

# The Associates World

Issue No. 60, April 2021  
A Monthly Newsletter for Paulist Associates

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## Evangelization Exchange

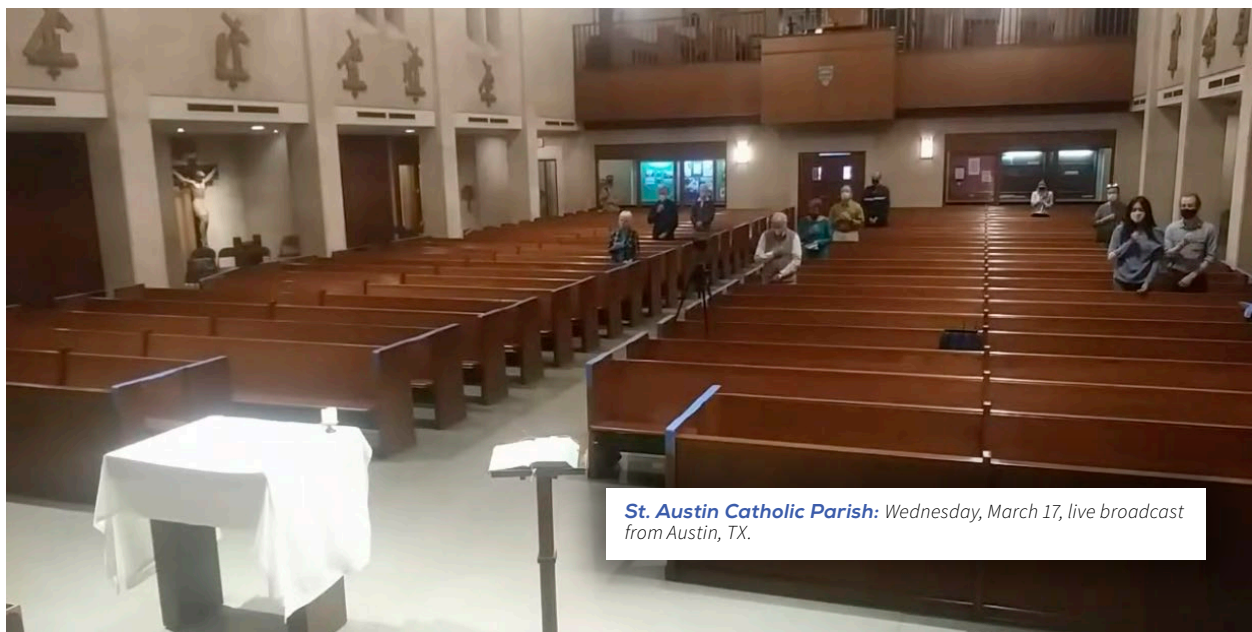
### ***'Presence' can return to a post-pandemic Church***

**By Frank DeSiano, CSP**

On Facebook, the noted catechist, Joe Poprocki, asked if there were things that we learned about parish and church during the pandemic. Great question!

Of course, this past very-long year has been a non-stop learning experience as we had to adjust to evolving patterns of infection and precautions. We opened doors to mostly-empty churches where a small percentage of our pre-Covid population would assemble, often without any of the music that has accompanied our Masses since 1965. Clergy and lay-ministers had to re-check the procedures to make sure everyone was on the same page and everyone felt safe.

But some other patterns emerged well. It's as if some nefarious force decided to make us part of a terrible thought experiment: Let's take away the very seams that tie Catholics together, from the Eucharist to faith formation, and see what is left.



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We had every right to feel like Job, the Old Testament figure who lost everything important to him, as the Satan tempts him: “Let’s see if he will give up faith now.” Job sits on the trash heap facing the deepest questions. We had to sit on the heap of endless fears and questions facing, in our day, our deepest questions.

Who was safe and who wasn’t? How can seemingly healthy people be the one’s spreading the virus most of all? When will we be able to see grandparents? Visit nursing homes? Gather for a family celebration? Who will be safe after

Thanksgiving, or Christmas, or New Years? What are the risks if I travel? Who will I infect? Who will infect me?

