

# TRUSTING IN CHRIST THROUGH CRISIS

**A Parish Leader's Rosary**



**St. Padre Pio, known for his devotion to the rosary, once said, “In times of darkness, holding the rosary is like holding our Blessed Mother’s hand.”**

The Church has withstood many types of crises over its 2,000 year history. Most recently, parish leaders had to figure out how to best serve their community while churches around the country were forced to close their doors during the Covid-19 crisis.

Living in trust and faith, knowing that you don’t have any control in a crisis, is hard. And admitting that you’re powerless in that situation requires great faith in God. This rosary-centered ebook was created to offer parish leaders prayers and meditations of hope in Christ, focused on the Glorious Mysteries of the rosary, as well as provide practical tips to help you lead during crisis.

# THE RESURRECTION

**Meditate:** Reflect on the empty tomb and Thomas' profound act of faith.

**Pray:** Deepen my faith so that I may be a source of faith for others through my leadership.  
(Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

**Action:** As a parish leader, you're called to look out for the needs of your community—but you can't pour from an empty cup. Pastors and other parish leaders alike often pour out their lives caring for others and fail to care for themselves.

Before helping others navigate a crisis, take a moment to help yourself. There's a reason why, before any flight takes off, airline flight attendants instruct you to put your oxygen mask on first before helping others in an emergency. This important rule ensures survival. So taking care of yourself first will enable you to take better care of others. There are small steps you can take to care for yourself.

1. **Spiritual self-care:** take time to pray (especially in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, study the Bible), read a devotion, or simply being in solitude with God.
2. **Mental self-care:** challenge and grow your mind with reading and discussions.
3. **Emotional self-care:** reflect or journal your feelings, and identify your emotions and what they mean.
4. **Physical self-care:** take time to rest, eat food to fuel yourself through the crisis (the healthier the food, the better!), and exercise.

You may not feel like you have time to do each type of self-care amidst a crisis. But deliberate self-care, even if you only manage one category, is crucial to refill your cup and lead others.

In today's world, the demands of parish leadership are more than you can handle. And that's before a crisis hits! It's enough to make any parish leader feel like being spiritually, emotionally, and physically exhausted is just "part of the job". But it doesn't have to be.

When you're not ready to pour into others, when you're tired, overwhelmed, or overcommitted, there is the ultimate Helper. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." The Bible is filled with promises that you can fill your cup with "the fullness of God" (Eph 3:19), "the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18), and "the fruits of righteousness" (Phil 1:11). Turn to Him in moments of crisis. Only He can fill what's been poured out and restore you.

*No single piece of technology can solve a crisis on its own, but technology can reduce some of the stressors before a crisis even begins. There's no time like the present to begin preparing for the future. ParishStaq is a fully integrated software solution, and can streamline your ministry, combining [Catholic church management software, giving, and apps](#) under one umbrella.*

# THE ASCENSION

**Meditate:** Reflect on Jesus ascending into heaven as his disciples fixed their gaze on heaven.

**Pray:** Deepen my hope and trust in you alone so that I may keep my gaze on heaven. (Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and Glory Be)

**Action:** Crises are sudden, but living the virtue of hope can help you overcome moments of despair during a crisis. One actionable way to avoid feelings of despair as a leader is to start by making a plan. It's challenging to develop a plan of action amidst panic, but creating a plan beforehand will help your team respond quickly and, more importantly, **effectively**. The more prepared you are, the better you can lead your people through the tough times that may come.

"How clear are our processes for a crisis? What systems do we have in place? What infrastructure needs to be established to bring stability?" Ask these questions of your ministry and define what your process is **before** a crisis strikes.

It's likely that multiple processes are necessary, from communication to finances to security. You'll also want to create evacuation routes and designated meeting places for physical crises, severe weather, and natural disasters.

If you don't already have one, develop a financial plan. Your plan will need two parts: a spending plan (budget), and a funding plan to raise the money to support your response.

