

# Our Christian Walk

The Gazette Of Grace

Summer Covid Issue

2020

*Serving The Community Of Our Lady Of Grace*



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*O Mary,*

*You always shine on our path  
As a sign of salvation and hope.  
We entrust ourselves to you,  
Health of the sick, who at the cross  
Took part in Jesus' pain, keeping  
Your faith firm.*

*You, Salvation of the Roman people,  
Know what we need, and we are  
Sure you will provide so that, as  
In Cana of Galilee, we may return  
To joy and feasting after this  
Time of trial.*

*Help us Mother of Divine Love, to  
Conform to the will of the Father  
And to do as we are told by Jesus,  
Who has taken upon himself our  
Sufferings and carried our sorrows to lead us, through the cross, to the joy of  
resurrection. Amen*

*Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God. Do not disdain  
the entreaties of we who are in trial, but deliver us from every danger,  
O glorious and blessed Virgin.*

*The Prayer to Our Lady of Grace from Pope Francis 3-2020*



## OLG Mission Statement

**We are a welcoming community of believers, being disciples of Christ through worship, the Sacraments, ongoing faith formation, evangelization and Christian service to others!**

## REOPENING FOR MASS

By Paul Fanning  
OLG Pandemic Safety Minister

Well friends, we have done it. Our parish has finally reopened for mass since closing at the beginning of March due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In the middle of an oppressive heatwave, our first Vigil Mass was held in the same time slot as before on Saturday July 11 at 5:30 pm. The Sunday Mass was again at 10:30 am on July 12. Attendance was 30 for the Vigil and 33 for Sunday not including Fr. Jack, Deacon Frank and our musicians Patty and Joan. In the future, for those who cannot attend in person, the virtual Mass will continue to be available on line on Sunday. Many thanks to those who make this possible!

Our state suffered the initial worst-case viral out-break, but over the four-months extending through the end of June NYers came together. We responded to the crisis and overcame the pandemic by staying home as much as possible, wearing masks and social distancing. These actions were taken to lessen the risk and prevent further infection to ourselves, family members, neighbors and others in the community at large and to prevent our healthcare system from being overwhelmed with seriously ill patients..

By the middle of May, infection rates had slowed, and state leaders were beginning to plan a careful statewide reopening in phases. Religious institutions, including the Albany Catholic Diocese worked with the state to develop guidelines that could be shared with local faith communities, so they could plan and prepare, and then reopen if conditions permitted.

In the first week of June, the trustees of OLG and St. Joseph's along with others gathered at St. Joseph's Church for a properly social-distance meeting to review guidance from the diocese and discuss what we could do together. Our parishes share Fr. Jack Varno and Interim administrator Debbie Griffith until a new pastor can be named for our parishes. Included in the joint reopening committee were parishioners with medical and organizational skills to help get things going.

There were two computer "Zoom" meetings which were held by the third week of June. At this point, both parishes were expected to develop separate but coordinated plans using the information that was obtained. A decision was made to hold the reopening of each parish over the weekend following the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. **With Fr. Jack's support, masses would resume at the usual times at each location. (Thanks Fr. Jack!)**

But many things had to be done so we could reopen under pandemic conditions. This included getting up to a dozen volunteers to show up early for each mass. They will serve as greeters, contact tracers, ushers and an hygiene minister to disinfect key features after mass was over. These volunteers had to be trained according to guidelines, and they will be needed for every weekend going forward.

The building was cleaned and disinfected in advance of the first mass. Areas needed to be roped off. Supplies were obtained. Seating in the worship space had to be reorganized for proper spacing and a new flow for communion put in place. Signs were generated. A self-assessment affidavit was created for every parishioner or their household, which must be submitted when they arrive early for a scheduled mass. If anyone is exhibiting symptoms or may have been exposed to someone who is infected, they should not attend mass and stay home.

Getting to this point has not been easy for anyone and our challenge is not over. We will need to sustain our efforts through the months ahead while also attracting other volunteers who can reinforce the terrific people who responded to our initial request for help.

Eventually, we will need to create shifts so volunteers can alternate weekends with others, so that no one becomes burned-out. If someone has a sudden change in plans, it would be helpful to call substitutes on short notice and give volunteers a break.

We are also reviewing what we have done thus far and considering system improvements. This is a work in progress. Our future decisions will be tied to how things progress in our state and not just what happens in our parish. If things go wrong in the future here in NY, we could be closed again.

In the meantime, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has made this possible for the parishioners of OLG. With all of us working together, we will make the new normal, normal!



## We are the community of Our Lady of Grace

### Note From The Barnick Family

I just wish to thank you and the great folks at Our Lady of Grace Church for the outreach efforts during the past several months to keep parishioners connected, with both parish information and the weekly Mass.

My family and I enjoy the opportunity to read scripture, attend the weekly Mass via u-tube, and also listen to the messages from both Father Jack and Father Marty Fisher.

You all have done an amazing job in keeping everyone connected. For ourselves, we have essentially been under self-quarantine since after Christmas and thus are limited in our ability to make commitments. Suffice to say, we are extremely grateful for the connection to OLG, the friendships we have made, and the power of Our Lord Jesus!