Most of us are more than ready to put this Job-like test to an end. We want to get on with life; but we also wonder if the life we knew will ever return. We want to turn the clock back 15 months, when we lived relatively care-free. Who can blame us?

But before we do that, I’d like to answer Joe Poprocki’s question with some observations of things we’ve learned during the pandemic — things that we should not forget as we think about parishes and Church in a world with diminishing covid exposure.

What are these things?

I think we learned some essential ways of presence because of the pandemic. We need to keep these up, not as alternatives to presence but as ways of augmenting presence. Not being able to gather or to see each other, Zoom, Cisco, Teams, and other Internet programs allowed us to experience other ways of contact. These modes of augmented and extended presence should not be forgotten.

First among these is livestreaming the Eucharist and other events. In spite of many quite legitimate questions about worship-at-a-distance, livestreaming made some level of faith experience accessible to many. Not only were a large percentage of the “faithful regulars” about to see their familiar sanctuaries and be fed by familiar ministers. Significantly, also many who do not usually walk up to a church door on Sunday (or otherwise) were able to experience this experimental version of Catholic liturgy.

In a world more likely to depend on virtual interaction and presence in the future, we should not scorn the millions who peeked into church experience electronically during this past year. This showed that many folks still maintain some connection and also that parishes wanted to reach



*Fr. Joe Ciccone, CSP gives online Mass at St. Patrick's Catholic American Parish in Rome, Tuesday in the Fifth Week of Lent, March 23, 2021.*



*Fr. Ivan Tou, CSP distributing the Eucharist during the livestream of the 12:10 pm Mass for Tuesday celebration of the Fifth Week in Lent on March 23, 2021, at UC Berkeley Newman Hall - Holy Spirit Parish.*

out. No one will argue that spiritual communion surpasses the experience of eating the food Jesus consecrates for us; but, in the end, spiritual communion is better than nothing.

Secondly, we saw activity among parents with their children being explicitly recognized and incorporated into our faith formation efforts. All these years we have been wringing our hands wondering how to get parents involved. This pandemic meant that this question could no longer be theoretical.

Parents had to be involved (just as they were for the rest of their children’s virtual education) through virtual classes, home activities, and various assignments. This welcome direction needs to be increased. Faith formation must primarily be in our homes. This is the only way younger generations will come to see faith as something part of everyday life rather than an added set of classes they are forced to take until they “graduate.” Catechetical publishers often stepped up to the plate, providing formats for this home-based learning.

Third, we saw lay people take initiatives in prayer, witness, and leadership. The whole vision of Vatican II of a church of people baptized into Christ and empowered by the Spirit — as vision that still battles with the pre-Vatican II default of going to church and getting what we need from “Father” or “Sister” — now had to show its mettle. People had to pray at home, form virtual prayer or faith-sharing groups, and exercise their faith in their everyday lives.

Parishes must further this as much as possible. Parishes must re-emphasize the “communio” vision of church in which all of us, with our different callings and gifts, have a role in building up the Body of Christ, in serving the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. Unless Catholic laity move beyond a generally passive role of “going to church” and into a more active role of “being church,” we will not grow beyond the institutional images that unfortunately serve more as straightjackets than cocoons.

Fourth, we saw parish renewals happen virtually or over livestream. This kind of initiative, coupled with “small group” or “breakout rooms,” can increase a broad sense of involvement in discipleship. Now we know that parish retreats and missions can, in addition to taking place in churches, also happen for people on their laptops or cellphones.