In a crisis, it may feel like everyone is turning to you to solve it, pulling you in a million different directions. Thus, it's crucial to delegate tasks when possible to ensure your response is quick and effective. One way to speed up your response is to have a team of go-to people. They're people in your parish that are well-connected, good networkers, or that have some connection to your local government. They can create access to resources and reach people that you and your staff might not be able to. Rely on them to spread an urgent message so you can focus on what the next step should be.

Some guiding principles for responding to a crisis are:

1. Have leadership determine the seriousness of the situation.
2. When in doubt, call 911.
3. Secure the safety of all.
4. Assist any injured victims.
5. Avoid analysis paralysis. Prompt beats perfect in a crisis.
6. Gather facts and seek information, and maintain confidentiality as appropriate.
7. Contact your go-to team.
8. Communicate with any people involved.
9. Be explicit about the steps you are taking.
10. Finally, fix what is broken, and (when applicable) share changes made to ensure it won't happen again.

Unfortunately, creating a plan upfront doesn't mean you don't have to revise it later. If we learned anything from the COVID-19 pandemic, it's that it's essential to be able to pivot in a crisis. So, take a step back. Take a deep breath. Carefully review the current situation. Assess the latest information you have about the crisis and what resources your ministry has on hand. You'll need to determine what's essential or extra and what



is working or isn't. With those assessments in mind, you'll be able to decide how and where to pivot.

In the face of a crisis, [St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church](#) sees an opportunity to serve. The parish's food pantry, 'St. Anthony's Bread,' provided more than two million pounds of food in 2020. "It's all about the volunteers," said Franklin Marsan, Food Pantry Manager. It's inspiring what the parish was able to do during a crisis with the help of Pushpay's volunteer management.

# THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Meditate:** Reflect on the disciples who gathered in the Upper Room and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Bishop Robert Barron provides an additional perspective: “Contemplate the importance of this mystery for the life of our Church today and to ponder our mission to continue boldly, and publicly to witness to Jesus Christ.”

**Pray:** Fill my heart with courage so that others may encounter you. (Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory Be)

**Action:** Communicate with your parishioners.

During a crisis, there's typically a lot of noise out there. Cut through the noise and communicate clearly with your parishioners.

But what do you say?

Ultimately, the leader's job in a crisis is to give **clarity**. Don't avoid or ignore the situation because the subject is controversial, politicized, or touchy. Your community is aware of their reality, and they're often looking for your guidance.

Instead, be truthful and transparent about your approach to the crisis. Your parish wants to know that you have a plan, and what your intent is. So share that with them,



and share it often. There is no such thing as overcommunicating when it comes to a crisis.

When you're sharing your plan and updates, there are several ways to get the message out: bulletin, email, text messages, your parish's [mobile app](#), social media posts, your website, and even your outside signage.

Make your parish accessible anytime and anywhere with a parish app designed specifically for your community. Powerful features like a dynamic home screen, push notifications, and groups help increase engagement and foster deeper connection. It's the heart of your parish in the palm of their hands.

People are looking for quick information during these chaotic moments. Update your website homepage or parish app, even if you don't have a fully formed plan yet. It shows your community you are actively aware of what's happening and are looking to help in whatever way you can.

When communicating digitally, make sure your messages are relevant and focused on what's happening. The last thing you want when a tornado hits is for your church to post something about your small groups! You'll want to pause any scheduled social media posts. And if you have the capacity, replace that post with a short message from someone in leadership responding to the current situation.

The Fourth Glorious Mystery:

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# THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY INTO HEAVEN

**Meditate:** Reflect on Mary being elevated body and soul and reuniting with her son in heaven.

**Pray:** Deepen my relationship with you so that I may bring others closer to you. (Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory Be)

**Action:** Unify your staff.

Once a crisis is underway, your staff will likely feel the stress and chaos as it unfolds. This crisis is an opportunity to show compassion for your teams. It's time to proactively support your people. It's time to lead.

Your staff need reassurance that it is possible to overcome this obstacle, and confidence in their collective ability to accomplish it. That boils down to two things: structure and compassion.

In a crisis, "normal" is gone. But do your best to provide structure and normalcy where you can. If your team has weekly meetings, try to keep those on the calendar for a quick check-in. It may be tricky, but balance the need for structure with compassion. There will likely be mental overload and stress from the crisis. Your team may need to take time off, be reminded to rest, or be given extra grace in day-to-day work.

