

## 101 Things for Your Middle Schooler to Do:

### Filling Mind, Body, & Soul in Social Distancing Season

Hello, my beloved middle school youth crew and families of Saint Michael's!

You are dearly missed, and it pains me not to see your beautiful, shining faces in this time of social distancing and safety measures, just as I know you wish to get out and about and see your loved ones and friends. These are strange and confusing times for all of us: a lot of people have been feeling stir-crazy as all of our schedules and routines have drastically changed so quickly with the cancellation of school and whatnot. So, when I was meditating on what I could do for my flock during this time—what I could give to you, since we cannot have our youth nights—I felt The Holy Spirit tell me to come up with what you need most in this season of restless uncertainty and cautionary measures of home confinement: *things to do*. I have brainstormed 101 mainstream but also very-off-the-wall ideas for our middle schoolers to productively fill their days in quarantine season. We can either grow numb and bored in front of TV and Netflix for however long this lasts, or we can explore creative new ideas and expand our perspectives. *But what do we do?* Try any of these! There's 101 of 'em, so take your pick! They are in no particular order of importance and are very random, but all wholesome. Some are meant to engage the mind, some to engage the spirit and fill the soul, and others to engage the physical to stay healthy and in shape throughout this season. I am praying for all of you in these confusing times, and you are on my heart through all of this. Here's to staying safe, healthy, and productive!

All my love in Jesus' Name,

Peyton Thomasson  
Associate Youth Advocate  
Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic Church

1. Develop your personal relationship with Jesus: explore apps out there like Hallow or Laudate that have prayers and meditations to teach us how to cultivate discipline in our relationship with Jesus and grow in contemplation of heart.
2. Watch daily Mass streamed online! You can find endless videos of this now on Facebook and YouTube.
3. If you have questions about the faith: Ascension Presents YouTube channel and Father Mike Schmitz have a video addressing just about anything you could ever ask about the Catholic faith. Check out their awesome videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVdGX3N-WIJ5nUvkIBTNhAw>
4. Bible challenge: Try reading the Bible cover-to-cover!!! Or, start small, and pick a passage to do Lectio Divina style with your family. I highly suggest downloading the Bible app. It has been a total game-changer in my life, and you can set it up to where it will send you the new verse of the day at a specific time each day. Here's how to do Lectio Divina: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKYEOc3ik9k>
5. Start a Bible study small group with your loved ones and friends on Zoom.
6. Learn a new language: download free apps like duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise and get started! <https://www.lingualift.com/blog/best-language-learning-apps/>

