

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

You have probably already heard that we are out of the lockdown and churches can open for Ash Wednesday. So, we will have **Ash Wednesday Masses**. **At Corpus Christi they will be at 9am and 6:30pm. At Our Lady of Lourdes they will be at 8:30am and 7pm.**

I realize that many of you will not be able to come out for Mass or will not be comfortable coming out at this time. So, to assist you in beginning the season of Lent, we have placed a link to an at home Ash Wednesday resource prepared by the Diocese of Hamilton which includes a video of Bishop Crosby reading the Gospel for this day and offering a short homily.

In this pandemic period we are all experiencing the fragility of life and experiencing the emptiness that only the living God can fill. We can offer this all to God as penance during this Lenten season. After Ash Wednesday we will return to our weekday Mass schedule: at Corpus Christi Tuesday at 6:30pm and Thursday at 9am. At Our Lady of Lourdes Wednesday and Friday at 8:30am and Thursday at 7pm. Sunday Mass schedule will be our regular schedule at both sites.

I do have one notice concerning our parish staff. Our office manager, Joanne Palangio, has decided to retire. This will take place at the end of February. Joanne first began as secretary at Corpus Christi Parish in 2008. She was a crucial assistance to me when I arrived here and Corpus Christi and Our Lady of Lourdes were united into St. Catherine of Siena Parish. This was a complicated process and Joanne's hard work was so helpful at that time. On behalf of our whole parish and myself I want to express our gratitude to Joanne and wish all the best to her and her family as she begins a new life in retirement.

I am also very grateful for Rachel Alfano, who will take over the responsibilities from Joanne, especially with regards to the financial operations of the parish. We will not hire any new staff at this moment. This will help us financially at this time and also gives us time to reflect on what our staff needs will be later on when we move into the new church and offices.

For now, Corpus Christi office will continue as a virtual office. For in person appointments or needs, we will normally ask you to do this at Our Lady of Lourdes office for now. Office hours are 9am to 12noon. It is suggested that you phone or email in advance if possible. You are still free to drop things off through the mail slot at the office door both at Corpus Christi and Our Lady of Lourdes offices.

Thank you to many who are dropping off envelopes in this way. Also, to many who have begun to donate by automatic deposit or through the parish website. If you have questions about this or would like to start donating in one of these ways, you can contact Rachel at the office for information.

One new initiative we have begun recently is a Question and Answer Series. We take one of your questions each week and one of us provides a response on our website. We have received dozens of questions, including a set of questions from students at St. John de Brebeuf High School.

Along with looking for a weekly homily each Sunday you may want to check out the latest question and answer. You are welcome to send in any other questions you have directly to myself or to our parish email or by mail.

I would also like to highlight the great service of our St. Vincent de Paul Society. The members of the Corpus Christi Care group has now officially united with the Lourdes' St. Vincent de Paul Society so that they now form the SSVp - St. Catherine of Siena Conference. As you know they help our parish to care for and support many people in need within our parish area. You can access their annual report by going to ssvphamiltonpc.org/ar2020.gif. The Society asked me to extend to all of you their heartfelt thanks for your support. They are always glad to welcome new members who wish to be part of this important ministry and assist in any way possible. You can contact the parish any time to be connected with them.

Finally, many are asking about our building process. Everything continues to move forward. Our plan is to put the project out for tender this month so that hopefully by the end of March we will be able to announce the company selected to oversee the building of the new church. We have tentatively set the date of Thursday April 29 for the ground breaking ceremony with Bishop Crosby coming. More information about this event will come out later on.

The Covid pandemic will probably limit what we can do, but we will find ways to allow everyone to join at least by livestream or video of the event. Also, we will probably have a prayer service at each church site at same time as the ground breaking to allow more of us to join in this event.

We wish all of you a holy and peaceful Lenten season.

St. Catherine of Siena, Pray for us.

Fr. Mark