

Staying Together While Apart: *Phone Ministry*



Contacting parishioners to connect them with practical and spiritual resources is an impactful way to accompany parishioners in this time of Covid-19. The telephone can be a powerful pastoral tool and a bridge to strengthen relationships. Now that several weeks of the pandemic have transpired, some churches might be on their second round of parishioner outreach phone calls and may have recruited volunteers to assist in this ministry. Below is a script to guide the team through these important conversations.

Phone Call Script

- 1. Introductions:** “Hello, my name is _____. I am a parishioner at _____ Church. May I speak to (*name of contact*)?”

❖ **Contact not available:**

“Is there a better time for me to call back?”
Write down the date and time. Try again at that time.

❖ **No answer, leave voicemail:**

“Hello, my name is _____. I am a parishioner at _____ Church. Our pastor, Father _____ wants our faith community to stay connected during the pandemic, so we are

calling our registered parishioners to see how they are doing and to see if there is anything you may need. Please feel free to call me back at (____) - _____ - _____.”

❖ **Contact but with another adult:**

Father _____, our pastor wants our faith community to stay connected during this difficult time. We are telephoning all of our registered parishioners to see how they are doing and to see if there is anything you may need.

2. Ask about parish support for them:

Inquire about how they are doing. (*Listen to their responses*)...These are some of the services we can offer or connect you to:” (*Note their need. List parish services or Archdiocesan services*)

- 3. Ask about others in need:** “Is there anyone that you know, even outside of the community, who is in need at this time?” (*If yes, please give them the Church’s number (____) - _____ - _____.*)

- 4. Ending the conversation:** “We also wanted to remind you about our livestreamed Mass and our policy about Masses with limited parishioners in the congregation respecting social distancing mandates.”(*Share policy*)

“Would you like to be added to our email list so you can be updated on parish information and announcements? May I confirm your email address?”

5. Offer to pray

“Before we hang up, do you have any specific prayer intentions we could add to our parish prayer list?” (*Note their intentions.*)

“Can I say a prayer with you right now?” (*If yes, see prayer below. If no, say, “Okay, thank you for speaking with me”.*)

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Lord, you are with us always but especially in challenging times. In this time of the

Coronavirus pandemic, bless (*parishioner's name*) and family as well as this intention (*name intention*). Keep close to you all of those who are infected and affected by this virus. Bless our parish family and fill us with your comfort and peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen. Our Lady of Prompt Succor hasten to help us.

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Thank you for speaking with me. Please know of my continued prayers for you. Have a blessed day.

Preparing for Phone Ministry

1. Gather a list of parishioners and phone numbers. Make a note of which parishioners are elderly, ill, or live alone. Make them a priority.
2. Recruit clergy, repurposed staff, pastoral council members, Evangelization committee, and volunteers to make phone calls.
3. Establish a system to collect phone call *notes* and determine who will follow up if needed.
4. Distribute the call lists with priority calls clearly marked at the top of each list.
5. Provide callers with information about parish or Archdiocesan resources:
 - ❖ Food distribution (Second Harvest or other food banks)
 - ❖ St Vincent de Paul
 - ❖ Catholic Charities
 - ❖ Grocery delivery/medicine pick up
 - ❖ Etc.
6. A list of parish spiritual resources and times (Livestreamed Mass, Adoration, Confessions, online faith formation resources, etc.)
7. Be prepared to provide pastor's office number or email address if it is requested.

Frequently Asked Questions

❖ “When will regular public Masses resume at full capacity?”

Unfortunately, we do not know. The Archdiocese is relying on the most up-to-date information from the federal, state, and health care agencies to protect parishioners and provide for their spiritual care. As information and guidelines are updated, we will share that with our parishioners. (*If your parish is offering opportunities for parishioners to make reservations to attend Mass, share your reservation procedure. Remind the caller about the need for patience in this process.*)

❖ “What do I do if I know of someone who is sick or dying and in need of the Sacraments?”

“Anyone who is in need of the Sacrament of the Sick should contact Father (name) at (____) - _____-_____.”

❖ Rumors, Myths, and Fears. “I heard that (*name*) is sick. Is that true?”

People may be scared and inquisitive and may want to discuss various rumors, myths, and fears that they have heard. While listening with compassion, the caller should not engage in sharing this type of information.

❖ Other questions

If a question is asked and the person from the parish does not know the answer, please do not try to answer it. Simply tell the person that you will attempt to find the answer and you or someone else will get back to them. (*Note their question and submit it with other notes.*)

If we can be of further assistance, please call Fr. David G. Caron, OP in the Office of Evangelization 504-267-9650.