

St. Catherine Laboure and St. Colman Church

P.O. Box 271
200 Tuytenbridge Rd.
Lake Katrine, New York 12449-0271

Lake Katrine, April 1, 2020

*The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
Because the LORD has anointed me;
He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
release to the prisoners, Iz 61.1*

During this time of crisis, it is more important than ever that we remember the importance of hope. Recently, our daily lives have been altered in various ways due to COVID-19. For us Catholics, not being able to attend Mass at our parish church is truly a loss. We are united as a community when we celebrate our liturgies together around the altar. But, we need to be even closer right now in spite of our physical distance. It is important to remember that we are spiritually close through our connection as one parish family, one church, one nation. Jesus promised us that *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* Mt 18.20

Our church building is closed, however, our Catholic Church is open – because it is always open inside our hearts, in our longing for God and his mercy. We could say that this is the first time we experience this type of situation, but it really isn't if we think about those who preceded us in our pilgrimage of faith. Think of our brothers and sisters, who in the past and even now could not practice freely their faith. Those in the Soviet Union, who were without Eucharist, and the other sacraments for years. Their faith and hope kept them spiritually alive and helped them share it with those around them.

Since March 14th our personal lives, our parish lives have changed drastically. The Archdiocese of New York decided to cancel all public gatherings in the churches. For some people it was a very drastic move but Cardinal Dolan wanted to follow the recent New York State rules, as well as protecting all of us from being exposed and worse, being infected by the virus. We know, that the best way to treat any illness, created by bacteria or viruses is medication, which we don't have for the coronavirus yet. However, from the human history we know, that the best way to stop an infection is to eliminate any way that the virus can be spread; or at least to slow it down. We need to take some steps to achieve our goal.

The amount of information that comes to us not only every day but also almost every hour is incredible. For that reason I decided to share with you a summary of the recommendations from the office of the Archdiocese of New York, which we must follow, with my comments related to our parish situation [...]. Since we can't meet each other at church, I have decided to be in touch with you in a different way. The last few days I have been speaking with parishioners on the phone. And, my goal is to be in touch with all parishioners before Easter. I was able to connect with members of our parish family whose names start with “A – F” so far. It seems that everyone is in good spirits, and looking forward to the day that we will be all together again in our church.

From the office of the Archdiocese of New York:

1. All public Masses are canceled beginning Saturday, March 14th at 4:00 PM, until further notice. This includes Sunday Masses as well as weekdays. Houses of worship are not ordered closed; however, it is strongly recommended that no congregate services be held and social distance be maintained.

Holy Communion may be administered as viaticum only. The minister of communion must observe the safety protocols dictated by the civil authorities for the prevention of the spread of infection.

[*At this moment, only the church of St. Catherine Laboure is open daily for private prayers from 11am-2pm, and Sunday from 8am-11am. When you visit the church, please use the door next to the prayer garden, wash your hands when entering the church as well as when you leave (the bathrooms are next to the entrance). For your private prayers please bring your own prayer books!!! The other option is our Prayer Garden, where you can pray outside (folding chairs may be very helpful). I have seen quite often people praying in their cars in the parking lot.

Every day I offer my private daily Masses for the people of St. Catherine Laboure and St. Colman. All scheduled Masses will be said privately. If you would like to reschedule a Mass, please call the rectory at 382-1133. If you want to schedule a new Mass please leave all information (intention, requested by and telephone number) in the envelop in the basket in the middle of the church, you can also call the rectory or send an email to parish383ny@gmail.com.

Many parishes have been having their Masses live stream on Facebook. I considered this possibility for our church; however, many parishioners do not use social media in addition to the fact that the quality of the recording is not so great. I think that for the time being, it is more advisable to participate in the Eucharist via TV from places, which have better recording equipment and more experience.]

The obligation to keep the Lord's day holy can be fulfilled by maintaining a prayerful attitude and through personal and family prayer. The faithful are urged to watch the celebration of the Eucharist on TV as well.

Mass will be celebrated in St. Patrick's Cathedral, and will be available on many cable systems via the Catholic Faith Network and its website at www.catholicfaithnetwork.org, livestreamed on the St. Patrick's Cathedral website at www.saintpatrickscathedral.org/live and broadcasted on radio on The Catholic Channel of Sirius XM (Channel 129). Also, in addition to the live stream from the St. Patrick's Cathedral website, and the broadcasts on Catholic Faith Network and Sirius XM 129, Mass for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday will also be aired on WPIX, channel 11. On both of these Sundays, we will begin at 10:00 AM and not 10:15.

