

Volunteers make the difference – every time!

Julia Murphy, CWL President, Holy Name of Mary Parish, Marysville

Our parish community is made up three rural churches: Holy Name of Mary, Marysville; St. Charles Borromeo, Read; and St. Vincent de Paul, Deseronto. We were blessed to welcome a new pastor in October 2019 -- Father Francis Zambon. Father Francis fit in very well with our parish community, and he quickly accomplished the huge task of learning the names of all the parishioners and how we are related! Parishioners in all three churches contributed to a Spiritual Bouquet, which we presented to Father as a welcome gift on his first weekend with us. It was definitely a Thanksgiving to remember!



Just a few months later, in March of 2020, the Covid19 pandemic was upon us, forcing all churches to close their doors. None of our parishioners, old or young, had ever seen this happen before. We made it through those first months of lockdown by praying and working together to help our community. The spirit of service was alive and well as parishioners reached out to help their neighbours. There were phone calls and virtual chats to check in and sometimes pray together; lovely cards and notes were sent through the mail; and packages of delicious homemade sweets with accompanying messages of encouragement were left in mailboxes to brighten days and let our neighbours know that others

cared and were thinking about them. Many people expanded their existing vegetable gardens, while others planted a garden for the first time, and all were happy to share their produce. Our schools made signs congratulating the Grade 8 graduates, and families displayed these signs at the end of their laneways so that everyone passing by could share in celebrating our young people.

In June, we had our first drive-in parking lot Mass at Holy Name of Mary in Marysville. It was the Feast of Corpus Christi, and what a wonderful celebration it was! A temporary altar was set up on a flatbed trailer, and an FM radio transmitter enabled us to stay safely in our cars and hear what the readers and Father Francis were saying. Volunteers were ready and willing to help with all tasks, including setting up the altar, directing the parking and the exiting of cars, and distributing Communion.



In the days that followed, more volunteers gathered in all three communities to help with the many tasks needed to get the churches ready to resume indoor Masses. Volunteers also made themselves available at each Mass as greeters and ushers and pew sanitizers. Father Francis offered drive-through confessions, and he arranged for Adoration for a half hour before each of our weekday Masses, since our Adoration Chapel remained closed.

When another lockdown was announced, we all breathed a sigh of relief that it would not begin until December 26th, so that we could celebrate Christmas together as a parish community. After Christmas, the lockdown restrictions allowed only 10 people in the church at one time. Father Francis kindly offered additional Masses during the week, and we moved back out to the parking lot in Marysville for Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses. Once again, our great volunteers, who

included members of the Catholic Women's League, the Knights of Columbus, and other parishioners, stepped up to meet the challenge. Special thanks to the volunteers from Marysville who built a "Holy Hut" to ensure that Father would not freeze while celebrating Mass on the flatbed trailer.

We know that the goodwill we have experienced this past year in Marysville, Read, and Deseronto is not unique to our parishes. Countless parishioners across the Archdiocese have shown great kindness and generosity as they have helped one another through this difficult time. Even though we do not know what the future will bring, we have no doubt that our communities will always rise to the challenge.