

OUR LADY OF MERCY CHURCH

837 Bartlett Road • Harborcreek, PA 16421 • www.ourladyofmercychurch.org



March 22nd, 2020 - 4th Sunday of Lent

MASS SCHEDULE

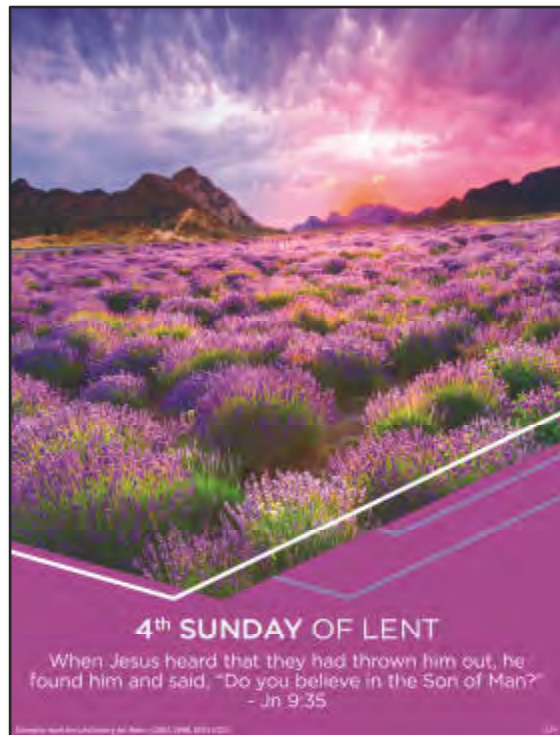
Public Masses are canceled until further notice. Please take this time to worship at home with your families. Check the Our Lady of Mercy website and e-mails for worship resources.

PARISH STAFF

Msgr. Gerald T. Ritchie, *Pastor*
Donna Clark, *Pastoral Minister*
Irene Lucas, *Director of Lifelong Faith Formation*
Brandon Vogt, *Director of Liturgy & Music*
Katie Stephenson, *Administrative Assistant*
Sarah Phipps, *Youth Minister*
Kirk Mientkiewicz, *Maintenance Coordinator*
Andrea Maille, *Lifelong Faith Formation Secretary*

CONTACT INFORMATION

Parish Office: 814-899-5342
Office of Lifelong Faith Formation: 814-899-6132
Fax: 814-898-3306
Email: info@ourladyofmercychurch.org



MISSION STATEMENT

We are a Eucharistic, Catholic Christian Community of Communities formed by the Word of God and the teachings of the Church. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live the values of Jesus Christ in a prayerful, welcoming and nurturing environment.

THE WEEK AHEAD

For a complete calendar of events, please visit ourladyofmercychurch.org/calendar

We Remember...

Gordan Bemiss, father of Doug Bemiss;
Rita Desser, mother of Kathy Lacy, Mary Whiteman and Don Desser;
Wendy Knepper, mother of Conner and Chloe Knepper; **Matthew Gerrans**;
 and **Jackie Jordano**, niece of Bob Gredler, cousin of Stacy Heidecker and Lindsay Magouirk;
 who passed away recently.
 Please hold them and their families in prayer during this difficult time.

PRAYER LINE

9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Call Donna Smicker at 899-9108

4:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Call Gerri Extein at 899-6875

The **Hospital Visitor** for the week is Donna Huff.



Question-of-the-Week

The winner of the Question-of-the-Week Contest for the week of March 10 was Clara Camillo, Gr. 5, who knew that there are 14 stops as we pray the Stations of the Cross.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Offertory for the weekend of March 15, 2020

Envelopes sent:	392	
Envelopes returned:	59	\$2,978.00
Faith Direct Deposits:	117	\$3,059.08
Loose Change:		\$ 66.00
TOTAL OFFERTORY:		\$6,103.08

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Mon. 03/23	Is 65:17-21	/ Jn 4:43-54
Tue. 03/24	Ez 47:1-9, 12	/ Jn 5:1-16
Wed. 03/25	Is 7:10-14, 8:10	/ Heb 10:4-10 / Lk 1:26-38
Thur. 03/26	Ex 32:7-14	/ Jn 5:31-47
Fri. 03/27	Wis 2:1a, 12-22	/ Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30
Sat. 03/28	Jer 11:18-20	/ Jn 7:40-53
Sun. 03/29	Ez 37:12-14 / Rom 8:8-11	/ Jn 11:1-45

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Women's History Month

The Nineteenth Amendment is 101 years old, yet many issues still impede the progress of women in our society. Women's wages still lag behind those of men: \$.79 for each dollar men made in 2019. The USA ranks last in government-mandated paid leave for new parents among developed countries. Pope Francis cautions that women must be "must be protected and helped in... the right to work and the right to motherhood. The challenge is to protect their right to a job that is given full recognition while at the same time safeguarding their vocation to motherhood and their presence in the family." In spite of the challenges to advancing the rights of women, their contributions as mothers, reformers, leaders, executives, teachers, and numerous other professions should not be overlooked.



