

St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church
St. Catharines, Ontario

31 Chestnut Street East
St. Catharines, Ontario L2T 1G8

June 10, 2020

Dear fellow Parishioners:

It is with great joy and hope that I write to you. Both the provincial government of Ontario, and our Bishop Bergie, have concluded that we can approach the opening of our church for regular life again. This is wonderful news, and comes with directions in matters of safety and good worship.

Many factors are at work in determining upon which date the opening can take place. In the end it is up to the parish priest / pastor to set the date, once all the required safety efforts are in place.

I have decided that it will be possible to open up our parish on Saturday, June 20 for 4:00 pm. From that moment on we will have our normal schedule of weekend and weekday Masses.

This opening has guidelines that must be strictly followed, but I believe that none of them are unreasonable. The opening up of our church does not mean that the Covid-19 situation is over, but that we can move toward a more active worship of God with each other.

I look forward to a return to “normalcy” in our parish.

These thoughts are not mine alone. Bishop Bergie has issued a letter to all of us in the Diocese of St. Catharines, and I have included it on our parish website.

On a very personal note, thank you for the prayers and best wishes I have received since my stroke of March 18. I have recovered from most of the difficulties within my body – my right leg needs strengthening, writing my signature has not fully returned, and I still need caution when using my right hand. But compared to where I was in those immediate days after the stroke, I have much improved. I hope you will see that for yourselves.

We remember in faith that Jesus opens many doors for us. As we embark on this revised journey, let us be firm in our trust in him. May God bless us all.

Father Brian Bevan,
Parish Priest.

WHEN OUR CHURCH REOPENS ON JUNE 20:

- For those planning to attend Mass, please take appropriate precautions including not having a fever before leaving home, ensuring proper hygiene (hand washing), and being aware of the COVID-19 symptoms.
- It is suggested that *all* persons over the age of three wear a mask during Mass. They would only be removed, and then put back on, at Communion time. *This parish will not be issuing masks.* Both Father Brian and Deacon Frank will wear a mask before and after Mass.
- We will use only the east side church entrance for entry and exit. The south east door (grey doors) and the east (ramp) door only. The front doors (Chestnut Street) will remain locked. However in an emergency, exit from any door is permitted by law.
- When coming to church, expect to be welcomed at the church doors, and to be escorted into the church. Seating will be in every third pew. I know that sometimes people have “favorite places” but in this present time that cannot be promised.
- Social distancing of moving and sitting within 2 metres of people we are not related to / did not travel in the same vehicle with, is not allowed,
- Hand sanitizer will be available at the entry into the church.

- Directional signage will be posted on the doors and the floors.

- A box will sit on the table near the entrance, where collection / donation envelopes are to be placed. There will be no collection, as we usually have, at this time. Simply drop your donation into the box before you go to your seating place. This box will be brought to the altar before the Collect (Opening Prayer).

- All items that be could shared with others, or could be touched and left, will be removed. That includes all Sunday Missals, newspapers, and flyers.

- There will be no bulletin at this time. Bishop Bergie will tell us when we can start issuing them again. Information about Mass times will be posted at the church entrance.

- There will be no shared singing for the present time. The musicians, Nicole and Katryna, will use their instruments and voices without accompaniment. Therefore, the song books have been removed for now.

- The announcements, scripture readings and distribution of Holy Communion will happen through Father Brian and Deacon Frank. For the time being, no ministry of Commentator or Reader or Minister of Communion will be exercised. This is a safety effort – the less people that touch the items used most directly in the celebration of Mass the better.

- There will be no processions. Father Brian and Deacon Frank will enter the sanctuary at the start of Mass from the sacristy. The gifts of bread and wine will already be on the credence table. As already said, the collection will be brought to the altar before the Collect (Opening Prayer) without fanfare. At the end of Mass both Father Brian and Deacon Frank will remain in the sanctuary in case someone needs to speak with them.

- There will be no sign of peace.

- At Communion time, Father Brian will give instructions about the very different process that will be used. Deacon Frank will give Communion in the east wing, while Father Brian will give Communion in the main section. Communicants and those seeking a blessing, will be invited to come forward, in a single line, first from the right sided pews facing the altar, and then from the left sided pews facing the altar.

Those coming for Communion will approach Father Brian or Deacon Frank, stopping and waiting at the place where the front pew meets the aisle. At that point they will remove their mask. The words *the Body of Christ* will be spoken to them and they will reply *Amen*. They will then approach to receive Holy Communion. After receiving Communion they will put their mask back on, returning to their pew.

- After the final blessing and dismissal, using social distancing, everyone at Mass will leave the church through the east wing doorway.

- Hopefully after Mass everyone will make the effort to distance themselves from others.

- There will be no fans used in the church for the present time. Windows will be open as weather permits.

- Anyone who develops Covid-19 symptoms after being at Mass is asked to notify the church office as well as your doctor and public health office.

- Washrooms will be cleaned and sanitized after each Mass.