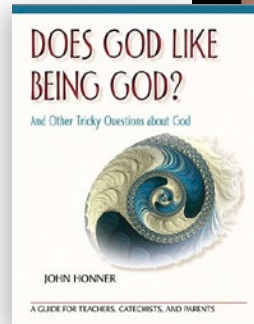
This means that extraordinary renewal efforts can be afforded parishioners (think of seniors or homebound people who find it hard to do things at night or even get out of house) but, even more, parishioners can send links to non-parishioners

**EVANGELIZATION**  
IN THE NEW DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS

A FREE webinar w/Fr. Frank DeSiano, CSP

October 8th 2PM

**Catechetical materials** made home-based learning possible during the pandemic.



## Crisis Spirituality



**St. Paul of the Shipwreck**  
**Fr. Frank Desiderio, C.S.P.**

Lenten Retreat “Crisis Spirituality:” St. Paul of the Shipwreck, Pray for Us.

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or Catholics who are very active in their faith. Voila — a greater chance for evangelization and mission for parishes today!

Fifth, parishes need to consciously point out elements of discipleship (encounter, prayer, Scripture, Sacrament, service and community) and use these as the points of growth for future Catholic life. Parishes need to invite Catholics to appropriate the personal and communal dynamics of discipleship which will be the framework that tomorrow’s Church will need to survive, to grow, and to thrive. It’s no longer “I’m a parishioner so I go to church,” but “I’m a Catholic disciple who has made relationship to Jesus and his people in the Spirit essential to my self-understanding.”