MASS INTENTIONS

Even though public Masses have been suspended, Fr. Ritchie will continue to offer a private Mass each day remembering the intentions of Our Lady of Mercy parishioners at each Mass.

THIS SUNDAY'S REFLECTION

JOHN 9:1-41



"One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see."

"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The disciples' question reflects a common Jewish belief of the time that every affliction was the result of sin, a notion that Jesus rejects. Jesus does not reject, however, the idea that sinfulness and spiritual blindness are related.

The nameless blind man in the gospel represents you and me. Just as he was born blind and had never seen the light, so we are born spiritually blind and dwell in darkness. Then Christ comes on the scene. He touches our lives and washes us in baptism, healing our blindness. He opens our eyes to all his glory, but also to our own sinfulness. Because, yes, we are all sinners.

There are those, however, who remain blind to their sin. We fail to see that our acts of prejudice, pride, or jealousy are sinful and separate us from God. Our inability to forgive or love unconditionally leaves us in the spiritual dark of night.

Reflection: When have I become aware of an obstacle to faith being removed? What form of blindness is God addressing in my life?

Let Us Give Thanks

With gratitude to God and for the prayers of the Community of Our Lady of Mercy, we are able to announce that we have a new Youth Minister for Our Lady of Mercy and St. Mark's. Her name is Sarah Phipps. Sarah will be working with us shortly. We are looking for an opportunity to introduce her to the parish. Please keep Sarah in your prayers as she begins her work in youth ministry with us.



Women's Conference cancelled

The 1:38 Women's Conference, scheduled March 28 at Our Lady of Peace Parish, has been cancelled.

OLM Book Group

When the concerts have been cancelled and the museums closed, when the store shelves are empty and concerns of a virus has us staying at home, there is always books to keep us company. For now, the OLM Book Group is still gathering and all healthy readers are welcome to join us. Our April title will be Say Nothing by Patrick Keefe.



Question Box



Have questions about your faith, the Bible, this parish, current religious topics? Place them in the Question Box in the Gathering Space before Easter and Fr. Ritchie will answer them in the May issue of *For Mercy Sake*.

"Adopt" a Homebound

During this time of self isolation many of our homebound may feel more cut off than usual. If you would like to adopt one of our homebound people and be in contact with them through mail and phone please contact Donna Clark at dclark@ourladyofmercychurch.org



Smile for Our Lady of Mercy

To link to our Amazon Smile charity listing visit: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/25-1563277>. If you shop Amazon please consider using Amazon Smile and naming "Our Lady of Mercy – Harborcreek" as your charity.



FORMED.ORG

With the children home from school for 2 weeks, they are probably starting to complain of boredom. Invite them to learn about the saints and heroes of our faith on [formed.org](https://watch.formed.org/the-saints-and-heroes-collection) <https://watch.formed.org/the-saints-and-heroes-collection> Sign in using the parish name and enjoy an extensive library of great Catholic books and movies at your fingertips.



PASTORAL FACILITATOR TRAINING

Would you like to become a Small Christian Community facilitator? Would you simply like to learn more about what is involved in leading a prayer group? Please consider joining us for training; three training sessions held at the parish on the **Wednesday evenings of April 1, April 8 and April 15** (dates subject to change). For more information please call Dave (evenings) at 602-4622.



For Mercy Sake Deadline

The deadline to submit items for the May issue of *For Mercy Sake* is April 19. Items can be emailed to ilucas@ourladyofmercychurch.org.

