2020 June 1

Dear Fellow Parishioners of the Oneida Catholic Parishes,

I never thought that I would be writing this letter to you so soon after I wrote the last letter but I am. The bishop has decided to totally open the churches on June 13/14 for mass, only two weeks after we have started the new reception of communion after the streamed mass. Before I say any more about that, I just want to tell you how much I have been concerned about all of you, your health, and finances. If anyone has a health, financial or spiritual need, please let me know if there is anything that I or anyone else in the parish can help you with. We want to be there for you. We pray for you at every mass and in our private prayer as well. I am genuinely concerned about people becoming more isolated (which is so inhuman) as well as more disconnected from the communities that are most important to them, especially their parish. As time goes on, I pray that we as human beings respond to these important needs better and help people to be connected.

We are in the middle of a great transition. Our parish leadership has been working extremely hard to make sure that the weeks of Pentecost and Trinity Sunday go well. If you still have any concerns about the time before complete opening of the churches, do not hesitate to contact us. As we transition to opening the churches for mass all the time, contact us with any concerns that you have. As I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, we will be returning to our normal mass schedule the second weekend of June (13/14). The masses may be at the normal times, but they will not be conducted normally. We will not be greeting anyone in a warm or hospitable way but in a way that protects people from the possibility of viral infection. During the mass, we will also practice safe protocols which do not help to make the mass what it is meant to be but keep us safe from where we sit to how we move and are restricted from an offertory procession, the sign of peace and receiving communion normally.

Everyone who wonders about whether they should come probably should not come. The obligation to attend mass is still not in force. Just remember that if you are over the age of 65 or have a health condition of any kind which would compromise your recovery from Covid 19, please strongly consider staying home. We will respect everyone's decision. We will do our best to keep the space clean, to help people to practice safe procedures and to worship the best we can under the circumstances. I do not think that we will have a problem with having 25% capacity (or less) or with anyone not helping us to make the experience safe and as good as we can. With the constant and confusing changes, do not be afraid to ask any questions you have.

The main considerations are on the back of this letter. Please read it and be familiar with them. If you can help with ushering and other matters, please email me at pastoroneidacatholic@gmail.com or call or text 920.649.0110.please let us know. Our office will be returning to normal hours on June 15. Communion Visits to the homes will be decided on a case by case basis after the request is made to me as pastor. For more information about the diocese guidelines, go online to https://www.gbdioc.org/front-page/covid19response. Scroll down the page to Re-engagement Resources for Parishes and select Phases for Return to Mass and Phase II Guidelines-Public Mass with Moderate Limits.

I know that these times are trying and confusing. I have been struggling greatly myself with what and how it is happening. I hope that we can all work together to make the most of a difficult situation. Let me know again if there is something, we can do for you to help. In the meantime, continue to connect to our website or Facebook pages if you can. If you can, download the new parish app as well, do so by following the directions on the parish website or with the help of someone who has it. Best wishes and prayers.

In Christ's love, Reverend David C. Ruby, Pastor Rev David C Ruby