

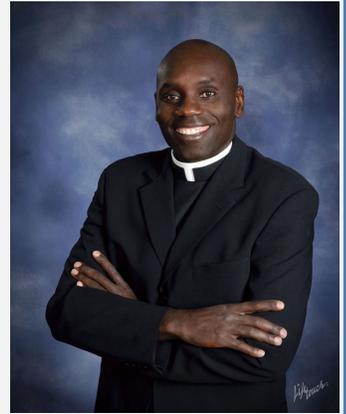
Father George was recognized as a villager of the year!!

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Rev. George O. Omwando

Keeping the parish running with short staff -

While helping others in need during the pandemic, Rev. George Omwando has almost single-handedly kept St. Catherine of Siena-St. Lucy Parish running during 2020.

The already small staff was reduced last year, after a staff member died, a musician departed, and Omwando's associate pastor retired. With parishes consolidating, he feared if he hired replacements, they might end up losing their jobs. "It is not right to hire a person if in one year he could lose his job," said Omwando.

In addition to taking on the responsibilities handled by staff, he has been navigating guidelines, streaming services online and working with banks to secure loans. He's been counseling overwhelmed parishioners, who have reached out more frequently than before the pandemic.

And he still finds time to help neighbors, allowing people to use the church's address to have food delivered when their own homes are outside a restaurant's delivery area.

"As long as they tell me in advance. Otherwise, if they deliver the food and I'm hungry, I'm going to eat it," Omwando said with a smile.

He has dipped into the rectory's food supply to feed hungry neighbors in Austin. However, he had to make some difficult decisions in the name of safety, such as limiting the number of people who can attend funerals, which he finds not easy to do.

"I've made a lot of decisions that were not popular, but in the long run, these decisions are good."

—*Stacey Sheridan*