The Warming Shelter Thanks You

From January 16th thru the 31st and February 26th thru March 11th over 200 people came together to provide a warm, safe place for the people of our community who are homeless at St. John the Baptist! Each of those nights a breakfast and dinner was provided thanks to many generous people. This is entirely operated through donations, and people giving of their time and energy! Many people of Our Lady of Mercy parish put their faith into action and volunteered in some way. We are so very thankful to you for your part in encouraging them to do so! So many people make this a reality and it just simply couldn't be done without each and everyone! Thank you & God bless you....Mary & Mary Ellen



Pastoral Council Nominations

Soon we will put out ballots for Pastoral Council Nominations. If you know someone who is passionate about their relationship with God, is dedicated to this community and desires to see it grow, is able to share their thoughts with others and is able to see other points of view then please recommend them for the council. Nominees are invited into a discernment process before they commit to the council. A nominee must be a parishioner who:

- †Has been baptized or received into the Roman Catholic Church.
- †By his or her free and consistent choice is a registered member of Our Lady of Mercy Parish.
- †Contributes to the betterment of the parish community.

For Questions contact Donna Clark



Join our family of heroes. Donate blood.



COMMUNITY
BLOOD BANK

Blood Drive



Our Lady of Mercy—Bartlett Rd
Saturday, April 4th 9 a.m.—12 p.m.
 To sign up, see *Todd Beckes*
WALK INS WELCOME!

DONORS MUST
 (1) Be at least 17 years old or 16 with parent consent
 (2) Be a U.S. citizen
 (3) Weigh at least 110 pounds
 (4) Not be on any blood thinning drugs
 (5) Not be on any other medications
 (6) Not be pregnant or breastfeeding



COMMUNITY
BLOOD BANK

CURSILLO CORNER

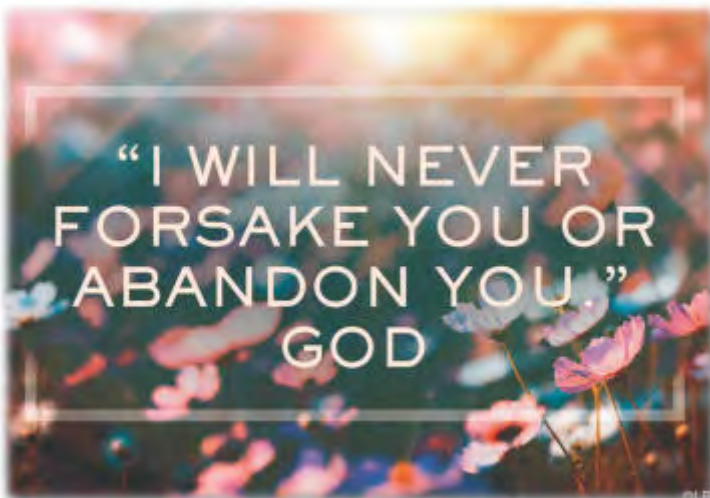


2020 Cursillo Dates

April 16-19th Women's Cursillo #258 at OLM

May 7-10th Men's Cursillo #251 at OLM

Start making plans for life's best weekend! Lois Heise would love to talk to you about Cursillo and how it can change your life! Call Lois at 882-9555.



LOCKDOWN BY BROTHER RICHARD:

Yes there is fear.
 Yes there is isolation.
 Yes there is panic buying.
 Yes there is sickness.
 Yes there is even death.
 But,
 They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
 You can hear the birds again.
 They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
 The sky is no longer thick with fumes
 But blue and grey and clear.
 They say that in the streets of Assisi
 People are singing to each other
 across the empty squares,
 keeping their windows open
 so that those who are alone
 may hear the sounds of family around them.
 They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
 Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.
 Today a young woman I know
 is busy spreading fliers with her number
 through the neighborhood
 So that the elders may have someone to call on.
 Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples
 are preparing to welcome
 and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary
 All over the world people are slowing down and
 reflecting
 All over the world people are looking at their
 neighbors in a new way
 All over the world people are waking up to a new
 reality
 To how big we really are.
 To how little control we really have.
 To what really matters.
 To Love.
 So we pray and we remember that
 Yes there is fear.
 But there does not have to be hate.
 Yes there is isolation.
 But there does not have to be loneliness.
 Yes there is panic buying.
 But there does not have to be meanness.
 Yes there is sickness.
 But there does not have to be disease of the soul
 Yes there is even death.
 But there can always be a rebirth of love.
 Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
 Today, breathe.
 Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
 The birds are singing again
 The sky is clearing,
 Spring is coming,
 And we are always encompassed by Love.
 Open the windows of your soul
 And though you may not be able
 to touch across the empty square,
 sing

Our Lady of Mercy's Response to the Covid-19 Situation

Lent invites us into the desert where we share in the hunger, solitude and prayer of Christ. The unfolding guidelines surrounding the need to contain the COVID-19 virus is giving us a unique experience of that desert. Closures have brought us into greater solitude. Anxiety has invited us into deeper prayer. And now, the suspension of Mass through the Erie Diocese is demanding that we fast from the Bread of Life. But, we also know that, in the desert, Christ was able to listen and respond to His Father with greater clarity and strength. May our desert experience bring us to a greater intimacy with God, a more sincere prayer and a truer awareness of our hunger and thirst for Christ in the Eucharist.