Sincerely, Mike, Patricia and son Joseph



### Nurse's Corner by Nancy Michela, RN

#### Lessons learned

#### This world changed and we

- appreciate teachers and their work;
- are in awe of nurses and doctors;
- recognize the importance of essential staff;
- grasp the power of a microscopic virus;
- welcome faith from any medium;
- cherish pets for companionship;
- treasure family, neighbors, and friends;
- learn new technology;
- and realize how precious is life.

## CALLING ALL LITURGICAL MINISTERS...

By Pat Parker

While we are in our “re-opening” period, now until who knows when, it is understandably difficult for those whose ministries are ‘on hold’ – Cup Ministers, Music Ministry, Altar Servers, etc. But at the same time, we now need a lot of volunteers for **new** ministries: extra greeters, trackers, extra ushers, and hygiene.

So, while you’re unable to serve in your regular ministry, why not consider helping with some of the new ones? Whatever time you can give to your Parish Family will be greatly appreciated; we need all of us to comply with all the rules to keep us safe...and open. Please pray over volunteering (even if you are new to ministry) and send in the volunteer form sent to you a few weeks ago or drop Lucille an email [feeserl@nycap.rr.com](mailto:feeserl@nycap.rr.com).



# FAITH FORMATION NEWS

By Roberta Quinn  
Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation

As you know, the pandemic has greatly affected our faith formation ministry. This year we have an adult candidate for full communion with the Catholic Church. Jackie Symes will be receiving her Confirmation and First Eucharist Sunday, August 2 at the 10:30 Mass. Along with Jackie, Jack Simpson will be receiving his Confirmation before heading to college end of this month. Since our second graders could not receive First Communion in May, we will hold this celebration on Sunday, September 13 at 10:30 Mass. Hopefully we will be celebrating Catechetical Sunday on September 20 when we honor our catechists who give so much of themselves to our children and their families. Classes will begin Sunday, September 27. Because of covid-19, we will be offering distance-learning as well as classroom-learning.

## We are Open Welcome One and All!



6 ft.  
apart

Social  
Distancing  
With  
Masks



Ours is a vibrant community, putting our faith in action under difficult circumstances! Thank you for being there, for supporting Our Lady of Grace, for stepping forward to help, for sending in your weekly donation, for your prayers for each other and our community. We love hearing from you. If you have a story to share Please contact us!



Covid-clean



MEET

ZACHARY  
SIMPSON

Hey folks, remember this young man? When Zachary Simpson ascends the OLG podium to cantor at Mass, everyone sits a little taller. His voice moves the deepest parts of our hearts and souls. God has entrusted him with a magnificent gift and this gift has been nurtured since his early childhood.

The Burnt Hills Oratorio Society hosted its 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Vocal Scholarship competition at St. Clement's Church in Saratoga on June 19. Of the nine applicants, Zachary (a senior from Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High) placed first and received a \$1500.00 scholarship toward continuing his education. He will attend Syracuse University where he wants to major with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in the Acting/Singing Track.

Zach has already partaken in 20 theatrical productions in several different local communities. With Proctor's School of the Performing Arts, he also participated in Les Miserables and Aida by Elton John and Tim Rice. His interests range from piano, singing, acting and dancing to percussion in a rock band!

I had a nice conversation with Zach and asked him a few questions about his music and involvement in OLG. Here is his reply:

*I've been a member of OLG as far back as I can remember. I started playing drums in fifth grade, joined band in school and started playing the Mass at Patty's beckoning! One never wants to be a bad drummer, so I was a bit nervous about playing during Mass. Patty was most encouraging and I developed an ease and confidence as the community accepted me.*

*Eventually I started singing in theater and followed through with vocal lessons which continue today. Again, Patty urged me to cantor; I felt edgy because I was not playing a character, I was myself! Contrary to my fears, I was well received, and truly valued the reassurance from OLG.*

*Yes, there is a definite connection between music and my faith. Even before I started music myself, I remember as a young child enjoying the music at Mass. It started there in my sub-conscious at Mass and became a reality in my growing faith journey.*

*OLG has played a significant role in deepening my trust and faith in God. I've so appreciated being part of the music ministry. But I'm also a huge fan of this community. The combination of attending Mass and sharing it with this community gives me great comfort, relaxation and peace.*

I so enjoyed talking to this bright young man, and I think that music (God's grace) flowing through Zach's veins is what will keep him so alive!

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### Your Help Needed Now!

**There is an immediate need for people willing to help record Mass for those who cannot attend Mass in person. Many parishioners have found the recorded Masses valuable and uplifting. It keeps us together!!!**

**If you can volunteer, a few of the requirements are:**

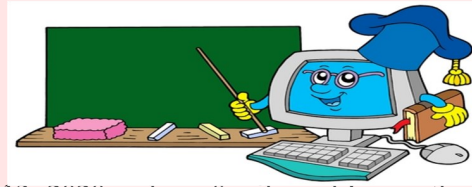
- ~Attend Mass on Saturday evening
- ~Have your own recording equipment
- ~ Process the recording to U-tube.