And be sure to celebrate your team's victories along the way, no matter if they're epic or small wins. When staff members voluntarily take on additional work during a crisis or achieve a team goal, it's also important that you appreciate and reward them for their efforts. Even simply recognizing their hard work in front of the rest of the team will go a long way in showing your appreciation and boosting morale. **Trust and loyalty are built or broken during difficult times.** The more compassionate leaders are in a crisis, the more confident and persevering teams are.

*Staff burnout can happen at any time. But with the stress of a crisis and a staff that's spread thin, it's even more likely. Your team may feel like there are too many tools and too little time. Lift some of the workload (and stress!) with tech that makes work efficient and easy. With ParishStaq's [church management software](#), your staff can automate follow-up communication, assign task ownership to team members, and even track and auto-assign your volunteers.*

The Fifth Glorious Mystery:

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# THE CORONATION OF OUR LADY AS QUEEN OF HEAVEN

**Meditate:** Reflect on the culmination of Mary's journey that required unimaginable faith, courage, and generosity. An inspiring example during a time of darkness.

**Pray:** In crisis, deepen my awareness of pride and fill my heart with the love of Mary so that I may lead with generosity. (Our Father, ten Hail Marys, Glory Be)

**Action:** Be the Church to the community.

A crisis often happens beyond the walls of your parish. It's not just your parish that's feeling the panic. It's your local community. People all around you are looking for hope.

The entire community should know they can count on the Church to be the Church. The Church is not the four walls that make up a building. It's the people who love their neighbors, meet the needs of the widow and the orphan, serve those whom society considers "the least of these," and share their lives with one another.

In these uncertain times, you can share God's love and comfort with your community. Use your words to share the hope of the Gospel and speak with the love of God when you interact with others. Along with loving words, your community needs you to take action.

Start by assessing the needs of your community after a crisis. Don't assume you already know what they need. Once you know the pressing needs, take stock of your parish's resources to address those needs. Ask questions like: *What do we have? What can we do well? How can we bridge the gap?* These questions can help you find practical ways to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a crisis.

You can be the Church to your community by:

- Opening your physical build to provide shelter to those in need
- Connecting people with services that provide physical or emotional support
- Network or volunteer with local organizations
- Collect food donations and hand out or deliver them

Generosity might look different in a crisis. Not everyone is going to be able to give financially, but that doesn't have to stop them from giving and growing the Church. Empower people to share their time and their talents by organizing volunteering opportunities. The greatest gift is knowing that someone took the time to help, regardless of the cost.

For those who can give, encourage them with transparent communication around the impact of their giving, letting them know the progress made in addressing the crisis and supporting any of the victims. Many donors are unsure how to step in and help in a crisis. Sharing how donors' financial generosity impacts your community will inspire them to continue to give, and strong stewardship fosters a deep trust in your ministry that will result in generosity far beyond the current crisis.

In a season of uncertainty, thanking donors and volunteers is even more important. Whether they're long-time supporters or new, let them know their generosity matters and is appreciated. You can automate emails or text messages to thank them, or

express your appreciation for them collectively during Mass. However you thank your donors and volunteers, remember that by making people feel truly valued, you also encourage them to stay connected.

At St. Michael Catholic Church, the consistency of [recurring giving](#) allows them to help people in need, either within the parish or in the community, through several outreach opportunities including a ministry called ‘Shoulder to Shoulder.’ The ministry fund was established in 2008 during the housing crisis to help parishioners who were struggling financially.

Chris Peterson, steward of administration said, “When our parishioners are in trouble, unexpected medical bills or their car breaks down, or if there’s a single mom and something happens, we’re able to help them financially get back up on their feet.”

***Don’t let disasters stop you from being Christ to the people in your community. Crises can be frightening, overwhelming, and exhausting. But they are also an opportunity to grow.***

We’re here to walk alongside you—through the ups and the downs—which is why we want to give you all the tools you need to thrive. So take a look into our Catholic-specific product, [ParishStaq](#), and see if it’s the right fit for your parish or diocese.



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