Below is the text of the letter promulgated by Bishop Persico to the faithful of the diocese. In conformity with the directives of the Diocese of Erie, all public prayer, including Mass and Stations of the Cross, will not be held at Our Lady of Mercy until further notice. Likewise religious education classes, youth events, including the Lenten Pastus, are cancelled until further notice. Ministry leaders will be contacting members of specific ministries with information about changes to their responsibilities or meetings. As we find ourselves unable to gather for Mass or religious education, Our Lady of Mercy and the Diocese of Erie will make links to live streaming of the Mass, to prayer and to faith formation resources available on the websites of both communities. Watch for emails and keep an eye on our website. The Parish Office will remain open Monday - Friday from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m..

Bishop Lawrence T. Persico's Response to the Covid-19 Situation

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

It saddens me to share this with you, but I have decided to suspend all public Masses in the Diocese of Erie effective Wednesday, March 18 until further notice.

This is not a decision I wanted to make; nor did I make it lightly. But given the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is an important decision made for the good of the community, especially the most vulnerable among us. We are working to make a number of resources available for the faithful, some of which I will share with you in this letter. But first, in the midst of this challenging moment, I want to provide you with spiritual encouragement and strength.

It is understandable that people are feeling overwhelmed-there's so much uncertainty in our lives in the face of this pandemic, something we have never experienced. In recent days, our lives have changed considerably. Families are scrambling to figure out how they are going to address the needs of children who are suddenly no longer leaving the house to go to school. Many of us are not allowed to visit elderly relatives who are in nursing homes. It's difficult not to wonder what additional limitations may be imposed at any given moment.

We are all human, and our concerns are natural. We can't help but worry about how we will navigate these changes in our lives. In addition to those whose health is at risk, I am particularly concerned for those whose livelihoods will be compromised for what could be a significant period of time.

There is no better time to grow in our faith than in a moment of trial. While the stress is real, our faith teaches us to trust in the Lord. "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him," Jesus said, just before he gave us the Lord's Prayer.

Even though public Masses have been suspended, I want to assure you every priest in the diocese will continue to offer a private Mass each day. I have asked that they remember the intentions of their parishioners at each Mass; that will be my intention as well.

In addition, we each still have an obligation to "keep holy the Sabbath." Please give serious consideration as to how you will accomplish this, particularly throughout Holy Week and Easter. I am asking families to worship together in their homes each Sunday. Our website will have a link to the readings for Sunday Mass, and we expect to live stream

Mass from St. Peter Cathedral in Erie, the mother church of the diocese, each Sunday morning. Please reference www.ErieRCD.org for final details, including the time.

I have every confidence the Lord will bless us as we find new and creative ways to welcome him into our lives. I have asked pastors to keep their churches open for visitation as much as possible. Many parishes will offer Exposition so people will be able to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, even if it must be done while remaining an acceptable distance away from others. We also will soon publish information about how baptisms, reconciliation, confirmation, weddings, anointing's and funerals will be handled in the coming weeks and months.

There are many Scripture verses that can help us, and we have begun to provide spiritual resources for you at www.ErieRCD.org/inspiration.html. Be intentional about setting aside time to read and pray so you will remain centered. Remember to pray for others at this moment: for our leaders, for researchers, for healthcare workers, for the sick, for our communities, for those who will suffer financial hardship, and for those who have died, as well as their families, among others. As a Christian community, we must intercede on behalf of each other.

We've included a link to Pope Francis' prayer to Our Lady, Salvation of the People of Rome, among the resources we've posted. And although our site also includes a Spiritual Communion prayer, given that we will have no public Masses until further notice, I want to share it with you here. I recommend you pray it every day:

"My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot receive you at this moment sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen."

Our Lady Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, pray for us. St. Patrick, patron of the Diocese of Erie, pray for us.

The Most Reverend
† Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
Bishop of Erie

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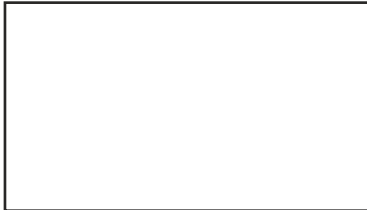

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