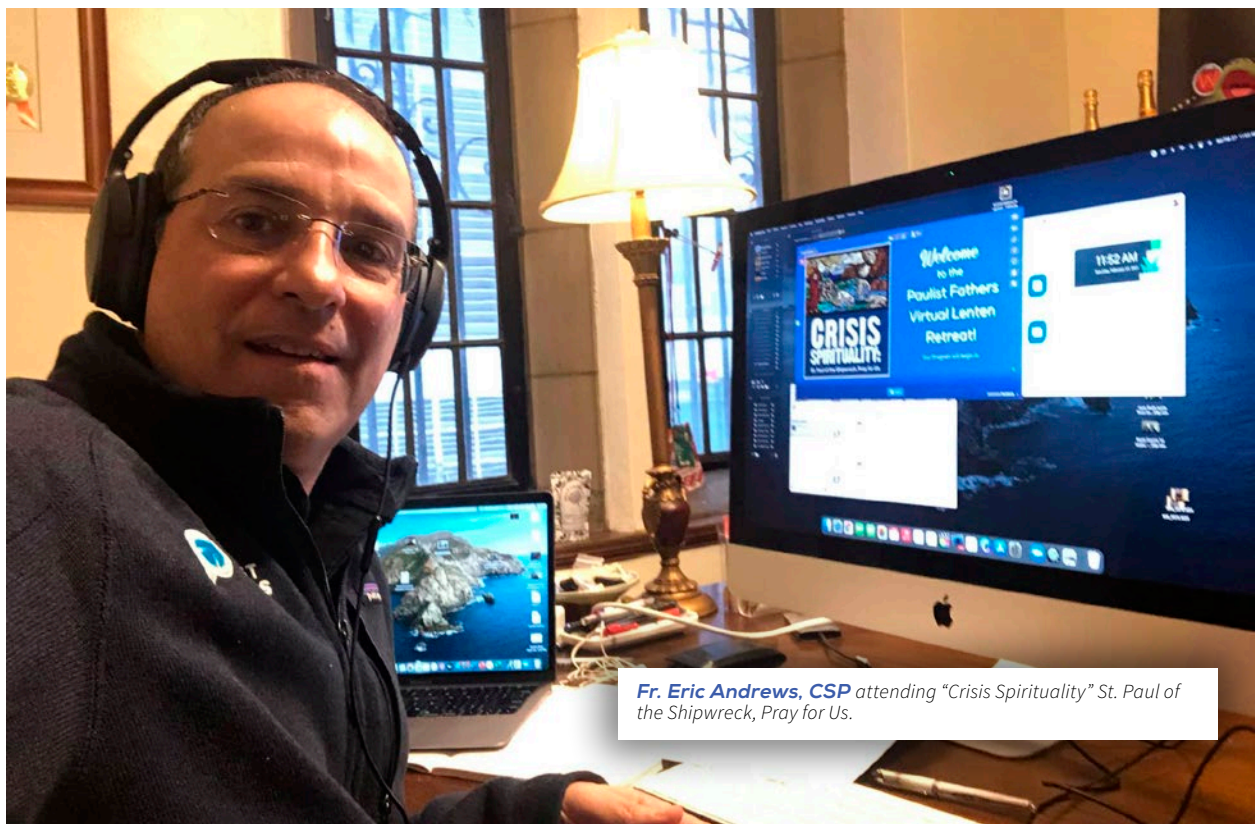


*Glimpses from Ash Wednesday at St. Thomas More Newman Center in Columbus, OH:*

The term “new evangelization” has had quite a roller-coaster history since it began to be used in 1983. But, certainly, it now is clear that “new evangelization” means a conscious living as Catholic disciples, moving well beyond the exterior markers of identity to an interior-and-exterior appropriate of faith as a vibrant way of life. The dynamics of conversion and personal commitment, implicit in just about everything Catholics do as part of their faith, now must be explicitly underlined and emphasized. Modern life has made “automatic Church” more and more impossible. Only a sense of discipleship, appropriated in a personal way, can begin to bring what modernity can easily take away.

Many thanks to people who have raised questions about the effects of this pandemic. Their questions have given us much to ponder and preserve. 🌐

*Frank DeSiano, CSP has been President of Paulist Evangelization Ministries since 2009.*



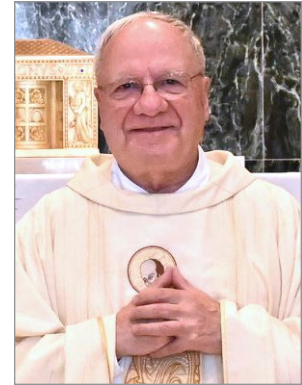
*Fr. Eric Andrews, CSP attending “Crisis Spirituality” St. Paul of the Shipwreck, Pray for Us.*

## Programs open a path for inactive Catholics

By Frank DeSiano, CSP

A classic program that Fr. Jac Campbell developed (in Seattle, but he spent years in Boston) is called Landings International (<https://landingsintl.org/>) with a strong emphasis on the different stories that Inactive Catholics have to tell about their personal lives, along with support from the group and personal witness to the elements of our faith. (There are about ten sessions in this approach.) A more recent program that Paulist Evangelization Ministries developed is called Awakening Faith.

Its emphasis is group sharing as a means of helping people feel included in the Church once again (<https://www.pemdc.org/programs/awakening-faith/>). This approach involves six basic sharing sessions.



Fr. Frank DeSiano, CSP



There are several underlying truths to this ministry today. The term “Inactive Catholic” has a very strong range of possible meanings, all the way from folks who do not attend Mass every Sunday to people who are called “nones” (which means they choose “none of the above” when asked about religious preference). Nevertheless, whatever term people use or accept as a description, the experience of faith is quite varied today. In younger generations, not many think of themselves as “away from the church” or “alienated from the Church.” So the “audience” is fluid both in terms of definition and in terms of behaviors.

My own sense is that people raised before 1960 experience a different kind of disruption when they “leave” the Church because the social and emotional connections were so reinforced and centered around parish-and-school life back then. More recently, young people grow up with a very different sense of connection to the Church (and to many institutions, for that matter), so the sense of disruption tends to be lower. In some ways, reaching out to Inactive Catholics can



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actually blur with ministry to Young Adults. Certainly, a strong motivator for mission today is the desire to reach out to one's own generation, with younger Catholics trying to connect with other less-than-active Catholics.

The pandemic has meant that believers have learned to do many things online. Both these Paulist programs can be done virtually although, obviously, in-person presence would be pastorally far superior. After all, the only way to overcome distance is by proximity. These programs can be done (perhaps better, even!) by lay persons and they have support for people who want to be group leaders.



