

# RESTORE ILLINOIS PHASE 5 RESOURCE GUIDE

## Preface

In anticipation of reopening in the state of Illinois per [Restore Illinois Phase 5](#)<sup>1</sup>, and under the invitation of Cardinal Cupich, members of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and Presbyteral Council have been meeting since January 2021 to discuss what might be helpful to parishes in assisting them and the faithful to reclaim their presence within their worshipping communities.

The team is representative of various regions (vicariates) of the Archdiocese of Chicago and diversified to more fully represent the makeup of the faithful we serve. The goal of this group was to gather ideas that can best support parishes in assisting parish leadership to guide discussions at the local level. The committee has listened to priests and lay leaders on what is already working in keeping people engaged and how efforts can be shared more broadly with the parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Chicago. We recognize there is already much creativity happening and more will be needed.

In a Pew Research survey in the summer of 2020, 28% of Americans report “stronger personal faith because of the pandemic;” “68% of U.S. adults who say their own faith has not changed much.”<sup>2</sup>

In a Pew Research report from October 2020, 86% of U.S. adults “say there is some kind of lesson or set of lessons for humankind to learn from the pandemic.”<sup>3</sup>

We believe there is a real opportunity to engage people and we want to ensure we have vibrant communities to welcome them back into a full experience of our rich Catholic faith with in-person worship.

Consistent with the Building the New Reality efforts of Renew My Church, now is a ripe moment for a renewed focus on evangelization, to demonstrate radical hospitality and welcome, the use of soft entry points, to assist the faithful in their role as disciples and to provide opportunities for their own personal growth and formation.

This ad hoc committee was focused on sharing their finding with our parishes. Once again, our scope was not to set policy for the archdiocese, but to offer a tool to parishes to have their own conversations. Below are the following subsets:

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1. [coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/restore-illinois-phase-5](https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/restore-illinois-phase-5)

2. [pewforum.org/2021/01/27/more-americans-than-people-in-other-advanced-economies-say-covid-19-has-strengthened-religious-faith](https://pewforum.org/2021/01/27/more-americans-than-people-in-other-advanced-economies-say-covid-19-has-strengthened-religious-faith)

3. [pewforum.org/essay/what-lessons-do-americans-see-for-humanity-in-the-pandemic](https://pewforum.org/essay/what-lessons-do-americans-see-for-humanity-in-the-pandemic)

- A. General Observations
- B. Pastoral Sensibilities
- C. Pastoral Fraternity
- D. Hospitality and Welcome
- E. RMC Considerations
- F. Technology Usage
- G. Archdiocesan-wide Potential Actions
- H. Chart: Sample Actions
- I. Resources that the Committee Found Helpful
- J. Appendix, Fr. Louis Cameli: *Finding Renewed Hope in 2021: What the Pandemic Has Taught Us*

## A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

*“The year 2020 will be remembered as a watershed year that separates the ‘before’ and the ‘after’. The pandemic has profoundly affected our lives and our society; it has intensified longstanding social problems, especially inequalities.”<sup>4</sup>*

- We are likely not experiencing a “new normal” but of the “next normal.” As a society, and within our parishes, we will continue to face unanticipated disruptions which may cause significant distress.
- The sense of “this is not business as usual” creates an opportunity to focus the energy of the parish around its mission.
- Be patient. Full reopening will likely be more incremental and not a full splash.
- Adapt. There is not a one-size-fits-all to reopening. Parishioners will respond differently to invitations to return to an in-person liturgy.
- There is always the need to honor and be sensitive to the experience of different cultures, especially within the same parish.
- Know there may be distrust in certain communities around the vaccine, most especially among Black<sup>5</sup> and Latino<sup>6</sup> communities.

## B. PASTORAL SENSIBILITIES

- Focus on fulfilling the mission; not on filling our spaces.
- Finding ways of blessing people **where they are** is more important at this point than getting them to show up **where we are**.
- Homilies should be a source of hope and healing. Multi-priest parishes should discuss this together and offer similar intentional messages on designated Sundays.
- Preach the Gospel. Avoid homilies that are political. Accept the reality of the virus and how it has affected our world and do not blame politicians.