[*This is a challenging time since we can't practice our faith publicly as a community. We are not able to be in our pews at our church on Saturdays and Sundays. Perhaps it would be a good idea to have your own altar set up at home, and pray with your family members at the hour we usually pray when we are together during our Masses. We can keep our schedule and be spiritually connected strengthening our faith as a church community.]

During situations such the one we are facing right now, the Church encourages us to make an act of "spiritual communion," where we unite ourselves to God through prayer. It is a beautiful way to express to God our desire to be united with him when we are unable to complete that union in the reception of Holy Communion. Below is a traditional prayer of spiritual communion that many saints have prayed over the years. The ultimate goal of our lives should be communion with God and an act of spiritual communion can help a person draw closer to that goal.

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Blessed Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire You in my soul.

Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

As though You were already there, I embrace You and unite myself wholly to You;
permit not that I should ever be separated from You. Amen.

2. Funeral Masses or services in the church or funeral home will no longer be conducted until further notice. Limiting the funerals to ten people has proven not to be feasible and caused problems for many priests. Burial prayers may be said in an open air setting in a cemetery, as long as proper distancing of the ten people allowed by state regulation is maintained. They may not be held in a mortuary chapel. The family is to be assured that a memorial Mass will be offered as soon as possible after restrictions are lifted.

3. Weddings are not allowed, unless absolutely necessary. If a wedding must take place for some serious reason, only the bride, groom, two witnesses and the officiant may be present, all maintaining the proper physical distance. Permission to celebrate a wedding must be obtained from the office of the vicar general.

4. Baptisms administered by the ordinary minister of the sacrament within the parish setting are to be deferred, except in case of emergency. In these extreme instances, the faithful should contact a priest immediately.

5. Upon reasonable request, confessions may be heard, preferably by “appointment” at the parish office or some other appropriate place, like in the church when it is open for private prayer, as long as hygiene and physical distancing requirements are observed (i.e., a barrier between the penitent and the priest, such as a grille and cloth).

From the Congregation for Divine Worship in Rome: “With regard to Penance, it is clear that the Sacrament is not to be celebrated via cell phone. In addition, in the present circumstances cell phones should not be used even for the amplification of voices between a confessor and penitent who are in visual range of each other”.

6. The Anoint the sick: “With regard to the Anointing of the Sick, it is not possible for the anointing with oil to be delegated to someone else, such as a nurse or a doctor.... Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by votum confessionis, that is, by the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. CCC, no. 1452).”

7. Confirmation and first communion: both of these sacraments will be postponed until further notice

8. Experts advise people to be spaced three to six feet away from one another while in the church.

Holy Week

1. Palm Sunday masses will be celebrated privately by the priests of the parish (Without a congregation). We would assure everyone that palm, which is being delivered to all the parishes this week, will be distributed later in the year once the quarantine is lifted. Depending on how things progress in the coming weeks, pastors might want to consider distributing the palm on Corpus Christi Sunday for the faithful to hold during Eucharistic processions. It is expected that all parishes will

celebrate the Palm Sunday liturgy this Sunday, and not postpone it to a later date to coincide with the distribution of palm.

2. Reconciliation Monday on April 6 will be cancelled. However confessions are still available by appointment.

3. The Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, April 9, the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, April 10, the Easter Vigil of the Lord's Resurrection on April 11 and Easter Sunday, April 12 will not be celebrated publicly. Masses celebrated by the priest in 'private' may not in any way include parishioners!!!

4. The laws of fast and abstinence are in effect for Good Friday. There has been no dispensation given. The norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. The norms concerning abstinence from meat and poultry are binding upon members of the Latin Catholic Church from age 14 onwards).

5. The collection for the Holy Land, which normally takes place during the Good Friday Liturgy, is being transferred to a later date in August or September.

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As I mentioned before, we receive the coronavirus updates all day long, and the information changes very rapidly. I had to make changes a few times while preparing this letter. In order to keep well informed, it is a good idea for you to become members of our parish social platform – Flocknote. That's very easy to do!!! Please follow all instructions on the website <https://app.flocknote.com/find> (when you register please choose email, which is a better option than cell phone). You will automatically be in the "Everyone" group. Then please also join the "Weekly Bulletin" and the "From the Pastor's Desk" groups. You may join at your discretion the Altar Rosary Society, Men's Association, Altar Server, Prayer Group and Ushers Group, if you are or would like to be members of those groups. Use your best judgment.

