somewhere, I like to go.

I go back to Colombia. The last time was in 2017, but I don’t know when I’ll be able to get back because of the pandemic. But my siblings are doing well there.

At Sacred Heart, we pray what I call the Coronavirus Antidote Prayer:

I will say of the Lord:

“You are my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.”

I will say of the Lord,

“You are my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.”

I will say of the Lord,

“You are my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.”

You are my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.”

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To report suspected abuse of a minor, please follow these two steps:

1. Call the toll-free PA Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-932-0313

2. Report suspected abuse of a minor by a church official, employee or volunteer by calling the diocesan toll-free hotline at 1-800-626-1608

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE WITH BOTH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE DIOCESE.

Email: ReportAbuse@hbgdiocese.org

Diocese of Harrisburg
Youth Protection Program www.YouthProtectionHBG.com
DIOCESAN NOTEBOOK

Fundraisers & Events

The St. Pauline Center in Kulpmont is lighting candles that can be purchased in memory of loved ones. While the doors of the center remain closed, volunteers are lighting candles offered for prayers for loved ones. A large candle can be lit for $5, and a small one for $1. Mail your selection and payment to the St. Pauline Foundation, P.O. Box 115, Kulpmont, PA, 17834.

St. John the Baptist in New Freedom is holding its inaugural Annual Summer Bazaar & Yard Sale on June 20 from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. This outdoor and indoor event will feature garden, outdoor and Christmas decorations, a women’s boutique, furniture, art, baked goods, gift baskets, yard sale items, crafts and a silent auction. Food will be for sale by Knights of Columbus Council #8891.

Education & Enrichment


Resurrection Catholic School in Lancaster will hold its annual Golf Outing on Sept. 15 at Meadia Heights Golf Course in Lancaster. For information on registering as a foursome, or if you would like to become a sponsor, contact Amanda Lyda at 717-475-6330.

Pilgrimages & Retreats

The Harrisburg Diocesan Council of Catholic Women is holding its inaugural Annual Summer Bazaar & Yard Sale on June 20 from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. This outdoor and indoor event will feature garden, outdoor and Christmas decorations, a women’s boutique, furniture, art, baked goods, gift baskets, yard sale items, crafts and a silent auction. Food will be for sale by Knights of Columbus Council #8891.

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Job Openings

Employment opportunities available at Our Mother of Perpetual Help School in Ephrata. Technology Education & Integrated Technology Teacher (Grades K-8), Physical Education Teacher (Grades K-8), Art Education Teacher (Middle School Grades 6-8), After School Clubs Program Supervisor, and substitute teachers. If interested in any position, send a cover letter, résumé, transcripts, and pastor letter to Mrs. Patricia A. Foltz, Principal, at pfoltz@omph.org.

Resurrection Catholic School in Lancaster is seeking a full-time middle school math and science teacher. All applicants must complete the Harrisburg Diocesan Professional Employment Application, submit three current letters of reference, and obtain the proper clearances. To be considered for an interview, applicants must also provide a Pastor’s letter of reference from the church that they currently attend. If interested, please submit a cover letter, résumé, letters of reference, Pastor’s letter of recommendation, and transcripts to Mr. Jeffrey Hughes, Principal, Resurrection Catholic School, at jhughes@rcspa.org or mail information to Resurrection Catholic School, 521 E. Orange Street, Lancaster, PA 17602. The application packet found on the Diocesan website must be completed and submitted. Please see the link to the Harrisburg Diocesan Professional Teaching Application: https://www.hbgdiocese.org/catholic-schools/employment-applications/.