Paulist Associates, because of their personal commitment to the vision of Isaac Hecker, can think about these approaches — or maybe develop a new one — because, as Fr. Jac Campbell used to say, there are so many fish swimming in the “Inactive Catholic Waters,” just about any technique is bound to catch someone!

As restrictions begin to be relaxed, parishes might well have the feeling that “we have to start all over again.” Of course, one never totally starts “all over” again, but parishes face an opportunity that does not come all that often. The pandemic has meant

that we have to invite and engage people who have been more distant from the parish over these last 12-13 months. Not only does this involve our mostly-active parishioners (often the oldest parishioners in our congregations) but also many less-than-totally active parishioners.

*NEIGHBORS REACHING NEIGHBORS* is a resource that can open the imaginations of parish staffs and councils as they think of inviting and engaging people once again. The basic kit (<https://www.pemdc.org/programs/neighbors-reaching-neighbors-2/>) provides a range of samples of invitation materials that parishes can customize and use to reach others. From post-cards to letters, from brochures and booklets, including a DVD with video resources for sharing faith, parishes can begin to imagine concrete approaches to inviting and engaging others.



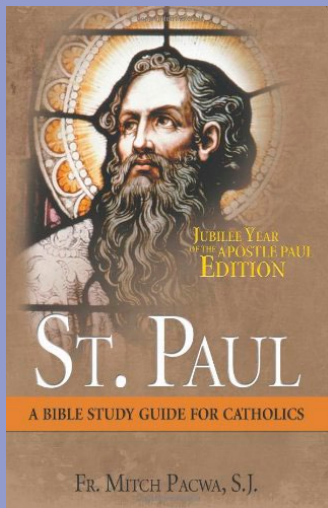
Our parishes are made up of neighbors. It is these neighbors who can help reach other neighbors for the sharing and celebrating of faith. 🌐

*Chris Malano, CSP: Paulist student*



## St. Paul – Steward of the Mysteries – A Bible Study Guide For Catholics *Our Sunday Visitor Publications, 2008*

Reverend Pacwa, S.J. takes a different approach in the study of St. Paul. Rather than a traditional examination of the life of St. Paul, he explores St. Paul and his teaching on the Sacraments. The title describes the book as “A Bible Study Guide for Catholics”. This is not an accurate title; it is a journey through St. Paul’s mind and theology on the Sacraments. Definitely a different, but meaningful approach.



The book is 95 pages in length and encompasses six sessions. It is recommended for a study group but can easily benefit individuals desiring to know St. Paul on a Sacramental level.

He opens the book with a brief description of the life of St. Paul. Afterward, he systematically addresses Paul’s takes on Baptism, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Eucharist, Holy Orders and Matrimony. With each chapter on the respective Sacrament, select quotes from St. Paul are used as well as scriptural references. The structure of a Bible Study is used with a format of: “consider, investigate, discuss and practice” — immersing the reader in a deeper understanding of St. Paul’s teaching leading to how it can be lived.

The book is available through online booksellers.

Reverend Mitchell Pacwa, S.J. is an American Jesuit priest. He is Senior Fellow of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology and President and Founder of Ignatius Productions, a Catholic media production apostolate. Author of several books and articles, he has appeared regularly in Catholic media. 🌐

*Charles B. Jones, Jr. is a Paulist Associate in Knoxville, Tennessee*



*Charles B. Jones*



## ***Tell us about your life as an Associate.***

An article in this issue referred to this quote from the Paulist Associates Handbook:

“Paulist Associates find opportunities in their daily lives, through their various vocations, to exemplify the mission commitments of the Paulists in the charism of Fr. Isaac Hecker. His charism specified that, in modern American/Canadian culture, the Holy Spirit was at work, making it conducive to invite people to faith, and helping the Church understand its role in modern, democratic societies. His charism was marked by openness to others and a particular welcome to outsiders.”

In the months ahead, we’d like to ask you to share ways in which you live that model in your daily lives, in your families, in your parishes or schools...any way that you bring the Paulist charism to the wider world.

