

St. Ambrose Parish

APRIL 19, 2020
BEEHIVE



Our Digital and Church lives

As many Catholics turn to online streams for Mass in the COVID-19 era, one expert is encouraging Church leaders to issue additional guidelines for digital Masses to set them apart from other TV shows that people watch.

“There are ways to make choices in our livestreams and recordings that mark them as a different kind of space, a sacred space, to minimize distractions,” said Dr. Katherine Schmidt, a theologian at Molloy College who has been studying the relationship between digital culture and the Church for the past decade.

“If you’ve ever been part of planning a big liturgy, you know that all the details matter immensely,” she told Crux. “So in this particular moment, why wouldn’t it matter where the cameras are placed, how well the audio is working, or what sort of posture the viewer is in?” What follows are excerpts of her conversation with Crux Catholic News Service.

CRUX: Your work on digital space was obviously “relevant” long before COVID-19, but it now feels doubly relevant given the Church’s uptick in its use of digital spaces during the pandemic. Can you start us off with a basic overview of what you work on?

Schmidt: For the past ten years, I’ve been trying to situate the things that are going on in virtual spaces, specifically the internet and social media, in the Catholic context. In my early research, I was seeing a lot of pushback from people who were saying that these spaces are alien to the Catholic tradition, to theology, to the Church.

But I was never convinced. As early as the 1700s, the Church has had interesting things to say about various types

of media - in those days it was paperback novels - and we’ve continued to hear from church leaders on our media ever since. The first part of my book, Virtual Communion: Theology of the Internet and the Catholic Sacramental Imagination (Lexington/Fortress), covers this history of the Church’s statements on media and technology.

Then, I make the case that we Catholics, with our deep sacramentality, really love media. My go-to example for this is the Stations of the Cross. We Catholics have always loved images, things we can touch, smells, and spaces. And so, instead of saying these things that mediate reality in their own ways are altogether different from what goes on with digital media, I argue that we’re dealing with more of a con-

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Our digital and Church lives

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tinuum. Yes, there are differences and limitations to digital culture, but it's not something totally foreign to the Catholic worldview. So our digital lives and our Church lives are not in conflict with each other, at least not necessarily?

This digital space is where many of us spend a majority of our lives, so to think that it's disconnected from the spiritual life is really problematic. If I'm engaged in digital media for most of my day - the average American spends nearly 11 hours per day in front of screens - then it's theologically dangerous to think that it somehow has nothing to do with experiencing grace.

I always try to tell pastors, even if you're not going to embrace digital technology as part of your own ministry, please don't actively work against it. Resist the urge to jab or joke about it in your homilies and don't be an obstacle if your parish wants to run Facebook groups.

I'm actually much less interested in whether we can "do Mass online" than I am in how digital spaces augment or work alongside our liturgical spaces. I'm convinced that digital spaces like Facebook and parish websites help provide what theologians, sociologists, and psychologists all tell us we need, which is a thicker social matrix that extends beyond what we do for an hour on Sundays.

What's really hard about this is that so much of this is obscured. I don't mean that people are hiding it, it's just that we don't see all of the emails, Facebook messages, and other digital connections that are facilitating bonds between parishioners. But these bonds are especially important in a "suburbanized" era for the church, at least in the United States, where parishioners are often geographically, physically separated from each other, no longer living in the same neighborhoods, playing on the same sports teams, etc.

CRUX: What do you say to those who critique these online forms of community as pale imitations of the forms of community that take place when people are physically together in one space?

Sociologists draw a distinction between strong ties and weak ties, which is pretty straightforward on its face. We tend to assume that the internet is only weak ties, while offline relationships are strong ties. But I think we're fooling ourselves a bit on both counts. Not only are there examples of strong and weak ties both on and offline, but it's also important for the church to have both kinds of ties.

We also have to be very careful to resist the temptation to see past eras, whether it's communication before the internet or the church before the 1960s, as golden eras. If we're not historically grounded, historically honest, that can be very dangerous.

The theologian Henri de Lubac warned about this, saying that we must resist nostalgia especially for the early Church. This isn't to say there aren't problems today, but I'm not sure how new these problems are in their essence.

For example, clericalism has been around a long time, but it's showing up now in a new form of the cult of personality on Catholic Twitter. But I'm not sure it's accurate to see it as something altogether different from or more problematic than the celebrity enjoyed by parish priests in some decades of the 20th century who, in the eyes of most parishioners, could do no wrong. We've seen with the abuse crisis that this was a huge problem.

Social media allows us to create these echo chambers, these silos where we're surrounded by voices that agree with us on the single issue or set of issues that we care about most. This is dangerous for Catholics, who can end up spending a lot of time talking to a small group who agree on a single issue, missing the larger sense of the Church's mission.

CRUX: Finally, let's talk about the life of the Church in quarantine. What are your suggestions regarding this jarring shift to digital spaces for communities around the globe?

When it comes to these livestreamed Masses, what we're witnessing here is an in-between space, a marginal space that's not exactly liturgical, but also is not to be consumed as other online content. I'm in no way on board with the idea that this simply counts as Mass. But it is different from rosary apps and prayer podcasts, because when done well, there's a communal dimension that's really important and holy.

I spent some time analyzing a range of virtual Masses from this past weekend, focusing on the ones that weren't doing them before the pandemic. The main thing that stuck with me was the frequent use of a single camera that's really high up and really far away. It's very alienating and cold. Then you have some parishes that are using multiple camera angles, where someone is selecting which camera to use at various points during the liturgy.

But I'm not so sure about that either, because someone's making the choice for you about where to look. Some people might say, "Oh who cares?" But we've been saying for millennia that the smallest details in the liturgy matter, so why wouldn't it matter where the camera is pointing?

So, I think in this particular moment, it might be helpful for the USCCB or individual bishops to issue some additional guidelines that say, "Hey, if you're going to livestream your parish, here are certain things that you need to do." It's really no different than when we say you have to use real candles and a chalice made of "noble materials." Here, it would be something about having your camera at a certain angle, close enough to the altar, that sort of thing.

Finally, no matter how immersive the virtual experience of Mass gets, I think there's still going to be that break when we get to the Eucharist, where we see the seams of the virtual experience that show that it's not quite perfect. There's this break where we realize, oh no, I can't actually partake in this Eucharist. In our sacramental imagination, it's important we hold onto the fact that this is a real break.

Excerpted from an article: Distinguish digital Masses from other media during pandemic by Nick Mayrand, March 20, 2020 for CRUX Catholic News Service. Go to <https://cruxnow.com>

All Things Considered

The Covid-19 memorial ribbons tied on our Shadbush trees caught up with the number of Michigan's victims on Good Friday at 1,400 souls. Four days later, we were behind by 368 deaths. The trees on the plaza could bear no more without endangering their own life – so we made a decision to pushed out onto the Ginko trees on our Hampton Road walkway. Ginkos are a species that, after all, survived Nagasaki.

It's staggering to think that each blue ribbon represents a cherished person who was a vital and loved member of a Michigan family just days ago. I have gone out in the evening to say a Rosary in the presence of these trees. Let me suggest a visit and a prayer at the foot of the ARK plaza cross.



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Back in 2013, when we established our Facebook page, we used it simply to announce and recap parish events and share photos of our gatherings and sacramental celebrations. Our page functioned as an electronic bulletin board to maintain a social media presence. Now as we “shelter in place” to do our part to mitigate the effects of Covid-19, we are

relatively safe but physically disconnected from friends, family and our faith community – all of whom we would otherwise rely on during difficult times.

Social media platforms such Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, have become more than sources of information and entertainment. They have become crucial for our parish to maintain a sense of connection, – a source of spiritual guidance and solace. When, for good reason masses were suspended, we encountered a huge challenge to broadcast services online. Holy Week made the pressure to “unleash the Gospel” even greater.

With the encouragement of our Archbishop, and with a miniscule cadre of volunteers (including one well-disposed agnostic) we began broadcasting mass the last two weeks of Lent. This crew of between four and eight, was always medically screened before each taping. On Holy Week we took it up a notch and went live for Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil. There were a few hiccups with the production, but overall our online masses were reasonably successful. Views per liturgy were 1,300 on average. Oddly, Palm Sunday was the most seen by a factor of three to one.

It's encouraging to check the positive comments after each post. I'm especially pleased to see people interacting with each other and us in the comments *during* livestreams as if they were there in person. It tells me that you're engaged.

In addition to Mass online, we knew we had to still engage our Christian community further – in person – albeit at a safe social distance. Easter shouldn't go by without keeping at least one tradition that would make a positive, lasting memory for our kids – to let them know that the Church was still reaching out to them.

So we scheduled our annual Blessing of Easter foods with modifications for keeping it safe. We did it so that no one had to leave their car. The process was previously discussed and approved by a doctor who works in emergency medicine and who provided my own personal protection gear.

An issue the doctor and I discussed was how to connect the Easter water with the basket itself. Sprinkling from a single Holy Water bucket, dipped multiple times with an *aspergillum*, posed some risk. We were prepared to hand out individual vials of water – but that meant person-to-person contact. If, by edict, we weren't allowed to pass out blessed palms, then passing out water would present the same danger. The squirt gun was a unique and fun solution – and was medically approved!

Photos of the event were posted on our Facebook page and the response was overwhelming. St. Ambrose was a hit in the Ukraine, where Easter food blessings are very popular. We oddly were talked about in Germany, where one tabloid (tongue in cheek I hope) went into a discussion of the merits of the caliber of the squirt gun I selected and why there might have been better choices.

Our post was shared extensively across Facebook on other people's timelines which resulted in hundreds of positive

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All Things Considered

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comments. Such comments on the internet are miraculous in-and-of themselves. We only received three negative comments, two of which came from priests.

The Associated Press picked up our blessing photos and St. Ambrose began to appear in Easter Sunday newspapers around the US and Europe. We even made it onto the opening footage of ABC World News Tonight – for ten seconds! The bit of joy we attempted to spread in an otherwise sad world went viral. By Monday night, we had logged just under **30,000 views**. What a grace it was to be able to give so many folks something to smile about.

Judging by this response to our efforts online, it's clear that people are looking for hope and solace in a time that's otherwise filled with despondence and gloom. We will work to keep our Facebook a source of peace and connection to each other and to our faith now and into the future. You do the same.



But there was more than just a media face to our parish during Easter. It was the continuing operation of the charitable arm of the parish – our chapter of the St. Vincent dePaul Society.

Remember how easy it was to buy groceries and pack a banker-box for a needy family back at Thanksgiving time? Well, doing the same thing now would certainly be a bigger challenge and represent a greater sacrifice. "Sharing your bread with the needy" remains a Gospel imperative – when convenient and when it is not. Check out our website and face page for further challenges on this.

Here at St. Ambrose, we have a marvelous kitchen facility and talented chefs to run it. We've turned both of those assets into a splendid Easter meal for the men at the homeless shelter on Kerchival. We'll be doing that at least once a week as long as there is need. Homeless in a pandemic is not where you want to be. We can help with one of those.

TRP

Faith Formation Station

As we continue to deal with an unique and uncertain situation, know of our continued prayers for you and your family. Know that your children's catechists have been missing them and praying for your families. Please check the St. Ambrose parish website under "Religious Education" for program updates and additional resources as they become available. You know that all sacramental celebrations have been postponed. When our Archdiocese of Detroit gives further information, we will reach out to all of our sacrament families.

RESOURCES FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS:

If your family is anything like mine I know you have spent the last month trying to figure out how to all live and work together in one space or manage the comings and goings of those that work outside of the home safely. You are balancing caring for parents, grandparents, extended family, neighbors all the while navigating a new way of shopping, schooling, working, living, breathing.

Recognizing the stresses of this time, I don't want to overwhelm you with just another list of resources to try to sort through and explore. (Getting through the suggestions from my 3 children's teachers and schools has been enough to make my own head spin over and over again.) However, I do want to stress that connecting to our faith is so very essential at this time and I want to support you in this connection.

I am, therefore, emailing a streamlined list of resources for you and including an explanation. You know your children and your family best and can choose the prayers, activities, programming that fits your needs. If you are looking for specific suggestions or ideas, I am more than happy to point you in the right direction. Reach out to me at any time at reled.stambrose@comcast.net.

Kelly Woolums



The church will be open from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. every Sunday during the pandemic for private prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

In compliance with Governor Whitmer's directives, there can be no more than 10 people in the building at a time. While inside, maintain at least six feet between you and other people. We ask that you please sanitize the pew area where you sat after you have finished your prayer. Supplies for this will be provided.

The Buzz

OK, I'm interested in the "buzz" out there among you on how the Corona-fast from assembling – as Church in church – is affecting your faith. We've been physically apart for just over a month now. I miss y'all, as the Texas members of my family might say. Are you hungering for a return to the Eucharist? I hope so.

Two weeks ago on Palm Sunday I wrote about some reflections I was meditating on that focused on the "Domestic Church." How is your Domestic Church doing?! Have you met the risen Lord behind your locked doors at home? (See today's Gospel passage from the 20th chapter of John.) How many of you have rejoiced with Him? How many of you are really a Thomas at heart?

Have any of you found Him in the conversations, rituals, foods, etc. in your house? Again, from today's 1st reading in the 2nd chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we hear, "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life . . . and to the prayers . . . and to breaking bread in their homes."

Is the Real Presence of Jesus with you right now? Is His Presence as real with you in your home as it is in the church tabernacle? If you say "no", then there is more spiritual work that needs to be done during our Corona-fast. To be very, very clear: I believe Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament! What I think is that we are satisfied with that level of sacramental belief and never grapple with the answer to the question of **why** did He give us Himself in this Sacrament. And this leads us back to the Domestic Church.

For instance, again in today's Gospel passage, Jesus breathes (see Genesis, chpt. 2) the Holy Spirit upon the disciples and speaks the famous words commissioning them to forgive sins. Classically we have been taught that this is the moment that priests were given the power to judge and forgive sins via the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation.

Yet we know that God forgives sins as soon as we sincerely ask. Notice that Jesus doesn't say anything about God's forgiveness being contingent on the disciples'. To be very, very clear: I believe in the forgiving power and grace of sacramental confession/reconciliation. I have seen and personally experienced too many miraculous moments to think otherwise. But if we are satisfied with the ecclesial celebration of Penance as the totality of its meaning, I think we miss the Domestic Church implication in today's Gospel commissioning.

We who are baptized and confirmed have received the Holy Spirit in a very special way. Now listen again to Jesus' words as addressed to you and me: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you. . . . Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." The Real Presence of Christ in our Domestic Churches calls us to do as He was sent to do – forgive.

And if I might play a bit with some of the visual imagery from the Thomas portion of the Gospel – sins are wounds. In the Domestic Church you have been commissioned to undo them. What will you choose: to deny/ignore? to judge and "retain"? to pour salt in them to get even? hopefully not to add to them? to bind up and heal? and in the end, join with Thomas and see the Real Presence in this situation and say, "My Lord and my God!"

I'd be honored to hear your stories about the Domestic Church at your place. Write me at chuck.stambrose@comcast.net.



An observation I've made during the quarantine while watching a lot of televised liturgies: the best homilists locally and world wide are somewhat united in that a return to a former normalcy would be a wasted opportunity. The effects of the pandemic have given our country and world an opportunity to reassess values as well as actions. Some societal reactions seem to want to go in very dark and dangerous directions. With the risen Lord Jesus, what do you think and feel? *Wesolego Aleluja!*

Chuck Dropiewski

The Beehive

is the parish weekly bulletin of the
St. Ambrose Catholic Community
Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

Pastor: Rev. Timothy R. Pelc

Pastoral Minister: Charles Dropiewski

Religious Education: Kelly Anne Woolums

Minister of Music: Louise Veltri

Dr. Norah Duncan IV – on hiatus

Office Manager: Peggy O'Connor

Secretary: Mary Urbanski

Sacramental Celebrations

Masses: On the Lord's Day –

Saturday Vigil - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday - 8:30 and 11:15 a.m.

Baptism: Arrangements for both adults and infants to be made by contacting the rectory.

Penance: As announced and by appointment.

Marriage: Couples should contact the rectory office a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed date to make arrangements.

Funeral: Normally celebrated within one week after the deceased's passing.

Directory

Parish Office: 15020 Hampton

Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan 48230

Tel: (313) 822-2814 **Fax:** (313) 822-9838

Email address: stambrose@comcast.net

Religious Education: (313) 332-5633

Pastoral Ministry: (313) 332-5631

Ark Scheduling: (313) 822-2814

Parish Website: stambrosechurch.net

Messages of hope from Bishop Gumbleton



Knowing that he will have a unique insight into our present day situation, we've invited Bishop Thomas Gumbleton to record a message for us. He didn't commit to a weekly talk, but says that he will do his best.

Bishop Gumbleton is in good health and in self-quarantine at his family's home in the Western part of Michigan. Once the social distancing restrictions are lifted, we hope to again see Bishop Tom at our altar. When available, the Bishop's messages will be available at facebook.com/stambroseparish.

Liturgy Schedule for the Coming Week

April 20

Easter Weekday

April 21

St. Anselm, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

April 22

Easter Weekday

April 23

Sts. George, Martyr and Adelbert, Bishop

April 24

St. Fidelis of Signarigen, Priest and Martyr

April 25

St. Mark, Evangelist

April 26

The Third Sunday of Easter

•Web Mass broadcast beginning at 8:00 on Sunday and accessible throughout the day.