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4. “Building a fairer, healthier world for all” by Cardinal Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development on the occasion of World Health Day. April 7, 2021

5. [consumerreports.org/vaccination/addressing-covid-19-vaccine-hesitancy-among-black-americans](https://www.consumerreports.org/vaccination/addressing-covid-19-vaccine-hesitancy-among-black-americans)

6. [npr.org/2020/12/15/946617273/why-many-latinos-are-wary-of-getting-the-covid-19-vaccine](https://www.npr.org/2020/12/15/946617273/why-many-latinos-are-wary-of-getting-the-covid-19-vaccine)

- Be patient, especially in consideration of Renew My Church and parishes that have already completed the Discernment and Decisions phase. Healing is ongoing in many of our parishes.
- Know there may be **reentry anxiety**.<sup>7</sup> The pandemic has been a moment of deep isolation for many. Issues related to mental health have increased. We cannot presume people will automatically come back.
- Be your best in your pastoral approach by letting the person know you are glad they are there. Do not guilt a person or family for not attending liturgies or parish meetings during the pandemic.
- Do not criticize people who are not ready to return. When possible, ask them to share their concerns or ask how the parish can make their transition back more comfortable for them.
- Avoid terminology (especially in public) that risks separating the community. Example: “Good to see those who have been with us for a while,” “Welcome to all those who are just now returning.” Individual conversations, when appropriate, should be utilized.
- One cannot presume that those who have not attended Mass in person have not been spiritually nourished. This has been achieved with varying levels of success through online Masses and prayer experiences.

### C. PASTORAL FRATERNITY

- Priests should consider gathering in clusters for a meal together to share their experience and discuss ideas.
- Ask for help. Other parishes may be utilizing best practices that are needed in your community. Reach out to them for guidance and training. Make sure these discussions are placed on deanery meeting agendas.
- Back in July 2020, many priest assignments changed. Pastors might consider discussions with their parish councils around feasibility of inviting the former pastor/priest to return to the parish for a more proper leave-taking.

### D. HOSPITALITY AND WELCOME

- Stress importance of community gathering (prayer), hospitality and fellowship.
- Connect with people. Ongoing efforts to reach out to parishioners and the community through calls and direct mailings will continue to be an important tool.
- During Sunday liturgy, invite those present to greet each other. Do not forget to greet those attending virtually.
- Consider Masses for those who have given birth and those recently married as people return. This could include notable wedding anniversaries.
- In people’s desire to see each other, focus on community and hospitality with less focus on programs and immediately going back to the normal parish calendar. People need meaningful relationships and opportunities to freely share their experience of the last year.
- Host parish gatherings to provide moments on building/reuniting the community. Potlucks are one way this can be achieved.
- Honor, thank and support those groups who have been the hardest hit (young families, children, seniors, front-line workers, healthcare workers, essential workers and those who were able to help our neighbors).

7. [nbcnews.com/health/health-news/collective-trauma-new-report-details-effects-stress-america-2020-n1260451](https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/collective-trauma-new-report-details-effects-stress-america-2020-n1260451)

- During Lent, the Archdiocese of Chicago shared a video reflection each week via social media channels. Consider something similar with a weekly or monthly video message to your community distributed via email, posted on your website and/or social media channels to keep people engaged in the life of the parish community and encouraged on their journey of faith.

## E. RMC CONSIDERATIONS

- Particular pastoral care may be needed for groupings in which there may be loss of a worship site(s).
- Host listening sessions for newly unified parishes.

## F. TECHNOLOGY USAGE

- There is a continued need to embrace the technology of video livestreaming. Hybrid options of online and in-person will be with us for a while. Online Masses can unite families across geographic boundaries. As “retailers have come to understand that an online purchaser is still a client [...] so church leaders have to get good with the fact that people who aren’t in the main room count.”<sup>8</sup>
- Some people are falling out of the habit of watching livestreamed Masses.
- Consider options to provide access. Some demographics have limited access to internet and technology, e.g., Latino communities, underserved neighborhoods, and the elderly. Not everyone has a computer with a camera and microphone.

## G. ARCHDIOCESAN-WIDE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Cardinal’s weekly Masses on ABC-7 are very successful in reaching out to the community and offering consolation and hope. During this time, Cardinal Cupich will continue to invite people back to in-person worship in their parish communities.
- Host an archdiocesan-wide *Te Deum* to mark the end of the pandemic. Invite ecumenical and interreligious communities, civic communities, first responders, essential workers.
- Raise up the local community. Cardinal and auxiliary bishops to visit churches throughout the archdiocese to highlight people returning to Mass within their communities, while also highlighting the ministries occurring at the local level.