Submissions of any length are welcome. And pictures are a great addition.

Email them to Denis Hurley at [dhpc18@gmail.com](mailto:dhpc18@gmail.com) — Thank you. 🌐

**– Denis Hurley, Editor.**

## Paulist Associate News

### Introducing a New Series of Monthly Programs

The presentations of our monthly programs on our 15 Paulist Patrons were well done. My sense was they were also well received by you all of you and formed the basis of many of your monthly meetings. Also, it was good to have 10 of our 14 associate groups take one of the patrons for the month. In fact, Los Angeles, and Tucson each did two.

Well now it is time for another series. Some have suggested we return to focusing on Hecker's thought and spirituality in his own words and reflect on their relevance for us today. What better way to do that than taking them from *The Paulist Vocation* which really is a collection of Hecker's many writings.

Most of you should have *The Paulist Vocation*. If you do not, it will be difficult to send it to you with our General Offices staff in New York still restricted in coming to work due to the pandemic. But Ellie Murphy our Newsletter Design Coordinator has set up for your convenience a link to *The Paulist Vocation* that you can view or better yet download as a pdf on your devices. The link is: <https://paulist.org/the-conversation/a-175th-anniversary/>

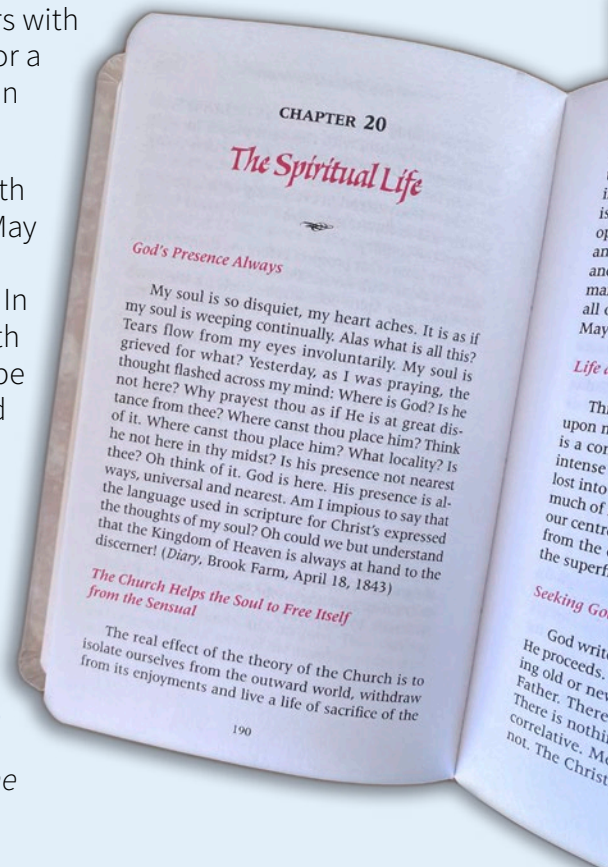
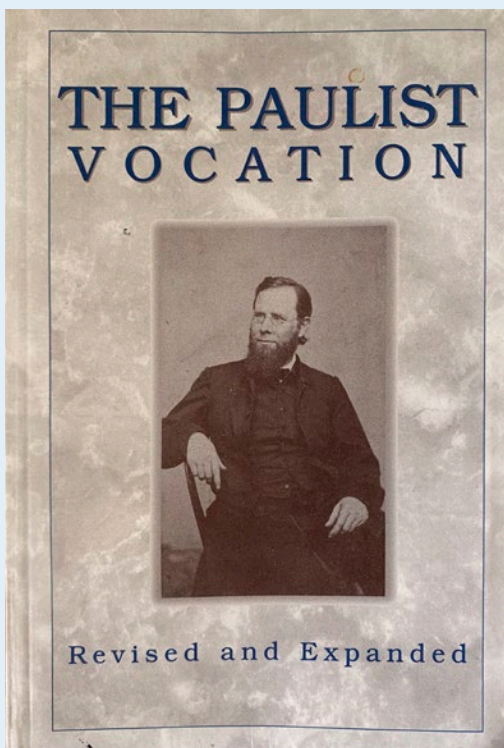
*The Paulist Vocation* is broken up nicely into over twenty chapters with each area and section a few pages or just a paragraph or two. For a monthly program, I suggest your group, or those so designated in your group, pick a selection that is meaningful to you.

