

St. Mary's Church
8408 S. Main Street
Evans Mills, NY 13637

St. Paul's Church
208 LeRay Street
Black River, NY 13612

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

BISHOP LAVALLEY HAS GRANTED US PERMISSION TO REOPEN OUR CHURCHES FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP STARTING SATURDAY, JUNE 20TH FOR ST. MARY'S AND SUNDAY, JUNE 21ST AT ST. PAUL'S. We are limited to 21 people at St. Mary's and 44 people at St. Paul's. **ONCE WE HAVE REACHED THOSE NUMBERS OF PARISHIONERS WE WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO ADMIT ANYONE ELSE TO ATTEND THAT PARTICULAR MASS WITHOUT EXCEPTION.** It will be a challenge to limit attendance at Mass and we ask for your cooperation and patience as we begin our journey toward normal worship and practice. Right now, it is safer for those over 65 and those with underlying health issues to remain at home. I realize this is a sacrifice, but it is for your own safety. Daily Mass will resume on Monday, June 22, 2020 at St. Mary's on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and at St. Paul's on Tuesday and Thursday.

We have developed a parish plan that will allow us to celebrate Mass and the Sacraments in a safe and responsible way. While we have "flattened the curve" of the coronavirus, there are still risks to all of us that require our attention and caution. Our parish plan conforms to the requirements set forth in Bishop LaValley's decree for reopening our churches for public worship. That decree and its requirements were drafted with the assistance of medical professionals and public health officials to assure that we are following the best practices for protecting our own health and the health of those around us. If all of us follow our parish plan, we will be safe in gathering for our worship. Even if we are not showing symptoms, each of us should think of ourselves and everyone we meet as a potential carrier of the virus. If we adhere to the precautions set forth in our plans, the risks of infection are substantially reduced. Wearing our masks, washing our hands and keeping our distance protects us and others.

Our parish plan is displayed in the vestibule of our churches and is on our website. I am also including a copy of the plan with this letter. Let me highlight some ways in which you can help us safely return to worship.

1. Bishop LaValley has continued his dispensation from attending Sunday Mass until further notice. For those unable to attend Mass we are publishing in our bulletins various ways that you are able to watch Mass.
2. If you are over 65 years of age, have underlying medical issues, are not feeling well, have a cough, a fever over 99.6, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, vomiting, sore throat, fatigue, unexplained muscle aches, headache or had contact with anyone who has COVID-19, **PLEASE STAY HOME FOR YOUR WELL-BEING AND THAT OF OTHERS.**
3. Initially, the number of people able to physically attend Mass will be limited. Please respect these limits and do not enter church if the approved number has already been admitted to church. **WE WILL POST A SIGN ON THE DOOR WHEN WE HAVE ADMITTED THE MAXIMUM NUMBER.**
4. We require face covering while in church to protect yourself and others for those 2 years old and older. **For the safety of your children, we suggest that you leave your children under communion age and parents can alternate in attending Mass and taking care of their children at home. They can attend Mass at 4:00 PM at St. Mary's, 9:00 AM at St. Mary's and 11:00 AM at St. Paul's .**
5. Please sanitize your hands as you enter and exit the church. Sanitizer is provided at the doors of the churches.
6. Please keep a safe social distance of at least 6 feet between you and others who are not part of your household. This means we cannot hold hands during the Our Father and there will be no exchange of peace.

7. Note that there will be no holy water in the fonts, no choir, no offertory procession, no bulletins, missalettes or hymnals.
8. Distribution of Holy Communion will be different. This will be explained at Mass and we ask for your cooperation. Keep at least six feet between you and others as you approach the Communion station.
9. Communion will be distributed under the form of bread only. We ask you to receive Communion in the hand to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.
10. The collection basket will not be passed during Mass. Instead, an Offering Box is placed at each entrance of the churches. Please drop your envelope or donation into the box on your way in or out of church. Thank you in advance for your support of the parish.
11. The celebrant and others will sanitize hands before distributing Communion. Parishioners will remove their masks prior to approaching the Communion station and will replace their masks after receiving.
12. On a regular basis we will clean our churches and disinfect them between every service.
13. Missalettes, song books and other common items will be removed from the pews.
14. You will be asked to maintain proper social distancing as you leave the church. Those seated in the back pews will be asked to leave first and other pews will follow in order. You are asked to return to your cars and return home to avoid congregating at the exists of the church, in the parking lots or anywhere on church property.
15. Due to the limitations placed on the number who may attend Mass due to social distancing, you may find it necessary to change the time of the Mass you routinely attend. Our Mass times are as follows:

Saturday afternoon

(anticipated Mass)

4:00 PM at St. Mary's

Sunday morning

9:00 AM at St. Mary's

11:00 AM at St. Paul's

Weekday Mass

8:00 AM Monday, Wednesday & Friday at St. Mary's

8:00 AM Tuesday & Thursday at St. Paul's

16. There will be ushers in both St. Mary's and St. Paul's to be at the entrance doors of both churches a half hour before Mass to direct Parishioners coming into Church regarding all precautions and directives that need to be followed: sanitize hands as they enter the church, leave the church, direct the flow of people at Communion, directing them to their pew where they will be seated, making sure everyone from 2 years old are wearing masks throughout the Mass. It is imperative that all follow the directions of the ushers. They are implementing the guidelines set by the Diocese and the State of New York.

Our return to public worship will be a challenge. There will be challenges and frustrations. We are asked to behave in new ways to remain healthy. Social distancing, avoiding crowds, hand sanitizing, personal hygiene and wearing face masks are behaviors that will be with us for a while. How well we learn those behaviors will determine how successful we will be at returning to normal worship and keeping people healthy and safe. Please do your part. We will do ours! God bless you.

Sincerely yours,

June 8, 2020

Reverend Vicente F. Jazmines
Pastor