## H. THINGS TO DO: SAMPLE ACTION ITEMS IN WELCOMING PEOPLE BACK TO THE PEWS

*“At this moment in history, marked by the ecological crisis and grave economic and social imbalances only worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, it is all the more important for us to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters. God has made this fraternal unity possible, by giving us his Son Jesus. The fraternity he offers us has nothing to do with fine words, abstract ideals or vague sentiments. It is a fraternity grounded in genuine love, making it possible for me to encounter others different from myself, feeling compassion for their sufferings, drawing near to them and caring for them even though they do not belong to my family, my ethnic group or my religion. For all their differences, they are still my brothers and sisters. The same thing is true of relationships between peoples and nations: brothers and sisters all!”<sup>9</sup>*

8. [careynieuwhof.com/8-disruptive-church-trends-that-will-rule-2021-the-rise-of-the-post-pandemic-church/](https://careynieuwhof.com/8-disruptive-church-trends-that-will-rule-2021-the-rise-of-the-post-pandemic-church/)

9. “URBI ET ORBI” Message of His Holiness Pope Francis, Christmas 2020, December 25, 2020

Now	Mid-Term	Fully Reopened
Let people know they are missed. It is not too late to do this.	Offer occasional different times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation for ease of access.	
Assure people that our parishes are following protocols and are providing a safe environment.	Offer a non-Sunday liturgy to gather. They may be less comfortable attending Sunday with a larger group of people.	
Help people understand what it means to be dispensed from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass. Some parishioners may be experience guilt. Wording should be pastoral and capture the spirit of the law.	Organize calls to parishioners who are absent. Intentionally, invite them to consider returning. Attentively listen to their concerns. A well-prepared script will be useful.	
Create “prayer calls” or “wellbeing calls” inviting people to connect virtually and in small cohorts.	Find opportunities for young adults to be connected. Perhaps host discussion groups after Mass to discuss homily or scripture readings.	
Get vaccinated. Clergy and staff should get vaccinated, which will offer a level of comfort for those returning.	Offer opportunities to respond to people’s grief. There is loss and brokenness: Death, divorces, weddings that never occurred, evictions and joblessness, to name a few. Celebrate Masses for those who have experienced trials during the pandemic (sign of pastoral care). Invite family members to be present.	
Pastor and pastoral team should call parishioners and offer direct mailings. <b>This should not be only for offertory envelopes.</b>	Consider Masses for those who have given birth and those recently married as people return. This could include notable wedding anniversaries.	
Thank your volunteers publicly and privately. Send personalized notes of gratitude.		
Be creative. Meet regularly with parish leadership to brainstorm ideas.		
Ask for help. Other parishes may be utilizing best practices that are needed in your community. Reach out to them for guidance and training.		
Offer listening sessions hosted by the priest. Listen to people’s stories and experience as we move forward.		

*“True, a worldwide tragedy like the COVID-19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. As I said in those days, ‘the storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities... Amid this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about appearances, has fallen away, revealing once more the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another’”.*<sup>10</sup>

*“We need to recognize and combat our aggressive and selfish inclinations, and not let them take root. ‘Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger’ (Eph 4:26). When we feel overwhelmed, we can always cling to the anchor of prayer, which puts us back in God’s hands and the source of our peace. ‘Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts...’ (Phil 4:6-7).”*<sup>11</sup>

## **I. RESOURCES THAT THE COMMITTEE FOUND HELPFUL**

[OSV Talks - Dan Cellucci - What If They Don’t Come Back? - YouTube](#)<sup>12</sup>

[“Will The Congregation Come Back?” Should Not Be Our Biggest Concern \(6 Better Questions\) | KarlVaters.com](#)<sup>13</sup>

[How COVID-19 Has Strengthened Religious Faith | Pew Research Center \(pewforum.org\)](#)<sup>14</sup>

[What Lessons Do Americans See for Humanity in the Pandemic? | Pew Research Center \(pewforum.org\)](#)<sup>15</sup>

[8 Disruptive Church Trends That Will Rule 2021 \(The Rise of the Post-Pandemic Church\)](#)<sup>16</sup>

[Is Pandemic Burnout Draining Your Motivation And Energy? Here’s How We Can All Promote Recovery \(forbes.com\)](#)<sup>17</sup>