As an example, note what I did with this April Issue. I will also do the May program to give everyone time to think about what I am proposing. In the May issue, after discussion with the Board and Coordinators, I hope to put forth a schedule like we did with the patrons.

I think the next series of monthly programs can be one in which we grow and are enriched by the thought and spirituality of Servant of God Isaac Hecker! 🌍

– by Mike Kallock, CSP

Mike Kallock is Director of the Paulist Associates.





## Proposed Program for April:

## *Hecker's Early Search and Struggles of Faith*

Submitted by Mike Kallock, CSP

### Opening Prayer:

God of Glory, through the power of the Holy Spirit we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ who raises us up to share in your divine life.

May the Spirit guide all we do and bring us joyfully to praise you among all people. You are one God, living and true, for ever and ever.

Amen.

(Opening Prayer from weekdays of the Easter Season, **Paulist Prayer Book**.)

### Selection from Father Hecker:

#### **God's Presence Always**

My soul is so disquiet, my heart aches. It is as if my soul is weeping continually. Alas what is all this? Tears flow from my eyes involuntarily. My soul is grieved for what? Yesterday, as I was praying, the thought flashed across my mind: Where is God? Is he not here? Why prayest thou as if He is at great distance from thee? Where canst thou place him? Think of it. Where canst thou place him? What locality? Is he not here in thy midst? Is his presence not nearest thee? Oh think of it. God is here. His presence is always, universal and nearest. Am I impious to say that the language used in scripture for Christ's expressed the thoughts of my soul? Oh could we but understand that the Kingdom of Heaven is always at hand to the discerner!

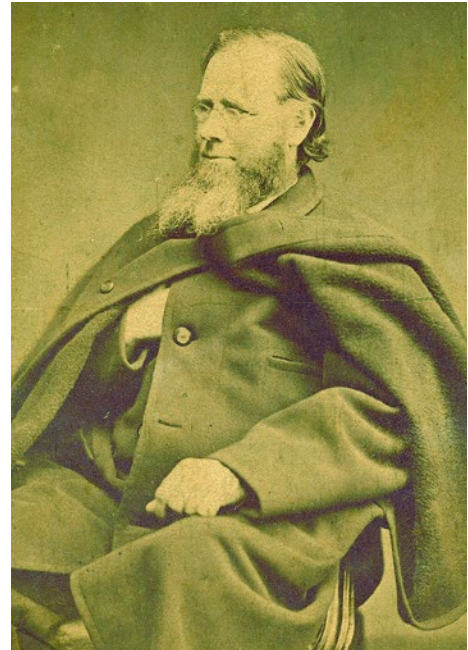
(Diary, Brook Farm, April 18, 1843)

### Background:

The selection is taken as is from *The Paulist Vocation*, the first selection of Chapter 20: **The Spiritual Life**, titled **God's Presence Always**. As noted above, it is from Hecker's Dairy.

Hecker would have been only twenty-four at the time of this dairy entry written while he was at Brook Farm (note the photo of him taken

**Brook Farm:** This is an image of a place or building that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the United States of America. Its reference number is [66000141](#).



Hecker in 1887.



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at about that time). Hecker stayed seven months at Brook Farm from January 10 to August 13, 1843. During that time, he went for three weeks in July to Fruitlands, and on route back to Brook Farm, he would stop for a brief visit to the Shaker community in Harvard.

You may recall Hecker went to Brook Farm to search among the leading New England “Transcendentalists” the answers to the deep questions of his life, his purpose, his calling, how he fit into God’s creation.

