ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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July 1, 2020
Month of the Precious Blood
of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Dear Diocesan Family,

Here we are in the month of July! It seems nice to walk outside not all bundled up and to feel the warmth of the sun on one's skin. Although we are still social distancing and wearing our protective masks, there is a sense that life's activity is resuming. Yet, we are being permitted to do so at a summer's pace where we are not going full throttle but are invited to enjoy our surroundings.

This being said, I was thinking that now would be a good opportunity for the Catholic communities of central New York to get back into the regular routine of gathering for worship for the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist (Mass) each Lord's Day, whether on Saturday evening or on Sunday. Parishes are getting used to the liturgical adaptations and have found ways to ensure the celebration of Holy Mass in a safe, dignified, and reverent manner. The sanitizing of our worship sites is becoming a routine practice. So now it is time for us to return home. We have been away for too long! Recently, I saw a picture of Jesus knocking at the door with the words: "DON'T social distance from ME I'm ESSENTIAL!"

I realize that some of our parishioners who have underlying health conditions or who have infants and toddlers or are of an advanced age might not feel it is time yet to return to public gatherings. I respect that and it is for that reason that I will continue to dispense the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, as well as, provide Sunday Mass via television and livestream.

Nonetheless, we know long-distance relationships have to be worked at and many do not succeed despite the best of intentions! I feel that this is the case when it comes to the building up of our parish communities. More than ever, in this time and place, our life in God must be sustained and gospel witness is needed in the public square. Such authentic living is nurtured and fed by our breaking open of God's Word and our sharing in the Eucharist where we encounter the Real Presence of the Risen Christ.

That is why I want to reiterate the important need for our churches to be open and welcoming on a daily basis. Parish priests and pastoral administrators must ensure that the Sacraments are available to their people and provide ample opportunity for them to share in the Eucharist, as well as, have readily obtainable the Sacrament of Penance and that of the Anointing of the Sick. I am saddened and frustrated when I receive letters from the faithful who feel they are still locked out of the Sacraments and their churches.

Recently, I was introduced to a song titled, "Way Maker" by the artist, Leeland. As I listened to its lyrics I was so struck how it spoke to me about what happens when we gather each Lord's Day around the Lord's Altar. It speaks about Jesus as "Way Maker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, Light in the Darkness…moving in our midst…working in this place…touching hearts…healing hearts…turning lives

around…mending hearts…even when I don't see/feel it, you're working…that is who you are!" After hearing it, I was struck that is what we are missing if we overlook the opportunity to gather for Sunday Eucharist.

So, just a very simple invitation, don't miss out! This month make your way back to your parish community and discover He who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life"! Meet up with the "Way Maker" as we face uncertain times and discover His Real Presence among us.

Hope to see you in a church near you! Be assured of my continued prayers for you and your families.

With a brother's care,

+Douglas J. Lucia

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse