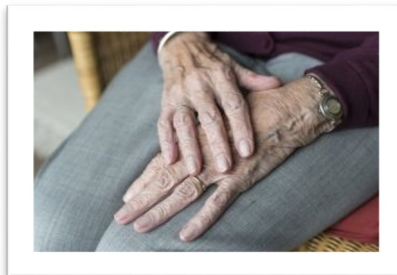


**Stretch forth your hand to the poor  
(Sir 7:32).**

In his second Covid [Catechesis](#), Pope Francis says:

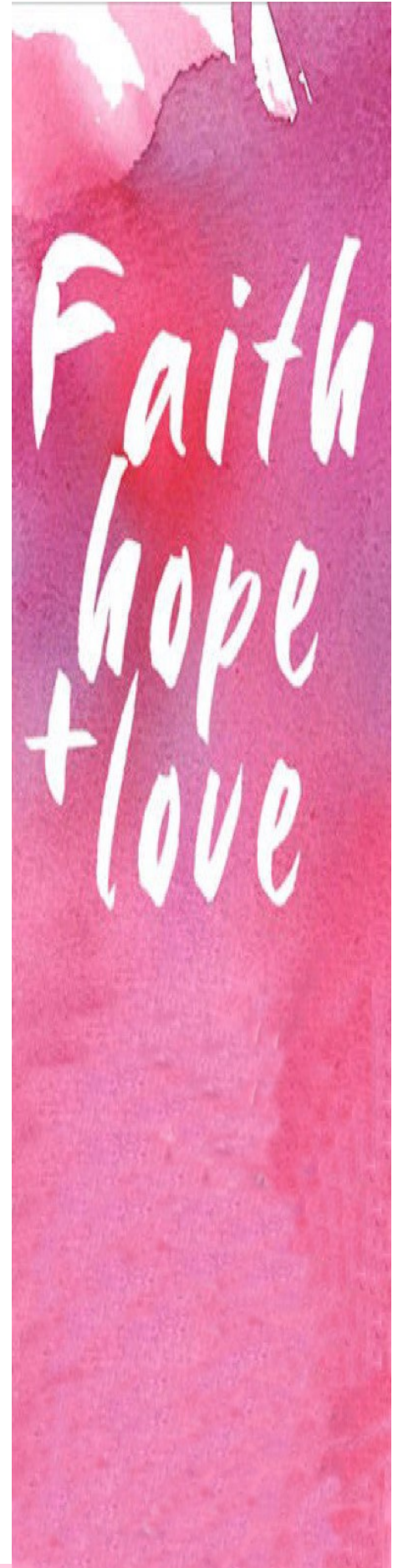
*'The pandemic has highlighted how vulnerable and interconnected everyone is. If we do not take care of one another, starting with the least, with those who are most impacted, including creation, we cannot heal the world.*

*Therefore, let us ask the Lord to give us eyes attentive to our brothers and sisters, especially those who are suffering. As Jesus's disciples we do not want to be indifferent or individualistic. These are the two unpleasant attitudes that run counter to harmony. Indifferent: I look the other way. Individualist: looking out only for one's own interest. The harmony created by God asks that we look at others, the needs of others, the problems of others, in communion. We want to recognise the human dignity in every person, whatever his or her race, language or condition might be. Harmony leads you to recognise human dignity, that harmony created by God, with humanity at the centre.'*



Many parishes have been actively reaching out during this period of pandemic. This case study shares how one parish has used digital technology to keep people in solidarity.

This is just one example among many. Caritas will be holding an event on 24 October to share the work which has been happening across the Diocese and to reflect on how we can grow the Mission of Charity. To find out more and register to attend click [here](#).



# Reaching Out Case Study Okehampton

## Reaching Out Case Study - Okehampton and Digital Outreach

Okehampton parish has used a range of approaches to reach out digitally both before and during the Coronavirus. The Parish Priest shares Mass online as well as creating community groups and support systems to be as inclusive as possible. Prior to lockdown, the parish had already been sharing Mass online with those who are housebound, sick or in care homes. The parish uses Skype, Zoom, Facetime and telephone to enable people to join Mass in the way that suits them the best. 170 people regularly join the service.

### What has worked well

The Parish Priest has created an engaging website to increase visibility and awareness of the Church.

The Parish Priest writes a regular reflection for the local newspaper and invites anyone interested to join the Mass.

For a number of years, the parish has offered people the opportunity to join requiem Masses and Holy Communion events online, to enable those living far away or housebound to join in important family events. This left the parish well-equipped to expand its online ministry during Covid-19.

The cost of technology has been low – the parish has used laptops and mobile phones. Getting online doesn't need expensive equipment. As the presbytery is next to the Church, a wifi booster provides the internet connection from the house.

The parish has made it easy to access Masses and events so people can join from their phone, when out and about as well as from home. People are grouped together according to what medium they prefer to use – Skype, Facetime or Zoom. There are volunteer mentors to help those struggling to get online.

There has been positive feedback from parishioners. The opportunity to watch Mass from home has been very helpful for people with hearing impairments who can find it difficult to hear in Church.



# Reaching Out Case Study

## From a parishioner's perspective

- There is a strong element of participation in the Mass and active engagement of parishioners. For example all the readers at Mass are on Zoom. There are times in the Mass when the priest talks to those who are not physically present including those who are joining by telephone. This helps everyone to feel included.
- There are those who cannot or don't want to engage with technology. Accessing Mass via phone helps to keep this group connected as do regular phone calls from parishioners who will also deliver newsletters.
- The fact that people can join via Facetime, Zoom, skype and phone has really helped everyone to use whatever technology they feel comfortable with. Relatives of some of the parishioners have begun joining the Masses.
- There is a specific focus on children who are spoken to directly during the Mass and encouraged to say hello.
- The approach has strengthened community connections. The Zoom is open for people to chat before and afterwards. Actually seeing people: *'makes you feel part of the parish—part of a community still'*.



- The use of Zoom for Mass has encouraged other parish groups to use this way of keeping in touch and people have been helping each other to work out how to use the technology.
- The online services are much appreciated by the congregation *'For Catholics, mass is so much part of your life. What we have on Zoom is fulfilling a very important need.'*

*'In the midst of crises, a solidarity guided by faith enables us to translate the love of God in our globalized culture, not by building towers or walls — and how many walls are being built today! — that divide, but then collapse, but by interweaving communities and sustaining processes of growth that are truly human and solid.'*

Pope Francis [Covid Catechesis](#): "Healing the world" - 5. Solidarity and the virtue of faith"

# Reaching Out Case Study

## What lessons have been learned?

Livestreaming was initially open access but there was some disruptive noise and now people have to provide an email in order to be invited to the services or events.

Getting a supportive group of volunteers is really useful – the Parish has a remote co-host for Zoom meetings to provide the technical support. The Parish Priest has been very careful about the mentoring and support for parishioners and only uses volunteers who are longstanding parishioners with DBS checks etc. in place to ensure that no-one is placed at risk.

The approach has been very inclusive – there are remote consultants who can be contacted for one to one support in using Skype or Zoom. One volunteer went to the garden of someone who was isolating to help them to get online – all at a safe social distance. There is also a telephone option so people can attend Mass over the phone.

The parish was already engaging in a wide range of social activities and had a plan in place – this was disrupted but some social events have moved online. The existing networks and social connections were an important base from which to move to full online activities post-lockdown.

St. Boniface Parish Bazaar 16th November 2019 Chief Guest: Tony Leech Mayor of West Devon Borough Council



Photos: Alan Orr