7. Learn a new instrument; there is a YouTube video out there for everything, and you can certainly be self-taught. You could also Zoom or FaceTime in a friend or family member who might be more of an expert at an instrument.
8. Build an art portfolio! Try out sketching still-life's of things in your home or paint a picture for someone you love to brighten their day and let them know you are thinking about them. Splatter painting outside is fun too and a great stress-reliever.
9. Snail Mail: Make a new pen pal! Maybe you could even translate (Google translate and apps out there for this) write letters of encouragement to those on lockdown in Spain and Italy and elsewhere in the world. People LOVE snail mail. It never gets old and is so incredibly personal and thoughtful. You could even get fancy and learn calligraphy!!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBoVGqiSsr4>
10. Read: Download books on tape on apps like Audible. Listen to new podcasts that teach you new things about faith and science or history. Challenge yourself and read all the classics or test out a new series, and set a goal to finish every book within the series.
11. Go on a nature hike! There are certainly neighborhoods you haven't yet explored, nature trails that are not yet closed, and parks that still remain open at certain hours of the day.
12. Take up photography: try nature shots around your neighborhood or portraiture photography of your family! If you don't have a fancy camera, just use an iPhone. There's all kinds of fun editing apps out there too! You could get creative and make a DIY photo booth with props in your home.
13. Learn Adobe Photoshop: This skill will do you well throughout all of life (so worth it). BUT, it is certainly pricey, so a free sort-of similar version is called Canva! You can create and account for free and start making your own cards and designs. <https://www.canva.com/>
14. Board games! Bring 'em back! Don't you miss late nights playing Battle Ship and Monopoly? Maybe you could even teach yourself how to play chess with YouTube videos and really test your mental strength!! I highly suggest trying out The Game of Things. I used to play this with my family and with friends at slumber parties all the time. It's absolutely hilarious and really helps you have even greater insight into people you think you know well already. It really forces you to be in tune with other people's humor. The bigger the group, the more fun to be had! If you don't want to purchase the actual board game version, just make up your own prompt cards. Here's how: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYhC3LFv6bc>
15. Card games: One of my favorite childhood memories is my dad and older brother teaching me how to play gin and poker!
16. Puzzles! I dare you to take up one that is 1,000+ pieces. Good luck! Time yourself? Race a friend as you work on two separate puzzles with the same piece count?
17. Workouts: YouTube is full of at-home workouts. Let the jumping jacks and burpees begin! Exercise is important, especially when we are cooped up in a house all day.
18. Make a collage out of old magazines (a great way to recycle and re-use something you would otherwise probably just throw away...collateral beauty, yay!!!).
19. Zoom, FaceTime, or Skype an old friend or relative whom you haven't seen in a while. This is a small gesture of kindness that will go a loooong way!
20. RECONCILE: Now is the perfect time—since there is nothing but open time to seize with our free will—to attempt picking up the phone and calling someone you need to reconcile with. Try speaking new life into a situation that needs forgiveness, whether you were the one hurt or you

were the one who hurt someone else. Confrontation is hard, but learning healthy confrontation is an important part of all of our lives. This will serve you well, my friends. I think God the Father is asking us to use this time of rest at home as a greater time of self-awareness to grow in trust in Him and humility, which requires reconciling with ourselves, Him, and others.

21. Geography challenge: learn world maps! You could make a game out of this and test your parents and see how much they know;
22. Skits: Make up a skit and put on a show for your family or record it and send to your friends (or post on your TikTok if you have one and try to start a new trend).
23. Dance: Learn a new dance or make up your own and record/send to friends and family to brighten their day. Challenge them to a dance-off and ask that they also come up with a creative dance to send back to you after they learn yours.
24. Reminisce and feel the love/gain new insight: Go through old family photo albums and home videos or ask your parents & call your grandparents/great aunts and uncles and ask them to share stories from the time when they were your age. You might be surprised by some commonalities and learn some new wisdom!
25. Start a journal or an online blog to keep track of your new experiences and thoughts and share with family or friends. There are free websites out there to do this like *WordPress*, *Wix*, *Weebly*, *Blogger*, and others.
26. Make cards to send to patients suffering from coronavirus or some other crisis or send flowers and cards to families who have lost loved ones to the virus (or anyone who is suffering in any type of way).
27. Pray a daily Rosary with your family or pray the Liturgy of the Hours (especially morning or evening prayer). The famous Father Patrick Peyton said: "The family that prays together stays together." (Rosary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgtJ-sFzWww> ; Liturgy of the Hours: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMwck-ruDm8> by Father Cassidy from our very own diocese)
28. Learn about new Saints to deepen the way you understand our beautiful faith and how it is lived out: you can find many stories online: <https://www.catholic.org/saints/> . If you have Instagram, I highly suggest following and exploring these accounts: @\_saintoftheday, @coffeewithsaints, @portraitofsaints. They post little paragraph bios of Saints on their feast days, and it is a great and quick way to learn more about these people's beautiful hearts and stories. Following these accounts has inspired me daily for years now.
29. Bake! Bake treats for your family (or make it a fun gifting activity and leave goods baked with love on the front steps of a friend or neighbor's house with a sweet note). This is the perfect time to try out all kinds of new recipes and Spring treats.
30. Charity challenge: Go grocery shopping for an elderly person who does not want to venture out and be potentially exposed to the virus.
31. ACTIVE GAMES that require little-to-no equipment! Pay any of these with your family or friends (9 of groups ten and under): ninja, pterodactyl, ... click here for ideas: <https://kidactivities.net/18-fun-pe-games-needing-no-equipment/> ; <https://spirituallyhungry.com/no-prep-youth-group-games/> ; <http://stumingames.com/2015/09/16-no-prep-games/> ; <https://www.wired.com/2009/08/simpleoutdoorplay/> ; [https://dragon.sleepdeprived.ca/games/30sec\\_2/30sec\\_2\\_23.htm](https://dragon.sleepdeprived.ca/games/30sec_2/30sec_2_23.htm)