[More than half of U.S. women are burned out. Here’s how to cope \(cnbc.com\)](#)<sup>18</sup>

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10. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, n. 32

11. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, *Gaudete Et Exsultate*, n. 114

12. [youtube.com/watch?v=VzFrBWBYKbw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzFrBWBYKbw)

13. [karlvaters.com/will-the-congregation-come-back](https://www.karlvaters.com/will-the-congregation-come-back)

14. [pewforum.org/2021/01/27/more-americans-than-people-in-other-advanced-economies-say-covid-19-has-strengthened-religious-faith](https://www.pewforum.org/2021/01/27/more-americans-than-people-in-other-advanced-economies-say-covid-19-has-strengthened-religious-faith)

15. [pewforum.org/essay/what-lessons-do-americans-see-for-humanity-in-the-pandemic](https://www.pewforum.org/essay/what-lessons-do-americans-see-for-humanity-in-the-pandemic)

16. [careynieuwhof.com/8-disruptive-church-trends-that-will-rule-2021-the-rise-of-the-post-pandemic-church](https://www.careynieuwhof.com/8-disruptive-church-trends-that-will-rule-2021-the-rise-of-the-post-pandemic-church)

17. [forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshiti/2021/03/11/is-pandemic-burnout-draining-your-motivation-and-energy-heres-how-we-can-all-promote-recovery/?sh=330be2481c02](https://www.forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshiti/2021/03/11/is-pandemic-burnout-draining-your-motivation-and-energy-heres-how-we-can-all-promote-recovery/?sh=330be2481c02)

18. [cnbc.com/2021/03/10/more-than-half-of-us-women-are-burned-out-heres-how-to-cope.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2021/03/10/more-than-half-of-us-women-are-burned-out-heres-how-to-cope.html)

## **J. APPENDIX, FR. LOUIS CAMELI: FINDING RENEWED HOPE IN 2021: WHAT THE PANDEMIC HAS TAUGHT US**

### Finding Renewed Hope in 2021: What the Pandemic Has Taught Us<sup>19</sup>

Father Louis J. Cameli

The 2021 theme for the Annual Catholic Appeal is Come follow me ... and bring hope to the world. In a year marked by struggles with the Corona virus, social unrest, and even natural disasters, it seems counterintuitive to sound the call to bring hope to the world. Still, as difficult as our experiences have been, I am convinced that real hope has come into sharper focus for us and in a way that will enable us to bear that hope into a world in need. The pandemic has advanced us on a spiritual path that leads us to deeper hope. Let me identify seven ways that this has happened.

#### **Hope through Our Vulnerability**

The pandemic laid bare our vulnerability. And that certainly means our capacity to be wounded and diminished by disease and the limitations of our mortal bodies. Even more, the pandemic taught us that, at some fundamental and ultimate level, we do not and cannot control our lives. That turns out not to be all bad news.

Paradoxically, that lack of control can free us from trying so hard every day to control and manage our lives. The lack of control can teach us to surrender ourselves into God's hands and to allow ourselves to be carried forward into a future designed not by us but by God. Living with our vulnerability in that way renews our hope. Additionally, it expands our capacity for compassion for the other vulnerable creatures with whom we share this earth. And that leads to another dimension of hope.

#### **Hope through Solidarity and Connection**

If great despair is an experience of isolation, then great hope is an experience of connection, solidarity, and communion. The pandemic taught us that we are in this life together. Wearing a mask was not just about self-protection. It was a means to protect each other. Bringing groceries to those in quarantine or isolation was more than a kind gesture. It expressed our basic reliance on each other to survive.

If we can rely on each other and if we can support one another, there is reason for hope. Our destiny and our salvation, according to Church teaching, can only unfold in and through our connection, solidarity, and communion. "For God decided not to save us and make us holy singly one by one but to gather a people to himself." (See *The Constitution on the Church*, n.9 from the Second Vatican Council)

#### **Hope through Creative Imagination**

How many times during the pandemic have we done things in a new and creative way that we would have never done if our old routines had been maintained? I think of grandparents using technology to connect with and follow their grandchildren. I think of people learning how to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and other big life events with drive-thrus. I think of ways that people stepped up and devised ways to help others who were out of work or out of food by enlisting neighbors to collect money and groceries. I think of teachers who found new ways to engage their students. I think of medical personnel who improvised new ways to deliver care to their patients. All these are examples of the exercise of creative imagination, a gift we did not always realize that we had within us.