The other options to get information about our parish life are our Facebook: [Church of St. Catherine Laboure](#) or [Church of St. Colman](#), and our parish website <https://parish383ny.weebly.com>. There is a special page "Coronavirus2019" under ABOUT section with all updates.

Everyone keeps reiterating how important social distance is. For that reason, **we should stay home**. Although we must keep ourselves well informed, it is unhealthy to focus on the corona virus news 24/7. We have to protect ourselves; we have take care of ourselves and those around us. It is also very important to engage in positive and encouraging messages. How about that platform FORMED? Have you had a chance to check it out? If you haven't signed up for FORMED, go to our parish website parish383ny.weebly.com. On the menu, choose ABOUT, then click on FORMED. It will direct you to how to sign up. If you have any questions please call Carla 845-382-4683.

The last point I want to touch upon is in regards to all the phone calls and messages I have been receiving from a few parishioners. Your concern is much appreciated! And, yes, the interruption of our services is a real financial burden to our churches considering that every parish is able to stay open because of your presence and your generosity. The suspension of Masses put many parishes into a serious financial challenge. Regular Sacrificial Giving, which is the main source of our income, is not coming in. Thanks to your gesture in the past, our parish was able to save some money and now I can pay our bills with some peace of mind. Also, I want to assure you that as soon as we were asked by the Archdiocese to suspend our services due to the Coronavirus, I immediately made the necessary temperature changes in all buildings in order to avoid unnecessary expenses. Being cautious as far as expenses are concerned is essential at all times, but it becomes even more critical in situations such as the one we are being faced with. For the ones who left messages asking if we have received your

envelopes, I want to reiterate that we have received some envelopes for the previous Sundays; others have inquired about the best way to handle it now. Thank you for your concern about our parish!

There are two ways for you to continue to provide support for our parish: sending donation by mail or online giving. When you send envelopes, please write only one check for the period of time your donation is for (you can enclose a separate note in the envelope indicating which dates the check was for). Writing just one check will save your time in addition to protecting yourself and others for not having to touch papers more than necessary, lowering a chance of spreading the virus. We better safe than sorry! The other option - online giving eliminates any chance of spreading viruses. Those who would like to join this way of giving, please visit our parish website section GIVE or log in to this website <https://parish383ny.weshareonline.org/> or scan the QR code.



Again, thank you for your concern about our parish! The parish needs your support, but also please remember that we need you to be healthy in order to return to your pews so we can together worship God when the quarantine is over, which we pray will be very soon. Please make sure that you have enough resources for your families during this extremely challenging time. I realize, that many people have been financially affected by this virus, and although the parish needs to survive financially, our lives are our most important wealth – most and foremost your wellbeing comes first, as well as your families, our parish family and our devotion to our Lord, asking him to protect all of our brothers and sisters.

We keep hearing in the news about how people are reacting to the uncertainty we are facing. One of the reactions has been to stock up large quantities of food at home, reason why we see grocery stores with empty shelves. It is wise to be prepared, but not to go overboard, which would cause unnecessary waste. As a priest, one of my thoughts after seeing all this repeatedly is that we need to be reminded that our existence here is not only physical but also spiritual. Difficult situations as the one we are going through right now; prompt us to consider very carefully what our needs are in order to keep a health balance in our lives. No matter how much food we stock up, we can't forget that we also need our "spiritual food".

As a parish we walk together on our pilgrimage to meet the Resurrected Jesus Christ. This is our goal as believers and HIS disciples. While we are waiting for that Day, we are still here and now on our pilgrimage together with our family members, our friends, and our neighbors. We priests want to make sure that our brothers and sisters in faith can receive all spiritual support from us. This is our mission as a Catholic Church. In challenging times like now, we have to take some extraordinary steps to fulfill our responsibility. You are not alone; we are here to help each other and offer our spiritual support. This is a good time to check on our spiritual needs.

I tried to include all parishioners in my distribution; however, we do not have emails or addresses for some of them, so please share this letter with your parish friends. It is better to duplicate the information than to leave people out.

"We seek refuge under your protection, o Holy Mather of God. Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to the test – and deliver us from every danger, o glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen"

God bless you!

Fr. Slawek