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Bishop travels diocese with monstrance to share hope of Blessed Sacrament

Posted on [April 22, 2020](#) by [Administrator1](#)

By Julie Asher

[Catholic News Service](#)

WASHINGTON (CNS) — New Hampshire’s Catholic bishop has made it to every part of his statewide diocese to date — south, east, west, north and central — bringing the Blessed Sacrament and the “light of Christ” to communities to comfort them and give them a reason to have hope during this pandemic.

“People are finding in faith there is a reason to have hope,” Bishop Peter A. Libasci of Manchester told Catholic News Service April 20.

Driving himself, the bishop made day trips to various parts of the statewide diocese over the past several weeks. He treated his front passenger seat, where he kept the monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament, “almost as if it were a tabernacle,” he explained, including draping the seat with a corporal, which is a square white linen cloth on which the monstrance is placed.

He also brought with him the proper vestments that are worn for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, including the humeral veil, a liturgical vestment that covers the bishop’s or priest’s shoulders and hands while he carries the monstrance.

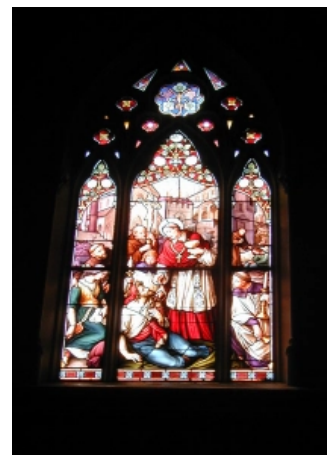
Bishop Libasci held the monstrance and offered a blessing as he walked around various buildings on the outside, like a nursing home, a firehouse, a church or a medical center. He sometimes was accompanied by a local chaplain or pastor — always observing the required 6-foot social distancing.

People would look out their windows and make the sign of the cross, as they would during eucharistic adoration, and they “all were really so very moved,” Bishop Libasci said.

At St. Francis Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Laconia, New Hampshire, when he was told about one resident in a room on the ground floor “who was actively dying,” he went and stood right outside the resident’s window.

“The bishop has to go out and encourage people,” the bishop said when asked why he traveled around the diocese with the Blessed Sacrament. He noted that Pope Francis has said “the doors of the sacristy have to open both ways,” and so bishops and priests must “go out among the people.”

“Even if I couldn’t get to every area” of the diocese, he said, he wanted to do his part to tell the faithful, “I know you cannot go to Mass or receive Communion, but we always have at least adoration. ... I know you can’t receive (it) but I need to be sure you can adore the Blessed Sacrament.”



St. Charles Borromeo is depicted in a stained-glass window at St. Joseph Cathedral in Manchester, N.H. In this scene, the saint brings the Eucharist to the sick. (CNS photo/courtesy Diocese of Manchester)

Bishop Libasci, 68, said he remembers “back in the day when people couldn’t receive Communion” because of their particular circumstances, but “they still came to church and they looked for that moment of spiritual Communion. We had it in our own family.”

He described many touching moments, especially in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, which he said is an economically depressed area. He made an unannounced stop as the pastor at St. Patrick Church there was just finishing a private Mass in his chapel. “It was a very great moment,” said Bishop Libasci, who blessed the parish grounds and blessed the town.

Besides recounting his journey around the diocese, Bishop Libasci also paid tribute to the priests of the diocese. They “are doing so many things they’ve never done before” because of this pandemic, he told CNS. “They have really, really stretched themselves doing confessions with all safeguards in place, the livestreamed (Masses)” and all manner of outreach to help their people and communities.

He’s also encouraged by and appreciative of the “tremendous engagement” of Catholics during this pandemic “through the viewing of Masses and devotions” online in the diocese. And priests are “baffled, amazed and so grateful” that Catholics’ donations at this time remain “constant and generous,” he said.

As everywhere in the country, New Hampshire’s stay-at-home directive has the bishop working at home but in regular contact with other chancery officials about diocesan business. He’s also spending time, he said, restudying the “General Instruction of the Roman Missal.” He and the priests of the diocese, all at their respective residences, are taking it “small portion by small portion.”

Bishop Libasci did not want to speculate as to when his state will be reopening and when public Masses in churches can once again be celebrated, so as not “to give false hope.”

But for now he is confident the Lord is at work in the hearts of the people of the diocese, and they feel his “healing presence” and know Christ is always the way, the truth and the light, even “in the darkest time.”

“The fact of the matter is Jesus said to disciples, ‘When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?’” said Bishop Libasci, “and the answer is well, yes!”

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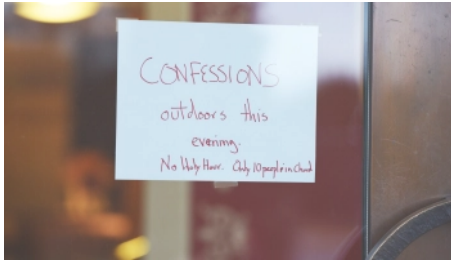
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