**We hope these volunteers will be willing to train to handle the live streaming once the system is in place.**

**Please contact Polly VanNostrand at [vannostrandp@gmail.com](mailto:vannostrandp@gmail.com). Thank you for considering participation in this outreach!**

## My Experience with Remote Learning

By Alison M. Norton



The way of life as I knew it was forever altered on March 13, 2020 and my family and I were thrown into the new and uncharted world of remote learning. More specifically my two daughters who are aged 10 and 12 doing a remote learning program through their schools and me, a preschool teacher, becoming a remote instructor overnight.

My daughters did an outstanding job with their remote learning assignments and zoom calls. After an initial adjustment period, they eased into a new schedule and did wonderfully. I can't speak highly enough of the administration and faculty at both Saratoga Central Catholic and St. Mary's School (Ballston Spa) and their ability to adjust the curriculum and keep in touch with the students through emails, zoom calls and phone calls.

As you can imagine if you have had young children, remote learning at the preschool level seems like an oxymoron. As strange as the concept seems on paper, I made it work in my teaching position with a combination of written lesson plans passed to parents, zoom calls where we did projects step by step together and even included a virtual field trip to the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California! I provided printed materials, links to websites and goodie bags for my students to help keep them connected and learning at home. I had already established a working relationship with my children and families after being together since September and we worked on individual goals. We had individual conferences via zoom before the end of the year to make sure that those heading to kindergarten in the fall would be ready.

Part of what makes preschool so special is the children are learning social and emotional skills in a school environment, among peers and in a hands on manner. So you can imagine the difficulty and frustration that could be experienced by both students and teachers alike when all of the sudden your interpersonal connections are gone. There is no more circle time, playtime, snack time or cooperative play and in-class learning happening. You connect with your friends and teachers via zoom, on a computer, or Facetime, which for some is not ideal due to parents working from home and other siblings also doing their own remote learning.

We got through it because we had to. I felt a tremendous loss and sadness to not be in school and see my students daily. If I had known that last Friday together would have truly been our last, I would have hugged them all so tightly and made sure they knew how much I loved them.

But everyday that we started a new week away from school, I rallied and put forth my best teacher smile for our zooms and thought outside the box on how I was going to teach the life cycle of the butterfly with my live butterflies in my kitchen but not in my classroom. I documented their growth and videoed their release on my phone and shared it via email. I recorded myself reading books for my students every night so they could see me and keep that connection. We had dance parties on zoom where they put in song requests and we had a blast.

There was a lot of collaborating between teachers sharing resources and ideas. Creativity, sharing, flexibility, cooperation and innovation all became more important than ever as parent involvement took a front seat to our success in preschool remote learning.

As I have said before, our success would not have been possible without the compassion, understanding, patience and willingness of our students' parents to be participants in this groundbreaking reality of remote learning. My connection with families was never so important and invaluable to me than during this time while we were physically apart.

The end of the year culminated in a drive through safe social distance graduation, which was lovely and gave us a chance to see one another safely and say goodbye for the summer.

I hope and pray that those administrators and government officials in control of decisions for the next school year will make their choices based on the safety of students, teachers, support staff and families.

Teachers will never stop trying to do what is best for their students. My classes are a family and we love each other. We support each other and build a foundation of friendship beginning on the first day of school. We learn cooperation, tolerance, friendship and the teachings of Jesus that include love and caring for others. Whatever platform we use, this will continue to be a reality next year.







## DRY HEARTS

By Janet Troidle

At this writing we have been in draught mode for awhile, until it stormed recently. On the porch with my morning joe, I drank in the quiet, melding with the environment as together we soaked up new life. Stillness was softly singing until a distant wind from the south gradually trampled north, moving everything in its path. The trees were water-laden, and the wind signaled a noisy wave of “whoosh”, shedding raindrops like dry skin...the sounds of the ocean were engulfing Ballston Lake.

Perhaps we are like these trees, also heavily burdened with thought, opinion, confusion, fear. The winds of the BLACK LIVES MATTER movement are shaking us back and forth, back and forth, inviting us to shed the droplets of hate that have infected our core. Nature provides a new ring of life each year to her creation-trees. Now the Holy Spirit longs to create a new ring of light around our souls. Will we, the people of God, accept the rain of awareness being poured upon us now? Can we give birth to a change of heart? Will we embrace the belief that all lives matter.

I do believe the answer is yes...and violence will not shake our resolve.



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### **Note From Editor:**

We welcome your comments, suggestions and contributions. We would like to use this newsletter to share the faith and Christian action of our parishioners. Please send stories about your ministry, e-mail photos; tell us about a person, or bible passages which have had a positive influence on you or your family, your poetry, your journey. We are published quarterly, with deadlines as follows:

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Our Cluster Parishes:  
Saint Joseph's Website:  
<http://www.stjosephschurchscotia.net>  
Immaculate Conception Website:  
<http://www.ic-glenville.com/>

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<http://www.olgchurchbl.org>