32. Learn to cook! Your parents would love to teach you☺. Maybe you can start helping to cook and help put family dinners on the table!
33. Host a family soccer tournament in your backyard.
34. Adopt or foster a new pet from an animal shelter or a pet store.
35. CULTURE! Visit a museum! YES, you can stream a virtual tour from your couch and learn all sorts of new things! <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/what-to-do-at-home-streaming-art-museums-concerts-coronavirus-trnd/index.html>
36. Running challenge: build endurance and start with a mile a day. Work your way up to a 10k, so that when this quarantine season is all over, you can sign up for one in our own city or in another city and make a family trip out of it. There are plenty of free apps out there to track your mileage and keep up with your endurance training. Challenge a friend to do the same, and enroll in the same race in the future. Here's an inspiring story of one of our own teens from Saint Michael's: [https://www.richmond.com/sports/plus/henrico-s-nicole-hays-lifts-community-at-short-pump-shamrock/article\\_84d5f6c6-dd83-55eb-a07c-5b51b775b2ba.html](https://www.richmond.com/sports/plus/henrico-s-nicole-hays-lifts-community-at-short-pump-shamrock/article_84d5f6c6-dd83-55eb-a07c-5b51b775b2ba.html)
37. Get healthy together as a family: now is the perfect time to try clean eating with all home-cooked meals out like Paleo, or the Mediterranean diet (or something like that).
38. Try a new food! Research other cultures and what they eat, and test something out that you have never been exposed to before. Expand your palate.
39. Break out the old rollerblades! Do a relay race or just roll around the block, and catch some sunshine and fresh air!
40. Play street hockey (with 10 people or less of course).
41. Take online voice lessons and learn to sing. I know there are teachers out here who do this and can skype in with students. For example, my former teacher, Amy Murphy, located in Birmingham, AL, does this. Highly recommend.
42. Build a pillow fort, turn out the lights, and tell ghost stories under the blankets. Basically, go camping indoors (...glamping lol ). Or, get fancy and set up a campsite in your backyard. Get those s'mores going with a fire pit in your yard...or your microwave!!
43. Speech challenge: Try speaking only in Pig Latin for a whole day. Or, make up your own secret language with a friend and talk in code.
44. Climb a tree and get some fresh air (and a new view).
45. Build a swing-set or a fort or a treehouse in your backyard.
46. Learn to sew or knit! Challenge: try making an outfit or costume you would actually wear! Sewing is a valuable skill. You can fix worn clothing or pillows or other items around the house.
47. I dare you to solve a Rubik's cube. See how fast you can do it!
48. Start a prayer journal so that you can remember people when they ask you for prayers. People ask for prayers over specific intentions all the time, and it is easy to forget if we don't write them down.
49. Frisbee!!! Never gets old.
50. Hide-and-seek, sardines, mafia, or dungeon chase with your neighborhood (10 people or under of course!). These games fueled my childhood! You can play these in the house or in the neighborhood.
51. History challenge: memorize all of the presidents of the United States in order. Google the Civil War and learn facts about all of the battles; find out if you have any war heroes in your family or

