



**A Pastoral Letter from Presiding Bishop George Lucey, FCM  
on Growth as a Mindset in the Pandemic**

11 September 2020

*In the name + of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!*

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

One of the consequences to parishes and church communities of the prolonged social distance requirement of this pandemic is the potential of losing a sense of belonging to those communities.

Last week at Mass there were several new people in attendance at St. Francis of Assisi. After Mass I went to welcome them and introduce our parish to them. Some were there from other Catholic parishes that were still not celebrating in-person liturgies, some were there because they had heard about us from being warned against us as “not being Catholic,” and one young gentleman introduced himself as a member of another Christian faith tradition.

He told me he heard we were “doing church” on the lawn and that he so missed his own experience on Sundays that he joined us. He shared he had two young sons and wanted them to join him the next time.

This experience has led me to want to reach out to all of our ANCC communities with a word of encouragement:

**Continue to be signs of hope in the midst of our local communities.  
Continue to “do church.”**

In our ANCC mission statement, we identify ourselves as “*a people who embrace [our] Gospel calling to transform the world, build God’s Kingdom, and make disciples of all people.*” During a time of pandemic, when lives are disrupted, spirits lowered, and anxiety is high, the saving message of Christ’s healing love is needed more than ever.

Our responsibility as followers of the Lord is, accordingly, even greater.

I thank our parishes and people for their efforts to adapt creatively to the new situation in which we find ourselves when it comes to corporate worship and parish life. Thoughtful and bold steps have already been taken.

Some of our parishes now celebrate safely distanced Masses outside. Others offer videotaped or live-streamed ones.

Some parishes also offer midweek virtual Masses, morning prayer, rosary devotions, Eucharistic Adoration, and social hours, all intended to spiritually sustain, comfort, and encourage their members during these troubled, disjointed times.

It's essential that we explore creative ways to continue offering the sacraments of baptism, marriage, anointing, and reconciliation and practicing the works of charity. We must also begin thinking about observing the Christmas season and, if necessary, Lent and Easter, in ways that are both safe and spiritually fulfilling. We must discover new ways to evangelize the unchurched and the fallen-away.

In a word, we need to think outside of the box in order to serve God and the people of God, and to share our experiments with one another.

As we continue to adjust to the new normal, I'm sure we'll discover, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, hopeful, grace-filled, and novel ways to continue, as our ANCC mission statement puts it, *"being the hands and voice of Christ in the world today."*

Sisters and brothers, I write this on the nineteenth anniversary of one of the most tragic days in American history: the terrorist attacks on the twin Trade Towers in Manhattan. I well remember, as I'm sure you do too, how the nation in general and churches in particular pulled together afterwards. We were traumatized, but we rolled up our sleeves to help one another in creative and generous ways.

I know that we will rise to the occasion in the current crisis as well. This is the time and place God has given us. It may not be what we wanted or expected, but it is ours. And with the help of the Lord and one another, we'll continue to find ways to adjust to it so that we may continue our calling to *"transform the world."*

God bless you all for your faith and dedication, and know that you're always in my prayers. In your goodness, pray for me as well.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "The Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM  
Presiding Bishop