Spending Spotlight

Spending Spotlight highlights many of the obvious costs associated with operating St. Ambrose on a monthly basis; yet there are “unseen” costs that add up to a significant amount. One of those is health insurance. We are grateful that contributions have allowed us to provide excellent health care coverage to our employees. Our monthly cost for purchasing health insurance from the Michigan Catholic Conference is \$4,848.50, which includes medical and dental.

Scriptures for the Second Week of Easter

April 20

ACTS 4:23-31

PS 2:1-3, 4-7A, 7B-9

JN 3:1-8

April 21

ACTS 4:32-37

PS 93:1AB, 1CD-2, 5

JN 3:7B-15

April 22

ACTS 5:17-26

PS 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

JN 3:16-21

April 23

ACTS 5:27-33

PS 34:2 AND 9, 17-18, 19-20

JN 3:31-36

April 24

ACTS 5:34-42

27:1, 4, 13-14

JN 6:1-15

April 25

1 PT 5:5B-14

PS 89:2-3, 6-7, 16-17

MK 16:15-20

April 26

ACTS 2:14, 22-33

PS 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

1 PT 1:17-21

LK 24:13-35

The Third Sunday of Easter

April 26th

In cooperation with our Archbishop's order, and in compliance with our Governor's ban on social gatherings, our Sunday mass for the foreseeable future will be celebrated and recorded

– but not open to a congregation.

Mass from St. Ambrose Parish for the Third Sunday of Easter will be broadcast on our Facebook page

and through our website starting at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday.

Our church building will be open for private prayer (no more than 10 persons at a time) on Sundays from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Upon leaving, please sanitize the space that you have occupied.

Your Envelope Speaks ... the Inside Story

To operate, each week our parish requires a *minimum* of..... \$10,100.00

On Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020

in envelopes we received \$13,100

in the loose collection 0

in electronic donations \$6,270.00

for a total of..... \$19,370.00

Over budget for the week..... \$9,270.00

Number of envelopes mailed 782

Number of envelopes used 73

52 Sundays

52 Sundays offers simple and insightful ways for your family to spend time together each Sunday learning more about the Catholic faith and having fun while you're at it. Materials are available for download online or you may sign up to receive the weekly email at www.52sundays.com/

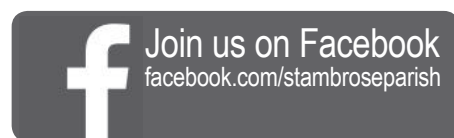
The Cry of the Poor

Bad times are even worse for the poor and jobless. You need to know that our St. Vincent dePaul Society here at St. Ambrose continues to serve the needy in this part of town.

Even though they do not make home visits during this period of pandemic, they continue provide our neighbors in need with energy and rent assistance as well as vouchers for food and cleaning supplies. When the Covid-19 threat subsides, they expect to see a huge surge in requests for financial assistance.

If you've been using your quarantine time to do some cleaning and divesting, please know that the St. Vincent de Paul stores are closed and are unable to take donated goods at this time.

For now, our SVdP welcomes financial donations. Masks and supplies for sanitation can also be used. Please send checks made out to St. Ambrose St. Vincent de Paul Conference and mail them to the Parish Office. Drop any other supplies at the rectory front door, in a marked box or bag.



Our Sick

Please pray for those who are seriously ill or who are hospitalized: Pat Blake, Karen Culver, Ann Sullivan Kay, Donald Miriani, Bonnie McKenna, Jeanne Noto, David Schumacker, Matthew Elias, George Bucec, Emilie Kasper, Darby O'Toole, Anna Noto Billings, Vilma Rivers, Vilma Marone, Eileen O'Brien, Martha Luna, Dina Engels, Liz Linne, Donna Barnes, Betty Greenia, Alexandra Cullen, Charmaine Kaptur, Frank Gregory, Alex Billiu, Gladys Bogos, Wayne Wallrich, Jerry Hansen, Jackie Walkowski, Kristen Kingzett, Denise DiBiancha, Valerie Dryden, Angela Stack, Maria Simcina, Fr. Norm Thomas, Albina Czecki, the Capuchin friars under quarantine and those suffering and hospitalized worldwide with Covid 19.



Photos by Larry Peplin. For a complete set of pictures visit [facebook.com/stambroseparish](https://www.facebook.com/stambroseparish)