

## **Home-Delivered Gift Bag Ministry**

During the pandemic, Immaculate Parish sought creative ways to stay connected with youth, families, and the homebound when in-person gatherings were suspended. In late 2020, Fr. John Vaughan and parish staff launched a ministry of home-delivered, inter-generational gift bags—an initiative lovingly referred to as “non-musical Christmas caroling.”

The first effort took place during Advent, reaching 20 youth group families (about 100 parishioners) and 10 homebound households. Its success led to seasonal deliveries at Valentine’s Day and Lent. Each round of deliveries grew in participation:

- **Valentine’s Day:** 30 families (150 parishioners) plus 20–30 homebound parishioners.
- **Lent:** 40 families (200 parishioners) plus 50 homebound parishioners.

Gift bags included missalettes, devotionals, sacramentals, parish event flyers, and home-based catechetical materials. They became a practical and heartfelt way to deliver both resources and encouragement. Children greeted the visits with excitement, teens expressed gratitude through texts and emails, and homebound parishioners and their families flooded the parish with calls, messages, and Facebook posts of thanks.

This ministry not only provided parishioners with helpful tools for prayer and faith formation but also fostered connection, joy, and a tangible sense of Christ’s presence during a time of separation.

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## **How to Implement a Home-Delivered Gift Bag Ministry**

### **1. Choose the Occasion**

Select seasons or feast days (Advent, Valentine’s Day, Lent, Easter, etc.) as natural opportunities to connect with families and the homebound.

### **2. Gather Materials**

Include items such as:

- Prayer aids (missalettes, devotionals, sacramentals)
- Catechetical materials or parish event flyers
- Simple seasonal treats or small gifts
- Donation boxes or service opportunities (e.g., Haiti mission support)

### **3. Recruit Volunteers**

Invite staff, parish leaders, and volunteers to assemble and deliver bags. Involve intergenerational helpers where possible (youth, families, parish organizations).

### **4. Invite Participation**

Offer parishioners a sign-up form for families who wish to receive gift bags. Identify homebound parishioners through the parish office or ministries of care.

### **5. Prepare & Personalize**

Decorate bags, label them by family or recipient, and include handwritten notes or prayers.

## **6. Deliver with Care**

Drop off bags at parishioners' homes—either handing them over outdoors or leaving them on the porch. Make visit in pairs (e.g., pastor and a parish leader, or parish staff and volunteers).

## **7. Follow Up**

Encourage feedback and stories. Celebrate the ministry by sharing gratitude notes, photos, or reflections in parish communications.

## **Impact:**

Strengthens parish connections, supports families and the homebound with spiritual resources, and spreads joy and encouragement across generations.