- if you have relatives or family friends who are veterans and write them a thank you note if you can. Go on Ancestry.com and find out where your ancestors are from!
52. Laughing contest. First one to bust out laughing loses. No rules! You can do whatever to make your partner laugh. (I lost every time when I played with my siblings).
  53. Staring contest. First one to blink or look away loses.
  54. Smiling contest. First one to crack a smile loses. Say anything you want to make them smile.
  55. Math challenge for those of you who love this stuff: memorize Pi. OR, try any of these middle school math challenges to test yourself and your friends!  
<https://mashupmath.com/blog/2017/4/24/can-your-middle-schoolers-solve-these-math-puzzles>
  56. SLIME! Make slime. Here's one of hundreds of recipes out there:  
<https://www.thebestideasforkids.com/fluffy-slime-recipe/>
  57. Make up a family cheer or draw your own creative family crest.
  58. Practice spontaneous prayer from the heart by doing intercessory prayer over a family member. Or, Zoom/FaceTime in a friend in need of intercessory prayer.
  59. Learn to pray the Rosary or the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and teach your family!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pdnzUjmkzA>
  60. Make up nicknames for your family members or your friend group (in good humor, no poking fun).
  61. Go metal-detecting in your backyard. Idk why not...this could be interesting; never know what you'll find.
  62. Spa-at-home. Why not treat yourself to a bubble bath and take turns giving back massages and face masks? Quarantine can absolutely be used as a time of rest and rejuvenation!
  63. Google Earth your house if you've never done it. Trippy perspective. Then, google anywhere you'd love to travel one day and start a dream-trip-jar to save up those coins and spare change and get there one day—so much to learn!!! <https://www.google.com/earth/>
  64. Memorize every lyric to your new favorite song. OR, if you really want to get creative, try song-writing yourself. Check out this intro video into song-writing:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXv4KVduKjw> .
  65. Try writing poetry. There are all kinds of great poetry-writing tips out there on the internet. Some of my favorite poets to read are Walt Whitman, E. E. Cummings, Langston Hughes, and Maya Angelou. My favorite poem is "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night" by Dylan Thomas. That's a good one to start with and read to get some inspiration. Here is a blog to introduce you to some poetry classics: <https://www.deseret.com/2015/3/20/20479016/poets-famous-quotes-birthplace-writers-edgar-allen-poe-maya-angelou-emily-dickinson>
  66. SPRING CLEANING!!! (Let's be real, we should all probably do this. I know I need to a deep cleaning myself).
  67. Act of service: clean out your closet and donate clothes you don't need to your charity of choice!
  68. STARS!!! Name your very own star! Then, order or borrow a telescope to look at it up close and personal! <https://www.star-registration.com/> Star-gazing with family and friends can be really fun. Try star-tipping!! It's super funny and disorienting. Here's how:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FdGLtpM\\_RU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FdGLtpM_RU)

