

**SAINT BERNADETTE
5930 S. ABBOTT RD. OP, NY 14127
716. 649-3090 SAINTBOPNY.ORG**

11 June, 2020

Dear Parish Family,

On behalf of Fr. Bob, Sister Rosemary and our ministerial and support staff, I want to thank you for your patience, prayers and support during this very trying time. To be hit with the COVID-19 pandemic on the one hand and to see the division in so many communities across our country—and here in Western NY-- has confronted us with questions at every level.

Last week I met with a representative group of parish leaders and staff in order to talk about the logistics of reopening the Church when we are allowed to do so by Church and Civic authorities. The last thing I would want is to put any of you at risk of getting this virus. I, along with Father Bob, have visited dozens of COVID-19 patients and seen the devastation it brings, even for those who eventually recover from the illness.

In the meantime, things have moved very quickly and Governor Cuomo announced last Saturday (June 6) that "Houses of Worship" could re-open at 25% capacity. Having expected this news much later, the timetable here at Saint Bernadette had to be speeded up.

Over the past month, we have researched dozens of ways to safely prepare the church and facilities for use again. After numerous consultations, I have purchased UVC lights for the main body of the Church and a non-irritating spray disinfectant for other areas. The considerable expense for this will be borne by the URGENT NEEDS FUND and your donations. I want to thank Fr. Bob, Dave Clarkson, Marty Ballowe, Lou Pacifico and Ed Kilgore for their assistance and advice.

Much of the reopening will depend on you. Volunteers will be needed to help clean and disinfect the Church, not just one time but several times during the week. This is one of the keys to our reopening. Volunteers should be in good health, able to move about 20 pounds (the weight of the lamps on casters) and be reliable. They should also be under age 65 and not have underlying conditions for COVID-19. We will need teams of volunteers to take several shifts to disinfect the Church. The lights will force the complete closure of the Church for up to 1 hour each time they are used.

In addition to the guidelines which have been provided by the Diocese of Buffalo, we have also come up with some additional innovations to get us started:

When we open, the Mass Schedule will be as follows:

SATURDAY: 5:00pm (Church)

SUNDAY: 2 Masses at 8:30am (Church and Gym)

2 Masses at 11:00am (Church and Gym)

1 Mass at 8:05pm (Church or Gym, TBD)

After the control/elimination of the Coronavirus, ***we will reevaluate the Mass schedule.***

All youth and adults will be required to wear a mask. You are asked to provide your own mask; however, some will be available for those who may forget them. **Hand Sanitizer** will be available although you may wish to bring your own as well. Social Distancing will be in effect. Members of the same household may sit together. You will be required to take the general sanitary precautions as have been outlined publicly for the past few months.

Your cooperation and patience will help all of us to move towards our common goal: To receive the Holy Eucharist. For the time being, **Holy Communion will only be received in the hand.**

We have been open for private prayer throughout the pandemic, and we have been present on Facebook Live and other social platforms which will continue for those unable to attend Mass. The Eucharistic Adoration Chapel will be returned to its usual place this weekend.

We've conducted small Funerals, Baptisms, Penance and Anointing of the Sick (and next week there will even be a Marriage).

Ultimately the ability of the larger Church to gather for the Eucharist is a healing antidote to many ills of a community. While attempts to turn a person toward selfishness and hate -- away from goodness of God and solidarity with our brothers and sisters-- the Eucharist is the ultimate antidote.

Sincere thanks for your spiritual support, many notes and other communications, as well as your financial support in these difficult times. The assistance given by our Food Pantry/Parish Neighbors is increasing every week. If you need food or other material support, don't hesitate to call our office at (716) 649-3090.

May we be reunited as a Church soon,

Pax Christi,

fr. bob