Hecker wrote the selection above into his Diary in his fourth month at Brook Farm. It captures a moment when the young Isaac seems to waver in his belief in God’s presence in his life, yet he encourages himself to trust that God is ever with him. He writes, “*Oh could we but understand that the Kingdom of Heaven is always at hand to the discerner!*” 🌍

## Discussion Questions to Share in Your Group:

1. Describe your faith at twenty-four? Where you settled, rooted in your faith, or where you unsettled, searching?
2. How would you describe your entire faith journey? Has it been smooth, gradual? Have there been sudden, dramatic changes? Have there been crisis of faith?
3. Has your faith changed and grown in any ways since you became a Paulist Associate? Describe?



**Servant of God Isaac Hecker:** Founder of the Paulist Fathers as a young man.

## News/Announcements/Prayers for Others:

### Closing Prayer:

Gracious God, you have sent Jesus Christ to save us from sin and death.

You gave us your Holy Spirit to sanctify and guide our lives.

May all we do give you glory.

We pray this through the power of our risen savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, true God for ever and ever.

Amen.

(Closing Prayer from weekdays of the Easter Season, *Paulist Prayer Book*.)

# PAULIST ASSOCIATES

## Contacts

### PAULIST ASSOCIATES WEB SITE

<http://www.paulist.org/associates/paulist-associates>

### FIND US ON FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/paulistassociates/>

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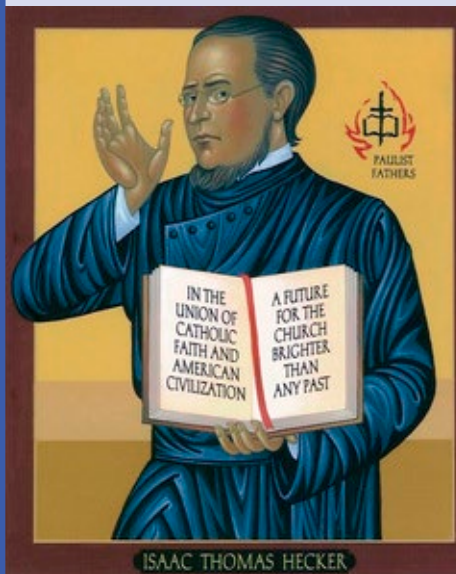
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**Editor: Denis M. Hurley**

**Design Coordinator: Ellie Murphy**

## PRAYER FOR THE INTERCESSION OF FATHER ISAAC T. HECKER, SERVANT OF GOD

Heavenly Father, you called your servant Isaac Thomas Hecker to preach the Gospel to the people of North America and through his teaching, to know the peace and the power of your indwelling Spirit. He walked in the footsteps of Saint Paul the Apostle, and like Paul spoke your Word with a zeal for souls and a burning love for all who came to him in need.



ISAAC THOMAS HECKER

Look upon us this day, with compassion and hope. Hear our prayer. We ask that through the intercession of Father Hecker your servant, you might grant us (state the request).

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit. One God, forever and ever. Amen.

When you pray this prayer, and if you believe that you have received any favors through Hecker's intercession, please contact the Office of the Cause for Canonization of Servant of God, Isaac Hecker at [heckercause@paulist.org](mailto:heckercause@paulist.org). Visit the web site: <http://www.isaachecker.org/> to learn more about his life and the cause for his canonization.

## PAULIST ASSOCIATES PROMISE

*I believe that I am drawn by the Holy Spirit to the spirituality and qualities of the Paulist Community.*

*I have discerned both by prayer and study that God calls me to become associated with the Paulists.*

*I promise that I will pray for the works of the Paulist Society, meet with others, who are also members of the Paulist Associates, for spiritual sharing and formation; and I seek to embody the apostolic qualities of the Paulists in my daily life.*

*Attentive to the Holy Spirit and faithful to the example of St. Paul and the charism of Father Isaac Hecker, I commit myself for one year of membership in the Paulist Associates.*