69. Plan and put on a scavenger hunt for your family; get creative and make up a theme and make decorations. It could be a whole ordeal or a treasure-hunt type-thing.
70. Start your own garden! Plant those seeds now that Spring is here☺!!! You could even grow your own fruits and vegetables that you could eventually cook with in the future—how cool!!
71. Sponsor a child or a family in another country. <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/sponsor-child-today/35543> ; <https://www.savethechildren.org/> ;
72. Make up a rap. Share it with your friends. You could even host a rap battle;).
73. Athletic challenge: see who can hoola-hoop and jump-rope the longest. Who can do the most push-ups? Who can do the most burpees? Who can do the most pull-ups? Who can long-jump the furthest?
74. Ride a bike! If you've never done it, now is the perfect time to learn! If you don't have one, borrow a neighbor's or a friend's. Wash your hands before you use it and also before you return it.
75. Host a family talent show! This could potentially get really funny, and you will learn many new things about each other. You could get creative and extend it to your whole friend group and all do a talent show via Zoom. Your talents could be prepared or spontaneous.
76. Send a care package to a friend to let them know you miss them and are thinking about them in these confusing times of social distancing. You can fill it with candy, treats, books, candles, sports equipment, cards, and other fun things that they would enjoy or that remind you of them!
77. Make homemade jewelry or crafts and start your own Etsy shop! <https://www.etsy.com/> You can sell things here and make some money to donate to charity or save up for something special after all of this is over.
78. Practice mindfulness and self-care by trying out Christian yoga: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbLUoxA7ZmU> or downloading the free calm app for meditations: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/calm/id571800810> (Hallow is a good Catholic meditation app: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/hallow-catholic-meditation/id1405323394> )
79. Write your own prayers and learn to pray from the heart and cultivate a spirit of contemplation (google contemplative prayer if you have questions and all the great Saints who have tips on this) Start with praying over your family dinners☺.
80. KARAOKE!!!! Youtube has every song known to man on Karaoke on this channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/singkingkaraoke> . You could virtually bring in your friends on Skype or Zoom or something like that and make it a Karaoke party!
81. Take up candle-making! This could get really interesting... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fbd3ybYLMg>
82. Service Opp: many elderly people are suffering in complete quarantine and isolation during these times. Consider writing them a letter or drawing them a picture with encouraging words to cheer them up and let them know someone is thinking of them, that they are not forgotten.
83. Make friendship bracelets.
84. Host your own rave party (ten people or less). Order lots of glow sticks and get the music going! Zoom or FaceTime people in who can't be there! Don't forget the soft drinks, popcorn, pizza, and treats!
85. As a family, support local businesses where you can!! This is so important during this quarantine season. Let's help our neighbors out in the Christian spirit as they go through these tough times.

86. Start a collection. You could collect coins (begin with ones you find around the house), beanie babies, shells, rocks, stamps, keychains...literally anything that piques your interest that you could make into a fun personal activity to develop over time as a personal goal.
87. Go bird-watching and learn the types of birds. You could also go bug-hunting and learn about your local eco-system.
88. Fly a kite if you've never done it! If you don't have one, you can always find a cheap one on <https://www.amazon.com/>
89. Take a virtual tour of the National Shrine in DC! It's beautiful! You should totally visit in person when all of this is over—highly recommend. <https://www.nationalshrine.org/virtual-tour/>
90. Take up the sport/art of fencing (order foam swords online). Here's a beginner's vid taught by Olympians: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8ldfA5fXJs>
91. Set up indoor bowling lanes and host a family tournament.
92. Go fishing at a local pond/lake (keep social distance from others of course).
93. Find household items and play: Guess What's in the Box! Check this out: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnZHkU5kRxU>
94. Interview, whether with social distance in person, or over the phone, someone who's testimony/story you'd like to get to know. Make a video blog called "quarantine talks," or something like that. Reach out to your favorite celebrities and YouTube stars. You never know if they will respond—sometimes they do! Interview someone in a nursing home—they're full of a lifetime of wisdom and stories and would love to chat with you!
95. Have everyone in your family take the free personality tests @ <https://www.16personalities.com/> ; <https://assessment.yourenneagramcoach.com/> ; <https://high5test.com/> . These will give you all great insight into your family dynamic with one another and how to better communicate with one another based on your natural strengths. It's always good to grow in self-awareness too! Personality theory is really interesting and makes for lots of fun conversations.
96. Re-decorate or re-arrange your room! You can always get lots of cute and fun new ideas on <https://www.pinterest.com/>
97. Host your own indoor Olympics with whatever sports equipment you have. Use your imagination and make up some new sports if you have to! Craft medals and ribbons and banners and trophies to make it festive and create an environment around it.
98. Learn to braid and to do hairstyles! Practice on a doll or a sibling. It's a valuable skill, no matter who you are, whether you have hair or not. Someone can benefit from your skill.
99. Make your own DIY terrarium and grow some lil plants to keep in your room. Here's how: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdWsE\\_y7TJw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdWsE_y7TJw)
100. There are thousands of quirky, fun DIY projects out there. Get googlin'! Here's a good place to start with an endless stream of ideas: <https://www.pinterest.com/etsy/diy-projects/>
101. Riddle me this! How well will you do? Let's test your IQ: <https://parade.com/947956/parade/riddles/>