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19. June 2021 issue of *Lumen Cordium* magazine, Archdiocese of Chicago. To be posted at: [giving.archchicago.org/annual-catholic-appeal/lumen-cordium-society/lumen-magazine](http://giving.archchicago.org/annual-catholic-appeal/lumen-cordium-society/lumen-magazine)

God, the Creator, gives his creatures a share in his capacity to create, to do new things or to do old things in a new way. This is the gift of creative imagination. It is a gift that carries us through perplexing circumstances and so gives us a sense of hope. We come to know that we have inner resources, God-given and often untapped, to carry us forward. We discovered or, perhaps better, re-discovered the gift of creative imagination that gives us hope through the pandemic.

### **Hope through Simplification**

The pandemic has forced us to live differently. It has pressed us to pare down our often complicated lives. In pre-pandemic times, we took for granted that we would be going out to eat or to a show or to a game or on vacation or to visit friends. Our calendars were full, and we often hurried from one thing to the next. The pandemic brought all of that to a screeching halt. We stayed home more or even most of the time. We cooked for ourselves. We discovered empty spaces in our day, something that was unaccustomed and perhaps occasionally disconcerting. In surprising ways, the pandemic simplified our lives. And spiritually that has been a gift that can generate hope.

Simplification means coming to terms with what is essential. Hope clings to what truly matters, ultimately, our destiny in God who is love. The simplification of our life gets us to let go of encumbrances that claim undue importance in our lives and, at the same time, block our full embrace of the future that God gives us.

### **Hope through Re-appreciating the Generations**

The pandemic made us take another look at each other. In a particular way, we became re-attuned to the different generations in our lives. We saw our older parents and grandparents in a new light, as very much valued and also very vulnerable to the onslaughts of Covid. Children of those older parents recognized their responsibility to safeguard and protect their parents and, at the same time, to do the same for their own children. In all of this, the different forms of distancing and separation made us more acutely aware of how important these intergenerational relationships are.

At a fundamental level, our hope is nourished by those who go before us and those who follow. Young people, of course, carry the seeds of hope with their movement into the future. To nourish their hope, however, they depend on the steady power of those who have lived well and have affirmed key directions in life. Generations sustain each other in hope. This is so clear in the Scriptures. When God wants to lead a new generation out of the slavery of Egypt, he tells Moses to identify him as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” (See Exodus 3:15)

### **Hope through Life Newly Valued**

Certainly before the pandemic, we knew that life is valuable. Having moved through these months, however, we can now claim a new and deepened sense of that value. Recently, the *New York Times* has been running a page entitled “Those We Have Lost to Covid,” featuring both celebrities and ordinary people. The poignant sense of loss in these stories underscores the preciousness of life. In another way, the valiant efforts and struggles of medical personnel to care and cure patients struggling with the most complex instances of Covid tell us how much life is worth.

Of course, as Saint Paul insists, our hopes are not anchored only in this life. (See 1 Corinthians 15:19) We believe that God calls us to new, abundant, and eternal life. Still, that eternal life is on a continuum with the life we experience right now. When we claim the preciousness of our earthly life, we also allow ourselves to hope in life eternal.



## **Hope through a Purified and Responsible Faith**

The pandemic pushed us to pray more often and more intensely. We begged God to free us from this plague. These are necessary prayers. We have needed divine help. At the same time, we have also come to know our need to claim our responsibility for bringing an end to the pandemic. The whole of our existence—and we relearned this forcefully through the pandemic—is a partnership of divine grace and human freedom. God is generous beyond measure, and God also calls us to exercise our free response to his grace and his help. Faith that blindly and irresponsibly pushes everything on to some “divine force” is a denial of the partnership to which God calls us. His grace is sovereign, but his grace also summons us to claim our responsibility.

When we relearned who God is and who we are before God through the trials of the pandemic, our faith was purified. Once purified and made responsible, faith gives rise to hope. And this hope is not in our own power but in God’s grace to which we respond, and which will lead us home.

## **Conclusion**

It is easy enough to reduce the pandemic to a medical crisis. It certainly has been that. Even more, the pandemic belongs to our individual and collective spiritual journey. The trials and the struggles that it has prompted move us forward to reclaim our hope in God. From that, the theme of this year’s Annual Catholic Appeal draws its power and gives us direction: Come follow me ... and bring hope to the world.